

LAND NORTH OF FIELD VIEW, REAR OF 46-52 HIGH STREET, HONITON, DEVON

NGR Centred on ST 1648 0068

Results Of An Archaeological Trench Evaluation

Planning Reference East Devon District Council
12/0622/FUL (Condition 2)

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Document No: ACD809/2/0

Date: December 2013



AC archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation on land north of Field View, rear of 46-52, High Street, Honiton, Devon (centred on ST 1648 0068) was undertaken by AC archaeology during November 2013. The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of two trenches totalling 46m in length, with each trench 1.40m wide.

Two boundary ditches, conforming to the historical pattern of properties, and a pit, all of probable post-medieval date were uncovered. Two distinctive horticultural soils (horticols) were found dating from the 18th century onwards. Modern activity on the site included the presence of a demolished World War II air raid shelter of Anderson type.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land to north and west of Field View, rear of 46-52, High Street, Honiton (centred on ST 1648 0068), was undertaken by AC archaeology between the 15th-19th November 2013. The evaluation was commissioned by Mr Dan Wilkinson and undertaken as a condition (2) of planning permission for residential development required by East Devon District Council, as advised by the Devon County Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCHET).
- 1.2 The redevelopment comprised the conversion of an existing building, formed from a Dutch Barn (c. 1951), and the building of seven new dwellings, together with associated garaging and parking. Foundations for dwelling nos 1–4 were already built, though no works had started for nos 5–7. A site inspection undertaken by the DCHET Archaeology Officer during October 2013 revealed that topsoil stored to the east of nos 1–4 contained pottery sherds and overlay *in situ* subsoil and that there was *in situ* topsoil in the area to be occupied by dwellings 5–7. The trial trenches were placed in these areas (Fig. 1 and Plate 1).
- 1.3 The site covers an area of approximately 1300m² and is located on the south side of the High Street, to the rear of street frontage properties, between numbers 46-52. It lies at a height of approximately 120m aOD, with the underlying solid geology comprising red, brown and grey coloured interlaminated sandstones, mudstones and siltstones of the Triassic, Branscombe Mudstone Formation (Gallois 2001, British Geological Survey online 2011). The soils of the development area are freely draining, slightly acidic loams (LandIS Soilscape online 2013).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The main archaeological interest in the site is that it occupies the rear part of medieval burgage plots extending from the main High Street and is therefore located in the historic core of the town. The settlement of Honiton once formed part of the Saxon estate centred on Axminster. The settlement, from which the present town developed, is believed to be founded during this period, being one of a number of farmsteads established along the sides of the Otter Valley. The location of the Domesday settlement *Honitona*, held by Drogo, is not certain although it may lie to the south of the town. The borough of Honiton was awarded to William de Vernon, 5th Earl of Devon by Robert Count of Mortain (brother of William the Conqueror). In 1193 William de Vernon granted Honiton borough status. The present settlement pattern is typical of a 13th century medieval town established along both sides of the High Street. By the early 15th century the pattern of long narrow burgage plots had become well established.

2.2 The 1842 parish tithe map depicts the site as open areas to the rear of properties fronting the High Street, with therefore the potential for associated small-scale industrial and agricultural activity, rubbish pits and outbuildings.

3. AIMS

3.1 The aim of the trial trench evaluation is to establish the presence or absence, extent depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site, which may have been or could be potentially affected by groundworks associated with the development and with particular reference to evidence for early settlement or industry. The results of the work, as set out in this report, will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent work as a second stage.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a brief prepared by DCHET (Reed 2013) and a Written Scheme of Investigation by AC archaeology (Valentin 2013). It comprised the machine excavation of two trenches totalling 46m long, with each trench 1.40m wide (Fig. 1).

4.2 All features and deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology proforma 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 and plans were produced at a scale of 1:10 and 1:20 and all site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Archaeological features and deposits were identified in both Trenches 1 and 2 and these are discussed in detail below. Relevant detailed plans and sections are included as Fig. 2 and photographs as Plates 1-5. In both trenches the archaeological features were cut into the natural geology of the area (context 102/202) which was a light yellow to light orange silty clay with frequent large mudstone, sandstone and occasional chert fragments. Tabulated context description by Trench are included as Appendix 1.

5.2 Trench 1 (Plan Fig. 2c and sections Figs 2a-b; Plates 2-4)

This trench was T-shaped totalling 30m in length and located on the southern side of the development area. The primary 20m was orientated northwest-southeast and a further 10m was orientated northeast-southwest. It contained a series of urban soils and horticols, a linear feature (F107), pit feature (F110) and an amorphous deposit of modern materials (F111).

The uppermost horizon in Trench 1 was a 0.26m thick, light yellow to orange coloured sandy clay with frequent angular stone fragments and represents an irregular dump of material possibly associated with the development of the properties in the very recent past. Below this was deposit 101, a 0.31m thick dark brownish black silty loam containing 19th and 20th century ceramics, china and animal bone (not collected). Below this deposit 103 comprised a sporadic 0.17-0.60m thick deposit of a light yellow to grey silty clay material which contained no finds and appeared to be a redeposited dump of natural subsoil. Where present deposit 103 overlay deposit 104, which was a mid brownish grey silty clay loam of a typical garden soil (horticol). It contained no finds.

Ditch F107 was located at the very southeast end of the trench and was 1.20m wide and 0.28m deep. It was orientated northeast-southwest and had a symmetrical profile with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. The feature contained two fills (105-6). Primary fill 106 was a 0.12m thick and most likely derived from the weathering of the sides of the ditch. Secondary fill 105 was 0.18m thick and comprised a mid grey to black silty clay containing pottery of 18th century date.

Pit F110 was oval with maximum dimensions of 2m by 1m and 0.22m deep. It had a steep southwest side with a moderately steep northeast side and a flat base. It contained two fills (108-9). On the western side was a slump fill deposit (109) which was 0.20m thick and comprised of a light yellow to grey silty clay. The remainder of the pit was filled with deposit 108, a 0.21m thick mid brown grey silty clay and contained pottery of late medieval and post-medieval date.

In the northeast-southwest trench extension a large 1.40m by 1.30m area (F111) of heavily degraded corrugated steel sheets, large sandstone fragments, bricks and mortar was uncovered in association with modern pottery, glass and animal bone. It was not fully excavated.

5.3 Trench 2 (Plan Fig. 2d and section Fig. 2e; Plate 5)

This trench was located on the eastern edge of the site area and was 16m long and northwest-southeast aligned. It contained a less complex sequence of urban soils and horticols than Trench 1. The uppermost deposits consisted of heavily truncated, organic topsoil (207), possibly a remnant horticol similar to deposit 101 in Trench 1, and a made up ground (200) with a stoney, rubble consistency and frequent, large brick, sandstone and concrete inclusions. Below this deposit, 201 was a light grey to grey brown silty clay, which contained 18th century pottery as well as two sherds of late prehistoric pottery. A linear feature (F203) was cut into natural subsoil (202).

Ditch F203 was 2.50m wide and 0.55m deep and was aligned northeast-southwest. The ditch profile was asymmetrical and had a sharp southeast edge and break of slope with a smoother northwest edge with rounded breaks of slope to a concave base. The ditch contained three fills (204-6). Primary fill 204 was 0.07-0.09m thick comprising light grey to yellow silty clay which appears to have derived from the erosion of the ditch sides. This was overlain by secondary fill 205, which was 0.10m thick and comprised a light grey to greenish grey silty clay. The majority of the ditch contained fill 206, which was 0.53m thick and composed of dark grey to grey brown silty clay containing sherds of post-medieval pottery.

6. THE FINDS by *Kerry Kerr-Peterson, with contributions from John Allan and Henrietta Quinnell*

6.1 Introduction

All finds have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate, then quantified according to material type within each context. The assemblage is discussed below. Finds totals by material type are given in Table 1.

6.2 The Pottery

The pottery assemblage comprises a total of 52 sherds, weighing 858g. There are two residual sherds of prehistoric pottery from layer 201, but the majority of the assemblage is late medieval or post-medieval in date.

Context	Context description	Prehistoric pottery		Medieval pottery		Post-medieval pottery		Glass		Clay tobacco-pipe		CBM	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
105	Fill of F107					1	4						
108	Fill of F110			6	100	41	694	15	123	1	1	2	73
201	Garden soil (hortisol)	2	24										
206	Fill of F203					2	36						
Totals		2	24	6	100	44	734	15	123	1	1	2	73

Table 1: Finds quantification by material type. Weight in grams. CBM: ceramic building material.

6.3 The prehistoric pottery by Henrietta Quinnell

Two sherds weighing 24g came from garden soil 201. The larger appears to be from a base angle. Both are of the same fabric. This fabric has a dense well mixed matrix with a range of inclusions which appear to include chert. The general character of the sherds suggests the earlier first millennium BC, broadly the Late Bronze Age or Early Iron Age (before around 300 BC). It is just possible that the sherds are 2nd millennium BC and broadly Trevisker, but inclusions would normally be larger. The general character of the sherds suggests a fairly local manufacture incorporating Upper Greensand derived materials.

6.4 The medieval and post-medieval pottery by John Allan and Kerry Kerr-Peterson

The assemblage contains 50 sherds, weighing 834g. The quantities of the various fabrics within the assemblage have been listed below in Table 2.

Context	Context description	SS	SCW	SW	IND	Total	MNV
105	Fill of F107		1			1	1
108	Fill of F110	20		7	17	44	17
206	Fill of F203	2				2	2
Totals		22	1	7	17	47	20

Table 2: Medieval and post-medieval pottery quantified by fabric.

Abbreviations: SS- South Somerset, SCW- sandy coarseware, SW- Stoneware, IND- Industrially produced wares, MNV: Minimum number of vessels.

There are 22 sherds of South Somerset coarseware, one sherd of a sandy coarseware which may be South Somerset derived, seven pieces of stoneware, which includes sherds of imported German Westerwald stoneware, as well as Staffordshire white and grey stonewares. Also present are 17 pieces of industrially produced cream ware in the form of two closed form vessels. The assemblage includes some residual material, in the form of jug fragments dating to the late 15th century. These include one ring foot base fragment and a sherd with incised thumbnail decoration. There is a more substantial group of 16th-17th century South Somerset coarseware sherds. However, the majority of the wares date to the 18th century and include several fragments of an 18th century South Somerset chamber pot with trailed slip decoration.

The only notable piece within the assemblage is a fragment of South Somerset coarseware from fill 10). This displays a badly broken fissure, into which the glaze has run. It is possible that this may represent a fragment of pottery waster, although the assemblage does not indicate any other evidence of pottery production, despite the possibility that Honiton was one of the production centres for the South Somerset wares.

6.5 The other finds

The rest of the finds assemblage consists of one, undiagnostic piece of plain clay pipe stem from ditch fill 108, weighing 1g. This is probably 18th-20th century in date. There are two pieces of fairly undiagnostic hand-made brick fragments, probably dating to the 18th-19th centuries. A total of 15 pieces of glass was recovered from fill 108, weighing 123g. These consist of mostly flat pieces of window glass, but there are also several pieces of green bottle glass dating to the 18th-19th centuries.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1** The two ditches F107 and F203 ran adjacent and parallel to current site boundaries in a northeast-southwest alignment. These probably represent transverse boundary ditches between the perpendicular burgage-like plots that are northwest-southeast aligned to the rear of the properties on Honiton High Street. These ditches may originate from the laying out of the burgage plots in the medieval period, or are related to later sub-division of the plots. They appear to have been kept open until infilled during the 18th century.
- 7.2** Pit F110 contained residual late 15th century pottery, post-medieval pottery and glass and is probably a rubbish pit of 18th century date.
- 7.3** The filling of features F107 and F110 appears to have been to re-organise the local landscape into allotments for small scale agriculture and horticulture. A hortisol horizon (104) includes fragments of 18th century pottery and must indicate this taking place in the 18th century or later.
- 7.4** The presence of two sherds of late prehistoric pottery within garden soil 201 suggests either the close proximity of prehistoric features or that it derives from material brought into the site when it was developed into allotments during the 18th century or later.
- 7.5** The form and character of F111 suggests that it was the remnants of a World War II domestic air raid shelter of Anderson type. These were a standard design 1.4m wide, 2m long and 1.8m tall constructed with a corrugated steel shell and part-buried and then covered with earth. This example may have been deliberately demolished and buried.
- 7.6** All of the other deposits and features found in the two trenches, including the redeposited natural material and made ground deposits, are associated with late 19th and 20th century activity on the site.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1** The archaeological field evaluation has shown that this area behind the High Street of the historic core of Honiton was not the site of intense activity in the medieval or post-medieval periods. From the 18th-19th centuries the area was used for horticultural purposes. In the mid-20th century it was regarded a suitable location for the construction of a domestic back yard air raid shelter.

8.2 The presence of late prehistoric pottery might suggest activity of that period in the vicinity, but may also indicate the transportation of material from outside of the area to be used in the creation of horticultural soils beginning in the 18th century.

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, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. It will be held until the need for any further archaeological work on the site is established and whether the creation of a digital archive for deposition at the Archaeology Data Service is required. If further work is not required the finds and paper archive will be offered to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter, but if they are unable to accept this, then it will be dealt with under their current accession policy.

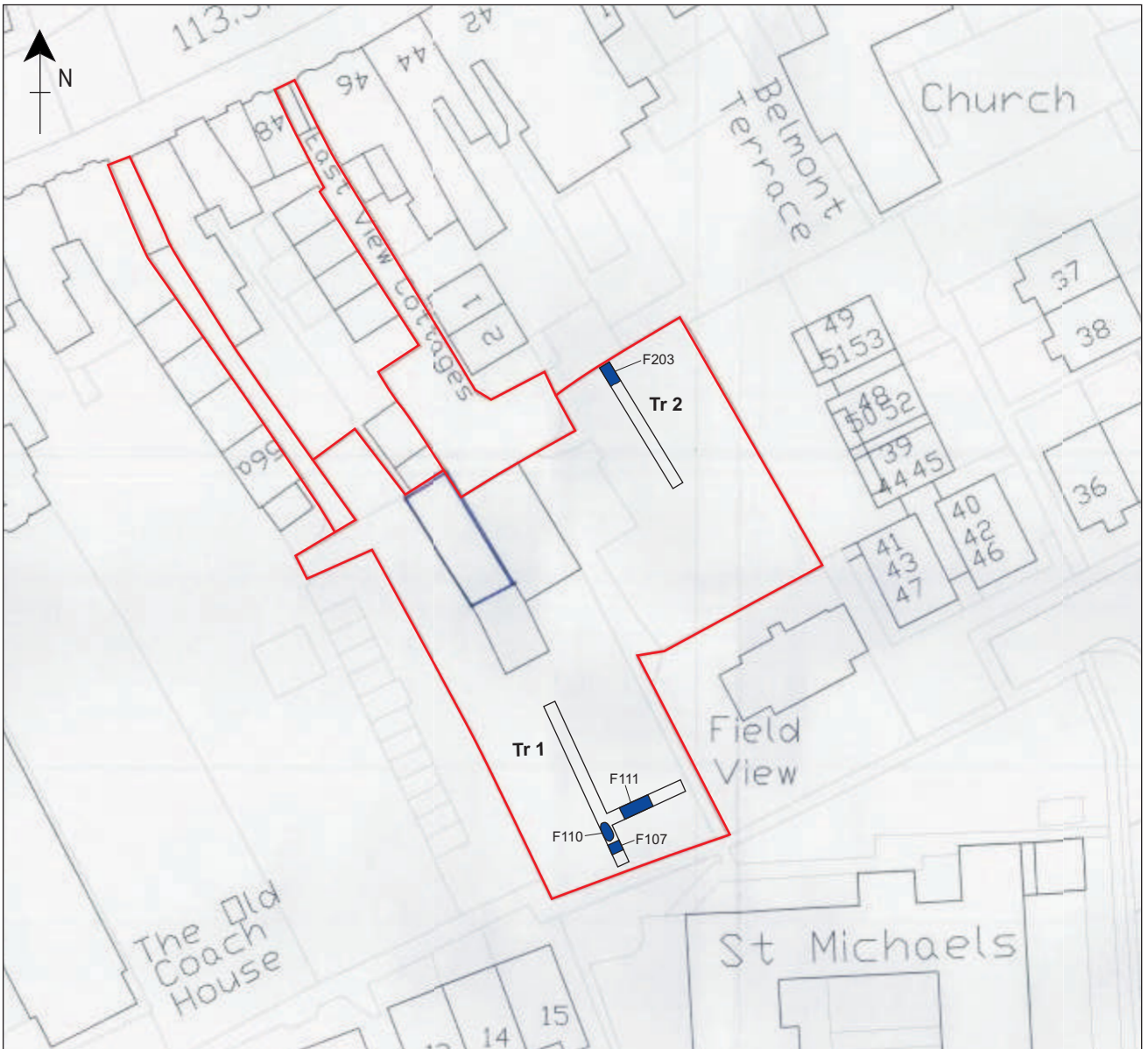
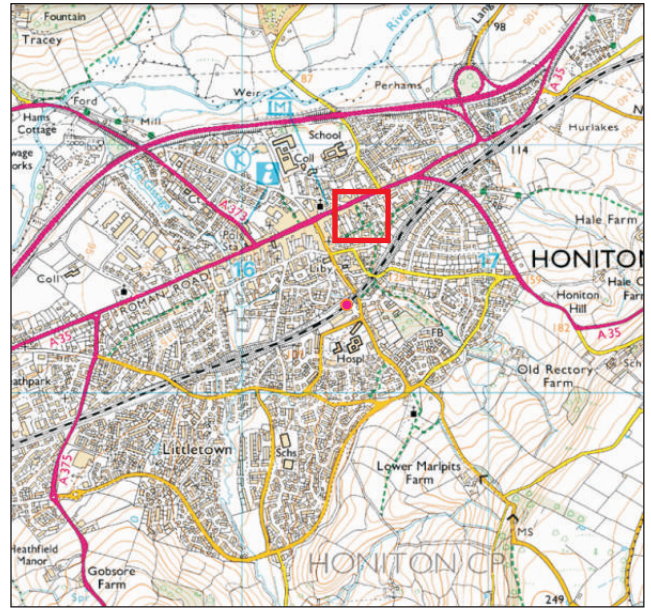
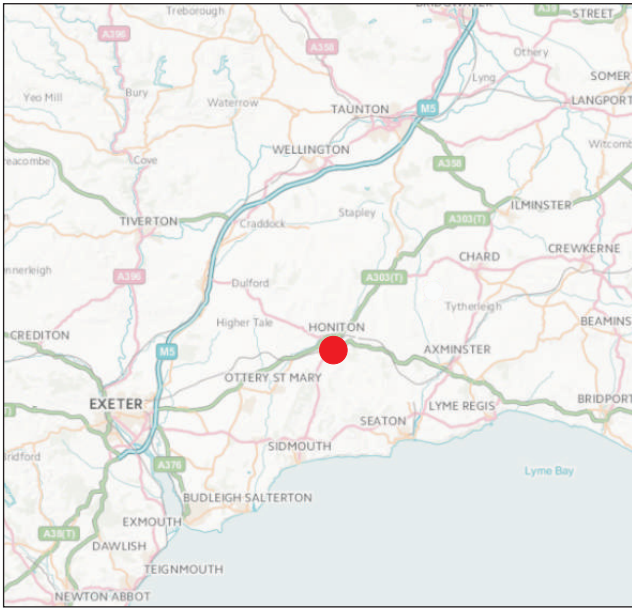
9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 166717, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

10.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Mr Dan Wilkinson on behalf of the owner. The site works were carried out by Ben Pears and Stella De Villiers, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Elisabeth Patkai. The collaborative role of Stephen Reed, DCHET Archaeology Officer is duly acknowledged.

11. REFERENCES

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- Application area
- Evaluation trenches with archaeological features

PROJECT

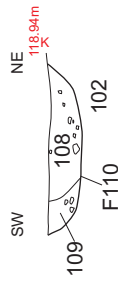
Land north of Field View, rear of 46-52 High Street, Honiton, Devon

TITLE

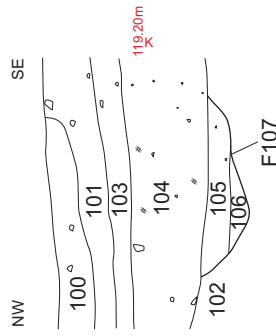
Fig. 1: Site location with trench plan and archaeological features shown



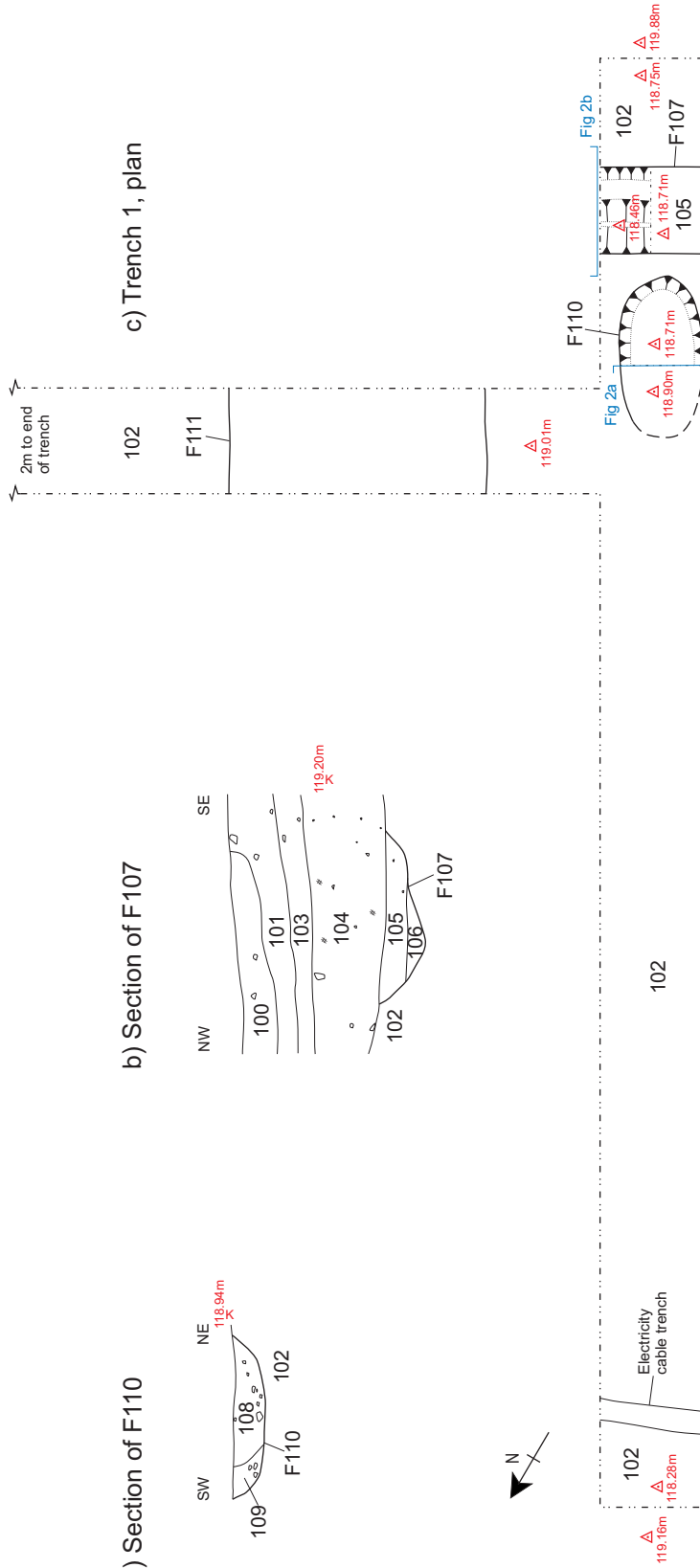
a) Section of F110



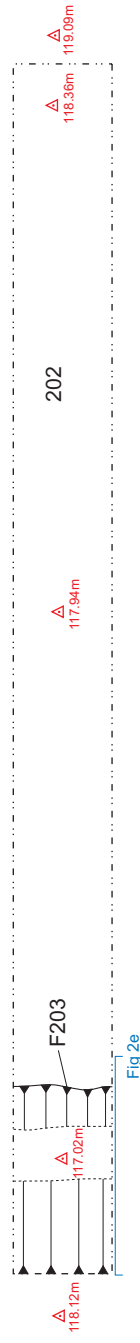
b) Section of F107



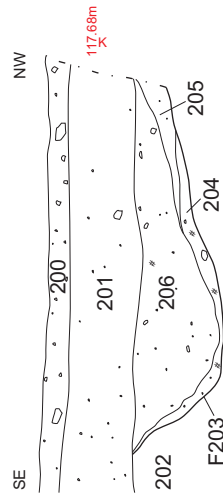
c) Trench 1, plan



d) Trench 2, plan



e) Section of F203



PROJECT

Land north of Field View,
rear of 46-52 High Street,
Honiton, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 2: Plans and sections,
Trenches 1 and 2



archaeology

0 5m

Plans

Scale 1:100@A4

0 3m

Sections

Scale 1:50@A4



Plate 1: General view of site, looking west



Plate 2: Trench 1, possible Anderson Shelter F111, looking northeast (scale 1m)



Plate 3: Trench 1, southwest-facing section of ditch F107 (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Trench 1, southeast-facing section of pit F110
(scale 1m)



Plate 5: Trench 2, northeast-facing section of ditch F203
(scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Tabulated context descriptions by trench



APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		Length	Alignment	Width
		20m	NW-SE	1.40m
		10m	NE-SW	
Con-text	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
100	Light yellow orange silty clay (40-60%) with a compact consistency and common sub-angular stone inclusions of various lithologies including sandstone, limestone, brick and tile up to 60mm	0-0.26m	Modern made ground	
101	Dark brownish black silty loam (40-60%) with a friable consistency and inclusions of rare sub-angular stone inclusions up to 60mm including sandstone, mudstone and quartz fragments. Degraded organics frequent	0-0.31m	Hortisol	
102	Light yellow orange silty clay (40-60%) with a compact consistency and inclusions of rare to frequent sub-angular sandstone, mudstone and quartz inclusions	1.08m+	Natural subsoil	
103	Light yellow grey silty clay (40-60%) with a friable consistency and rare sub-angular mudstone, sandstone and quartz inclusions up to 60mm	0.17-0.60m	Redeposited natural	
104	Mid brownish grey silty clay loam (40-20-40%) with a moderate compaction and semi friable in places. Inclusions of very rare sub-angular stones to 60mm including sub-rounded to sub-angular mudstone and quartz. Organic material moderate	0.60-1.08m	Hortisol	
105	Mid grey to black silty clay (40-60%) with moderate compaction and inclusions of very rare sub-angular stones up to 80mm. Organics rare and degraded	1.08-1.26m	Fill of F107	
106	Light yellow grey silty clay (40-60%) with a moderate compaction and inclusions of rare sub-angular mudstone, sandstone fragments up to 60mm. Organic few	1.24-1.36m	Fill of F107	
107	Cut of linear feature	1.08-1.36m	Boundary ditch	
108	Mid brown to grey silty clay (40-60%) with a moderate compaction and rare sub-angular mudstone and sandstone inclusions. Organics rare and degraded.	1.08-1.29m	Fill of F110	
109	Light yellow to grey coloured silty clay with a moderate compaction and rare, sub-angular mudstone and sandstone stone inclusions up to 60mm	1.08-1.29m	Fill of F110	
110	Cut of pit feature	1.08-1.29m	Rubbish pit	
111	Large +1.30 by +1.40m sub-square shaped feature composed of stone and corrugated iron against a vertical edge. Material heavily degraded and infilled with modern rubbish and waste including metal, glass, brick and pottery. Cut from very high up and only capped by (100)	0.26m+	Air raid shelter	

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 2		Length	Alignment	Width
		16m	NW-SE	1.40m
Con- text	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
200	Dark reddish, grey brown silty clay (40-60%) with a stoney, rubble consistency and frequent, large brick, sandstone and concrete inclusions 40-100mm at +40% occurrence	0-0.20m	Modern made ground	
201	Light grey to grey brown silty clay (40-60%) with a friable consistency and inclusions of small, frequent sub-rounded to sub-angular inclusions of chert, sandstone and mudstone fragments c.10-30 mm at 10-20% with rare charcoal c.5-10%	0.20-0.50m	Hortisol	
202	Light yellow to light orange silty clay (30-70%) with a compact to stoney compaction and large, frequent mudstone, chert fragments c.20-80mm at +30% occurrence	0.50m+	Natural subsoil	
203	Cut of linear feature	0.50-1.05m	Boundary ditch	
204	Light grey to yellow silty clay (40-60%) with a hard consistency and inclusions of medium to large, occasional chert and mudstone fragments c.20-60mm at 5-10% occurrence	0.97-1.05m	Fill of F203	
205	Light grey to greenish grey silty clay (60-40%) with a friable consistency and inclusions of very small, rare quartz, mudstone, chert fragments c.10mm at 5-10%. Few to no organics	0.50-0.60m	Fill of F203	
206	Dark grey to grey brown silty clay (40-60%) with a friable to plastic consistency with rare, small sub-rounded quartz, chert, sandstone and mudstone inclusions c.10-30mm at 5-10%. Charcoal rare but substantial	0.50-1.03m	Fill of F203	
207	Dark grey to grey black silty clay loam (40-30-30%) with a soft to friable consistency and large, frequent rootlets and vegetation heavily mixed by modern disturbance. Modern pottery frequent alongside charcoal and stone fragments c.10-30mm at +20%.	0-0.60m	Disturbed topsoil	

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