LAND NORTH OF WOODLANDS, KILMINGTON, DEVON

NGR Centred on SY 2642 9845

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

Prepared by:
Ben Pears
and
Simon Hughes

On behalf of:
Terry Hutchings-
Architectural Design

Report No: ACD822/2/0

Date: December 2013

AC archaeology

LAND NORTH OF WOODLANDS, KILMINGTON, DEVON

(Centred on NGR SY 2642 9845)

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

CONTENTS

List of figures

List of plates

Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation carried out on land north of Woodlands, Kilmington, Devon (centred on SY 2642 9845), was undertaken by AC archaeology during December 2013. The site occupies a small area of rough, overgrown land 0.3km west of the village of Kilmington, Devon and extends south of route of the Axminster to Honiton Roman road.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of 2 trenches totalling 28m in length, with each trench 1.1m wide. These were positioned to target the route of the Axminster to Honiton Roman road and the adjacent area.

A partially exposed and well-constructed metalled road surface was recorded that corresponded with the route of the Roman Road but was undated. A small parallel ditch was recorded to the south of the road surface and was also undated.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land north of Woodlands, Kilmington, Devon (SY 2642 9845), was undertaken by AC archaeology during December 2013. The evaluation was undertaken in support of a future planning application for residential development, as required by East Devon District Council and advised by the Devon County Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCHET).

1.2 The archaeological evaluation was commissioned by Terry Hutchings-Architectural Design.

1.3 The site is situated approximately 0.3km to the west of Kilmington and comprises part of a small rectangular plot that extends to the south of Roman Road, which currently forms a farm track (Fig. 1, Plate 1). It covers what is currently scrubland that slopes gradually to the south at around 95m aOD. The underlying geology comprises Branscombe Mudstone Formation – Mudstone.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The route of the Axminster to Honiton Roman road (MDV14186) forms the north boundary to the proposed development site. Here, the Roman road currently comprises a farm trackway that continues approximately southeast as a residential road before forming the route of the current A35 towards Axminster (Plate 2). To the northwest on Shute Hill, the route of the Roman road continues as a track and retains, in places, visible in places as an earthwork thought to represent the cambered profile or *agger*.

2.2 Later activity adjacent to the site comprises the site of a former gravel pit to the west and some post-medieval field drains recorded during an archaeological trench evaluation at the junction of Gammons Hill and George Lane (MDV36540 and EDV5145).

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. This was with particular reference to the adjacent route of the Honiton to

Axminster Roman road. 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 was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Hughes 2013). It comprised the machine excavation of 2 trenches totalling 28m in length, with each trench measuring 1.1m wide (Fig. 2).

4.2 Trenches were positioned to target the portion of the proposed development site that extends up to the route of the Roman road as well as the adjacent area to the south. The removal of soil overburden within the trenches was undertaken under the control and direction of the site archaeologist.

4.3 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 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 **Trench 1** (Plan and Section Fig. 2; Plates 3-5)
This trench measured a total of 18m in length but was split into two sections due to the line of a flowing drainage ditch. Natural subsoil (context 103), which comprised a weathered mudstone in a light yellowish-grey clay matrix was exposed at a maximum depth of 0.42m. Throughout the majority of the trench the natural subsoil was overlain by a light grey silty-clay subsoil (102) which was in turn sealed by an intermittent layer of dumped modern rubble and tiles (101) and topsoil (100). The trench contained a sequence of layers forming a probable metalled surface (F105) to the north and a probable ditch (F110) at its mid-point. Surface F105 was recorded only in plan.

5.2 Approximately 3.5m of surface F105 was exposed to the north end of the trench at a depth of 0.06m below current levels, with this extending beyond the edge of the trench. The lowest-exposed deposit to the north of the surface consisted of a compacted light grey silty-sand with fine sands and coarse grit inclusions (107), which may represent a compacted hardcore layer. On the south side of the surface was a partially exposed layer (109), which comprised a compact bluish-green to grey silty-sand with very rare sub-angular chert pebbles and fine sand. Overlying both layers 107 and 109 was a gradually cambered metalled surface (108). This deposit was approximately 0.11m thick and formed a rough surface that was comprised of highly compacted, small to medium sub-rounded chert and quartzite pebbles measuring 20-70mm in size, and bonded by a yellow silty-clay with fine grit inclusions. Surface 108 was partially truncated by root intrusion from a recently removed hedgebank (104). Overlying the north side of the surface and extending to the north was a compact dark reddish brown gravel with medium to large chert and limestone cobbles (106). This layer represented a more recent metalling of the track, with this overlain by the general thin topsoil 100.

5.3 Probable ditch F110 was located in the south portion of Trench 1. It measured 0.67m wide and 0.25m deep with moderately-steep sloping sides and a concave, slightly irregular base. It contained a mid greenish-brown silty-clay basal fill (111) that had

moderately-common sub-angular chert inclusions. This was overlain by an upper fill of dark brownish-grey silty-clay with no inclusions (112), which was in turn sealed by subsoil layer 102. No finds were recovered from F110.

5.4 **Trench 2** (Plate 6)
This trench was excavated onto natural subsoil (context 203), which was present at a depth 0.52m below current levels. The natural subsoil was overlain by a consistent sequence of layers, as recoded in Trench 1, which comprised, a subsoil (202), a horizon of modern dumped rubble with brick and tile (201) that was in turn sealed by topsoil (200).

5.5 No archaeological features or deposits were present in Trench 2.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 The results of the evaluation have identified the presence of a well-constructed WNW to ESE probable track surface (F105), which extended beyond the north limit of Trench 1. This is consistent with the assumed line and location of the Roman road extending between Axminster and Honiton. The surface was recorded only in plan as part of the agreed methodology. However, based on the exposed deposits, it was constructed from at least three layers of material. These comprised the basal deposit of large mudstone rubble and compacted clay (107), with this probably overlain by the homogenous probable bedding layer of clay and sand (109), and finally capped by a slightly cambered, compact upper surface (108). On the north side of the surface, the upper layer was probably eroded with the surface subsequently replaced with a looser infilling of stone rubble (106).

6.2 Although there was no dating evidence recovered from surface F105, this construction methodology is perhaps consistent with profiles recorded through the Axminster to Honiton Roman road recorded during groundworks associated with the Axminster bypass (Weddell *et al* 1993). Here, construction of the Roman road included large irregular fragments of chert and quartz overlain by gravels in a clay loam matrix forming a cambered profile or *agger*.

6.3 To the south of the surface, an associated roadside ditch was not exposed. Later intrusion from the recently removed hedgebank and the presence of the flowing drainage ditch did not allow full investigation of this part of the site.

6.4 Probable ditch F110 was also undated. However, it was sealed by the subsoil present as the lowest recorded soil horizon suggesting that it was, at least, not of modern origin.

6.5 Based on the establishment of a probable road surface recorded in the position of the assumed route of the Roman road, both trenches were extended in length in order to fully investigate the potential for any associated settlement adjacent to the probable Roman road. No further features were exposed in either trench and no finds were recovered from the overlying deposits.

7. CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The trial trench evaluation has exposed part of a well-constructed and layered probable road surface on the general line and location of the assumed route of the Axminster to Honiton Roman road. No datable evidence was recovered from its layers, but the form and construction methodology is broadly consistent with profiles recorded through

sections of the same route during groundworks associated with the Axminster bypass (Weddell et al 1993). In addition, visible earthworks identified as representing the route of the Roman road have been recorded adjacent to the site. Based on this and earthworks adjacent to the site thought to represent the agger, the surface recorded in these works therefore has the potential to represent the eroded elements of the Roman road.

7.2 The area to the south of the probable surface within the proposed development site was also investigated, and contained no finds significant evidence for any associated settlement.

8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

8.1 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. A museum-allocated temporary reference number has been obtained from The Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter which is RAMM 13/73.

8.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 167350, which includes a digital copy of this report.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

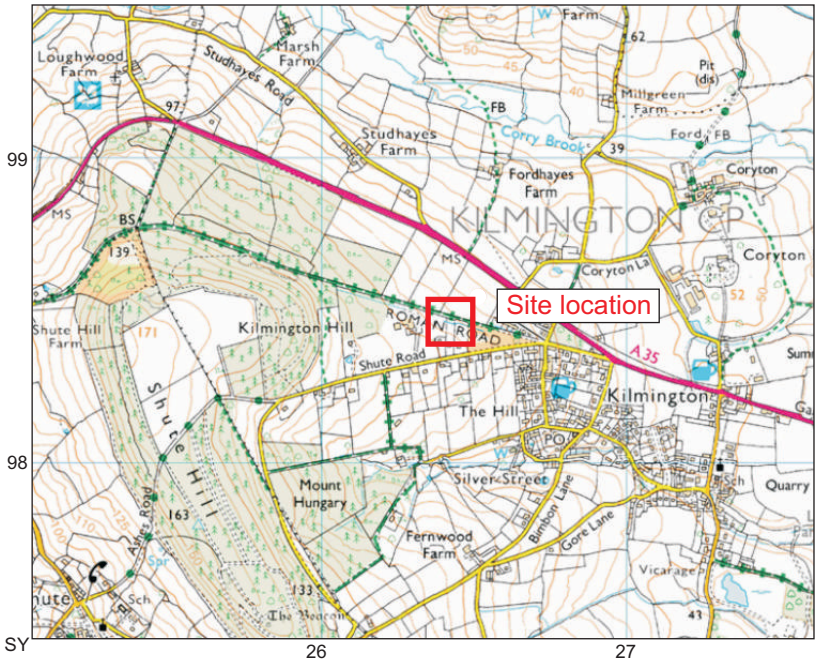
9.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Terry Hutchings-Architectural Design. The site works were carried out by Ben Pears and Jon Hall. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Elisabeth Patkai.

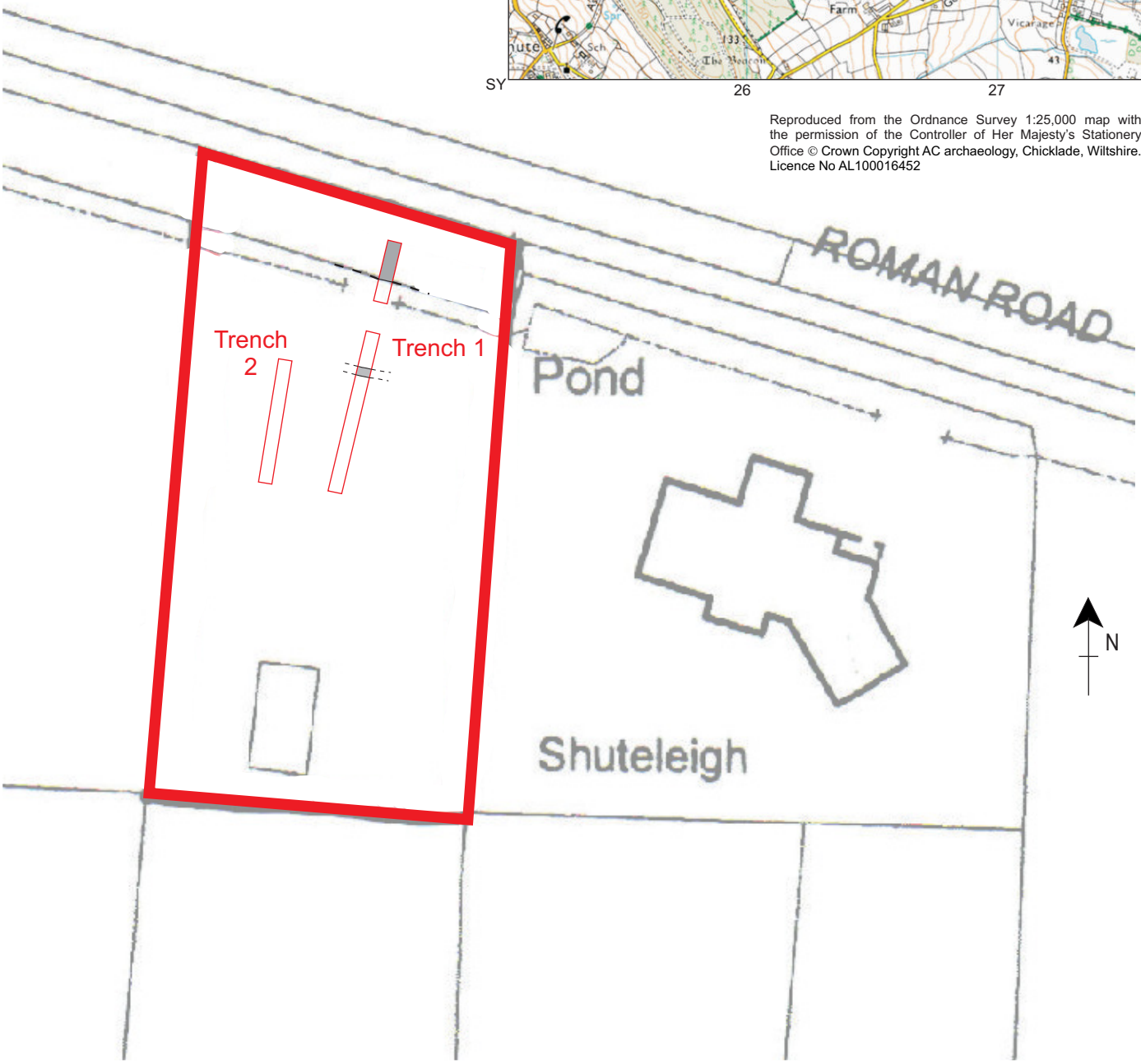
10. REFERENCES

British Geological Survey online 2012 www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience

Hughes, S., 2013, Land north of Woodlands, Kilmington, Devon: Project design for an archaeological evaluation. Unpublished AC archaeology document, ref. ACD822/1/0.

Weddell, P.J., Reed, S.J. and Simpson, S.J. 1993 'Excavations of the Exeter-Dorchester Roman Road at the River Yarty and the Roman Fort Ditch and Settlement Site at Woodbury, Near Axminster' Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society 51, 33-134.





0 25m

Scale 1:500@A4

Trial trenches

PROJECT

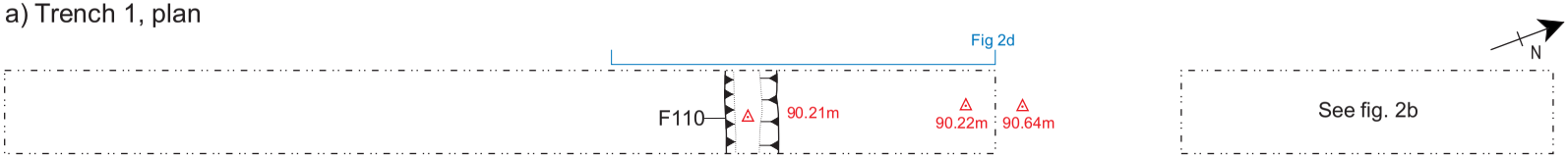
Land North of Woodlands, Kilmington, Devon

TITLE

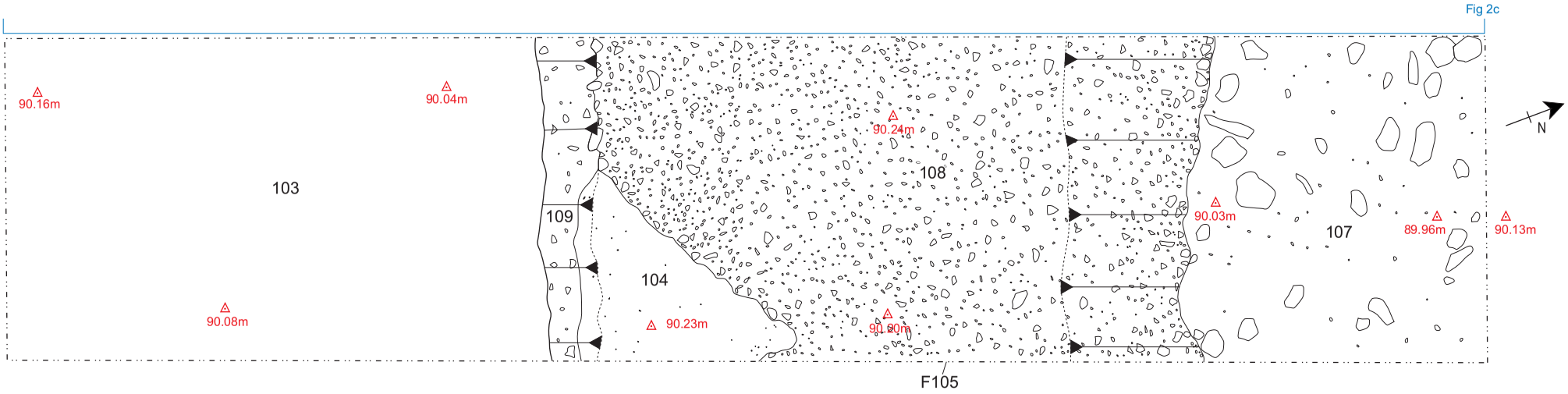
Fig. 1: Site location and trial trench location plan

AC archaeology

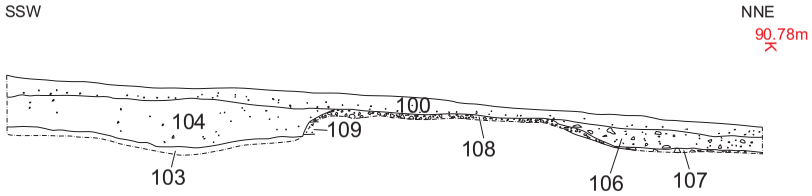
a) Trench 1, plan

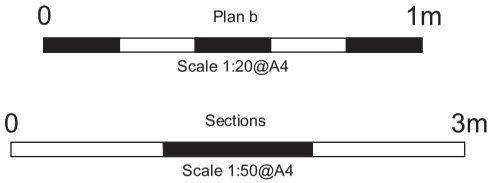


b) Close up plan of road F105, Trench 1

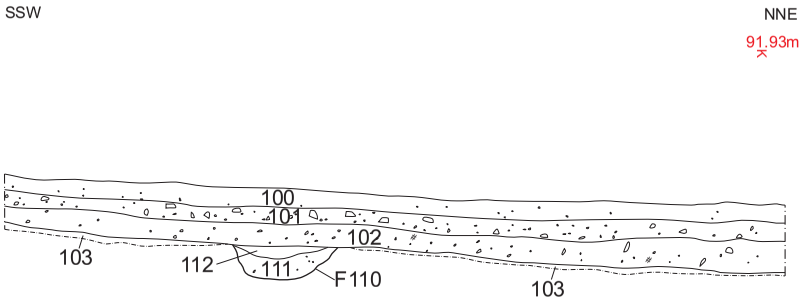


c) Section of road F105





d) Section through Trench 1 and F110



PROJECT

Land North of Woodlands, Kilmington, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 2: Trench 1, plan and sections

AC archaeology

Plate 1: General view of site, looking north

Plate 2: Line of Roman Road, view to west from site entrance

Plate 3: General view of Trench 1, view to north (scale 1m)

Plate 4: Trench 1, Surface F105,
view to south (scale 1m)

Plate 5: Trench 1, Ditch F110,
view to west (scale 1m)

Plate 6: General view of Trench 2,
view to north (scale 0.50m)

Devon Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Unit 4, Halthaies Workshops
Bradninch
Nr Exeter
Devon
EX5 4LQ

Telephone/Fax: 01392 882410

Wiltshire Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Manor Farm Stables
Chicklade
Hindon
Nr Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP3 5SU

Telephone: 01747 820581
Fax: 01747 820440

www.acarchaeology.co.uk