

# LAND AT GREAT COURT FARM, BERRY POMEROY, TOTNES, DEVON

(Centred on NGR SX 8181 6029)

## Results of Archaeological Excavations

Outline Planning Reference: South Hams District Council  
03/2163/14/O

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On behalf of:  
Baker Estates Ltd

Report No: ACD1477/2/0

Date: June 2017



AC archaeology

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Report Author(s)	László Lichtenstein and Paul Rainbird
Contributions	Charlotte Coles and Naomi Payne
Checked by	John Valentin
Approved by	John Valentin

### Acknowledgements

The excavations were commissioned by Richard Ayre and Mike McCleod of Baker Estates Ltd and managed for AC archaeology by John Valentin. The site works were carried out by László Lichtenstein with the assistance of Paul Cooke and Naomi Kysh. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Leon Cauchois. The collaborative role of Steve Reed, Devon County Council Archaeology Officer, is duly acknowledged.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of AC archaeology and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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## Summary

*Archaeological strip, map and sample excavations carried out prior to groundworks associated with a residential development on land at Great Court Farm, Berry Pomeroy, Totnes, Devon (centred on NGR SX 8181 6029), were undertaken by AC archaeology in May 2017. The site comprised an area of approximately 2.6 hectares to the north, west and south of Great Court Farm, which is situated east of Bridgetown, Totnes in Berry Pomeroy parish. Four areas were excavated centred on a series archaeological features identified during previous trial trenching.*

*Archaeological features were present in three of the four excavation areas, with the majority of these probably relating to previous land division and drainage during the modern, post-medieval and medieval periods. A few postholes and pits were present which could relate to former settlement, but no obvious structural patterns were apparent and few artefacts were recovered. One large pit may represent piecemeal quarrying for clay, albeit undated. The finds comprised a small amount of worked flint, medieval and post-medieval pottery and one piece of animal bone.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Presented here are the results of second stage archaeological mitigation, comprising a strip, map and sample excavation prior to groundworks associated with a residential development on land at Great Court Farm, Berry Pomeroy, Totnes, Devon (SX 8181 6029; Fig. 1). The work was undertaken as a condition (14) of planning consent (ref. 03/2163/14/O), as advised by the Archaeology Officer, Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (DCCHET).
- 1.2 The investigations were undertaken by AC archaeology during May 2017 and were commissioned by Baker Estates Ltd.
- 1.3 The site consists of two agricultural fields; Field 1 to the north and Field 2 to the south. It covers an area of approximately 2.6 hectares to the north, west and south of Great Court Farm, which is situated east of Bridgetown, Totnes in Berry Pomeroy parish. The site lies on gently sloping ground at between approximately 58-70m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), with the highest ground located in the northern field and the land then falling away gently to the south and more steeply to the west.
- 1.4 The underlying solid geology consists of igneous tuff of the Ashprington Volcanic Formation. No superficial deposits are recorded within this area ([www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)).

### 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site has been subject to a previous desk-based assessment (Pink 2014), geophysical survey (Dean 2014), an earthwork survey and trial trench evaluation (Rainbird and Valentin 2014). The assessment established the potential for currently unrecorded archaeological remains of prehistoric and unknown date to potentially be present within the site, which may relate to settlement, agricultural and quarrying activity. The geophysical survey identified nine mainly linear anomalies which could possibly relate to archaeological features.
- 2.2 Subsequent trial trenching established that archaeological features were present, with the majority of these probably relating to previous land division and drainage during the medieval, post-medieval and modern periods. A few postholes and pits were present which could relate to former settlement, but no obvious structural patterns were apparent and few artefacts were recovered. Two large pits appeared to represent piecemeal quarrying for clay, albeit undated.

Earthworks surveyed at the site were shown to be of recent origin. Of probably most interest was in the far northeast corner of the site, where a former ditch containing Romano-British pottery was present parallel and adjacent to Blackpost Lane. The lane may be the older line of the road between Totnes and Paignton prior to turnpiking.

### **3. AIMS**

- 3.1** The principal aims of the archaeological excavation were to record, prior to development, any significant archaeological deposits, features and finds which may be revealed or disturbed by the groundworks for the proposed development in those areas identified as of interest based on the results of the previous trial trench evaluation.

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1** This phase of work comprised the archaeological excavation of four areas within the development site, undertaken in accordance with a project design (Valentin 2016) approved by DCCHE. These areas were centred on features highlighted during an earlier phase of archaeological trial trenching (Rainbird and Valentin 2014). Following demarcation of the investigation areas using a Leica Net rover GPS to sub 10mm accuracy, topsoil and any local subsoil deposits overlying the natural subsoils (or drift geology) were removed separately in level spits and stored on site using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket, under the supervision of a suitably qualified archaeologist. Machine excavation ceased at the level at which natural subsoil and archaeological deposits were exposed.

- 4.2** The archaeological works were conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Excavation* (2014) and 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, 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate. All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

### **5. RESULTS – AREA 1 (Plate 1)**

- 5.1** This area measured approximately 58m x 4.8m and was positioned in the northern part of the site, in Field 1, adjacent to where a former ditch containing Romano-British pottery was present in the evaluation trench running parallel and adjacent to Blackpost Lane. Natural subsoil (context 102) comprised highly variable degraded siltstone and was exposed at a depth of approximately 0.51m below current levels. This was overlain by 0.20m of agricultural subsoil (101) consisting of mid reddish-brown silty clay and 0.31m of topsoil (100) consisting of greyish-brown clayey silt. A number of natural features were investigated to confirm their origin. The ditch was not revealed and no other archaeological features or finds were encountered in the investigated area. Due to a tree protection area, the trench was positioned further to the west of the position of the known ditch than would have been ideal and this accounts for it not being present in the trench.

### **6. RESULTS – AREA 2 (Detailed plan Fig. 2a and sections Fig. 2b-e; Plates 2-3)**

- 6.1** This area measured approximately 15.5m x 15m and was situated to the south of Great Court Farm where the evaluation identified evidence of made ground levelling deposit forming a terrace, potential medieval land division in the form of a number of ditches and discrete features.

Natural subsoil (202) was exposed at a depth of 0.53m below current levels. This was overlain by subsoil (201) and buried topsoil (200) which was overlain by 0.22m of made ground/modern topsoil layer (213) consisting of mid greyish-brown silty clay. One linear feature (F207), three discrete archaeological features (F203, F205 and F211) and a feature interpreted as natural in origin (F209) were recorded. One piece of modern china was recovered from the made ground/modern topsoil (213).

## **6.2 Linear feature**

Ditch F207 was aligned approximately northeast - southwest, measured at least 8m long by 0.70m wide and 0.10m deep. Its bulbous terminal, originally thought to be a pit, was excavated during the earlier phase of trial trenching. It had shallow sloping sides and a rounded to flattish base. The ditch contained a single fill (208) of reddish-brown silty clay. No finds were recovered.

## **6.3 Pit**

Pit F203 was sub-oval in plan and measured 1.18m long by 0.80m wide and 0.21m deep. The pit had moderately sloping irregular sides and an irregular flat base. It contained a single fill (204) of mid reddish-brown silty clay. No finds were recovered.

## **6.4 Posthole**

A single small posthole F205 was present adjacent to pit F203. It was circular in plan with a rounded, shallow profile and measured 0.28m in diameter and 0.10m deep. It contained a single fill (206) of light reddish brown silty clay from which no finds were recovered.

## **6.5 Extraction pit**

Feature F211 was oval in plan and measured more than 3m long by 2m wide and 0.14m deep. The feature contained a single fill (210) of mid reddish brown silty clay. It was cut by a modern water pipe which reduced the area available for excavation, but this may be a small quarry pit. No finds were recovered.

## **6.6 Natural feature**

Feature F209 was amorphous in plan and measured 2.05m long by more than 5m wide and 0.11m deep. The feature had an asymmetric profile with a very steep side to the north, shallow sloping and irregular side to the south and an irregular base. It contained a single fill (210) of dark reddish brown silty clay. No finds were recovered.

## **7. RESULTS – AREA 3** (Detailed plan Fig. 3a and sections Figs 3b-c; Plates 4-5)

**7.1** This area measured approximately 15.5m x 15m and was situated to the south of Great Court Farm where the evaluation identified evidence of a pair of ditches. Natural subsoil (302) was exposed at a depth of 0.57m below current levels. This was overlain by 0.25m of subsoil (301) and 0.34m of topsoil (300). Two linear features (F308/F309 and F303/F311) were recorded.

### **7.2 Linear features**

Ditch F308/F309 was aligned north – south with gently sloping sides and a rounded base and measured 0.91m wide by 0.35m deep. It contained two fills (306-7) in excavated segment F308 and a single fill (310) in segment F309. The primary fill (307/310) was composed of light reddish-brown silty clay and contained one piece of worked flint. The upper fill (306) was also composed of light reddish-brown silty clay, but also contained abundant fine gravels and one piece of worked flint.

Ditch F303/F311 was aligned north – south, running parallel with ditch F308/F309. It had steep sides and a rounded base and measured 1.1m wide by 0.44m deep. It contained two fills (304/313-305/312). The primary fill (304/313) was composed of light brownish-yellow silty clay

and contained no finds. The upper fill (305/312) was composed of mid brownish-red silty clay and contained one piece of prehistoric worked flint and two sherds of medieval pottery.

## 8. RESULTS – AREA 4 (Detailed plan Fig. 4a and sections Figs 4b-e; Plates 6-8)

8.1 This area measured approximately 15m x 9.5m and was situated to the south of Great Court Farm where the evaluation identified three ditches and a posthole. Natural subsoil (402) was exposed at a depth of 0.50m below current levels. This was overlain by 0.15m of subsoil (401) and 0.35m of topsoil (400). Three linear features (F403/F409, F405/F419 and F412/F417) were recorded.

### 8.2 Linear features

Ditch F403/F409 was aligned approximately northeast – southwest. It contained a single fill (404) in excavated segment F403 and two fills (410/411) in segment F409. This was a modern ditch which was cut from the level of topsoil (400). Primary fill (404) contained one sherd of modern pottery and one piece of animal bone. It cut ditch F412/F417 and spread remnant probable former hedgebank material (415) and (416).

Ditch F405/F419 ran parallel to the south of ditch F403/F409. It was V-shaped in profile and measured 0.60m wide by 0.30m deep. It contained a single fill (406/420) comprised of mid yellowish brown silty clay which contained one sherd of medieval pottery.

Ditch F412/F417 was aligned approximately northwest – southeast. It had steep sides and a broad irregular base and measured 1.9m wide by 0.54m deep. It contained two fills (413/421-414/418). The primary fill (413/421) was comprised of light to mid reddish-brown clay to silty clay and contained no finds. The upper fill (414/418) was composed of light yellowish brown and mid brownish-red clay and silty clay and contained two sherds of medieval pottery.

## 9. THE FINDS *by Charlotte Coles and a contribution from Naomi Payne*

9.1 All finds recovered on site during the excavations have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. They have been quantified according to material type within each context and the assemblage examined to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. The small collection of finds are summarised in Table 1 below.

Context	Context description	Worked flint		Medieval pottery		Post-medieval/modern pottery		Animal bone	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
213	Layer					1	33		
301	Subsoil	1	7						
306	Fill of ditch F308	1	1						
310	Fill of ditch F309	1	5						
312	Fill of ditch F311			2	18				
404	Fill of ditch F403					1	6	1	18
418	Fill of ditch F417			2	2				
420	Fill of ditch F419			1	1				
Total		3	13	5	21	2	39	1	18

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

## **9.2 Worked flint**

Three pieces of prehistoric worked flint (13g) were retrieved from three contexts, these are mottled grey flint and are all waste flakes.

## **9.3 Medieval pottery by Charlotte Coles and Naomi Payne**

A total of five sherds of medieval pottery (21g) were recovered from three ditches in Area 4. These are unglazed body sherds of Totnes type and date from the late medieval or early post-medieval periods (15th to the 17th centuries).

## **9.4 Post-medieval/modern pottery**

Two pieces of post-medieval/modern pottery were found from two contexts; these are a piece of hand painted porcelain from context 404 which is not closely datable and a piece of Staffordshire ware transfer printed plate dating to the 19th or 20th century from topsoil layer 213.

## **9.5 Animal bone**

A single animal bone fragment was recovered from context 404 this is a mammal long bone. An identification of species is not possible.

## **10. DISCUSSION**

**10.1** The excavations have extended the findings of the evaluation phase in further revealing undated activity involving various phases of land division on the site. The presence of worked flint indicates that the area was in use in prehistory, but does not appear to have been a focus for settlement activities.

**10.2** No further evidence of a roadside ditch or the potential Romano-British activity in the area was forthcoming from the excavation area 1 due to the presence of a tree protection area.

**10.3** The various ditches, located to the south of Great Court Farm, appear to illustrate several phases of land allotment. No pattern in regard to this allotment could be discerned, and the only stratigraphic relationship was with modern features. The small number of finds related to these ditches indicate that they may have been in use in the medieval and post-medieval periods, but had gone out of use by the date of earliest historic mapping in the mid nineteenth century. No evidence of settlement was found in association with these features and the area appears to have exclusively been used for agricultural purposes. The pit and posthole present in Area 2 were in isolation and undated.

## **11. CONCLUSIONS**

**11.1** The excavations have extended the findings of the evaluation phase in further revealing undated activity involving various phases of land division on the site. The paucity of finds indicate that the various ditches to the south of Great Court Farm were not the focus of settlement and probably relate to agricultural activities on the site.

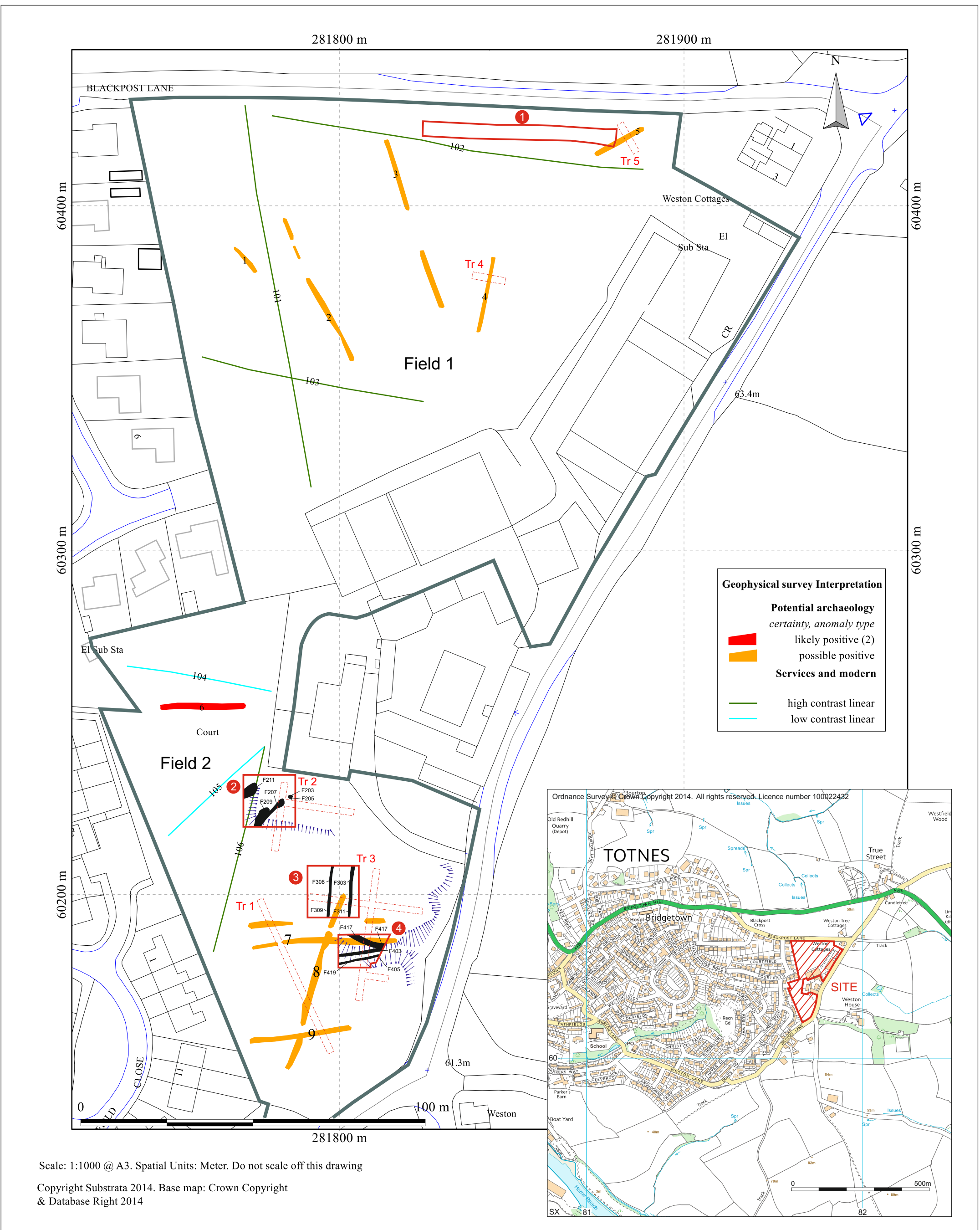


## 12. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY

- 12.1** The finds, paper and digital archive are stored at the offices of AC archaeology at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ under the unique project codes of **ACD868** and **ACD1477** and under the temporary reference number issued by the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter of **RAMM: 14/34**. The contents of the finds archive will be reviewed by the Royal Albert Memorial Museum and, if they are considered worthy of retention, they will be transferred to the museum under an allocated accession number. Material not retained by the RAMM will be discarded at the same time.
- 12.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed using the unique number **180630**, which includes a digital version of this report.

## 13. REFERENCES




- British Geological Survey online viewer [www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk).
- Dean, R., 2014: *Land at Great Court Farm, Totnes, South Hams, Devon: An archaeological gradiometer survey*. Unpublished Substrata report for client, ref. 140311.
- Pink, F., 2014, *Land at Great Court Farm, Totnes, South Hams, Devon – Historic Environment Assessment*, Unpublished AC archaeology report, ref. **ACD868/1/0**.
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- Valentin, J., 2016, *Land at Great Court Farm, Berry Pomeroy, Totnes, Devon. Project Design for Archaeological Strip, Map and Sample Excavation*. Unpublished AC archaeology report, ref. **ACD1477/1/0**.



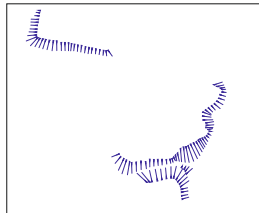
Scale: 1:1000 @ A3. Spatial Units: Meter. Do not scale off this drawing


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**Legend**

-  Evaluation Trenches 1-5
-  Archaeological features
-  Application boundary

Earthwork survey  
AC archaeology-15/04/2014



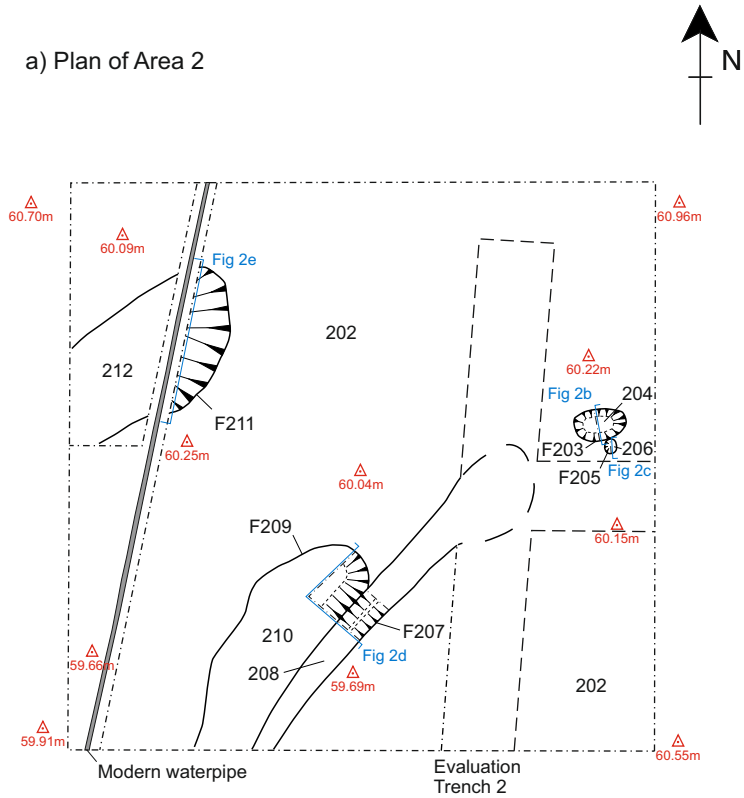
-  1 Excavation areas 1-4



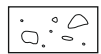
PROJECT  
**Land at Great Court Farm,  
Berry Pomeroy, Totnes, Devon**

TITLE  
**Fig. 1: Location of site and excavation areas**

a) Plan of Area 2



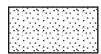
Key to all sections



Stones



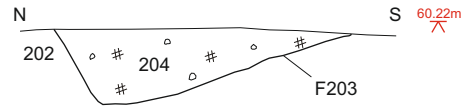
Charcoal



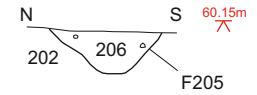
Sand



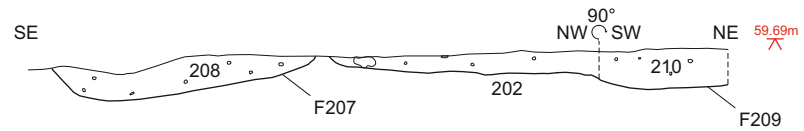
b) Section of pit F203



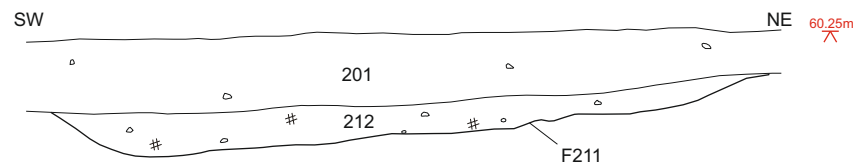
c) Section of posthole F205



d) Section of ditch F207 and natural feature F209



e) Section of extraction pit F211



PROJECT

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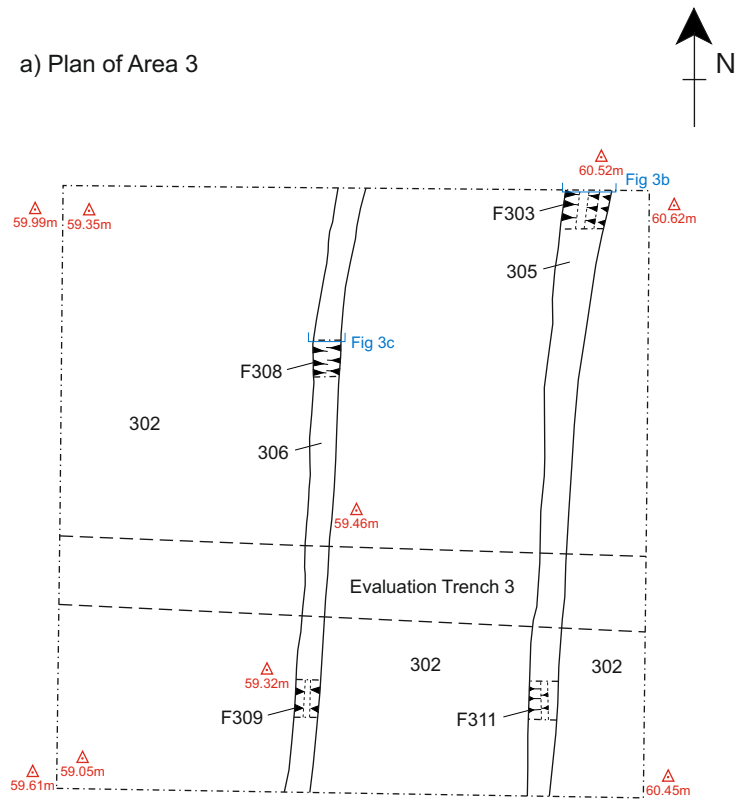
TITLE

Fig. 2: Area 2, plan and sections

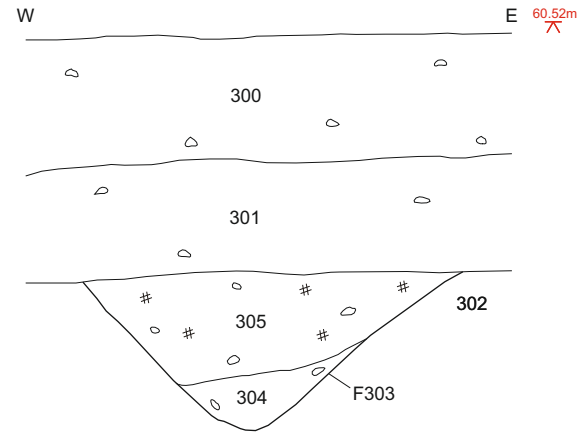


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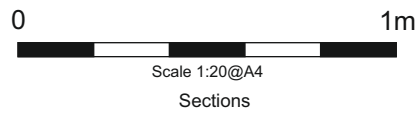
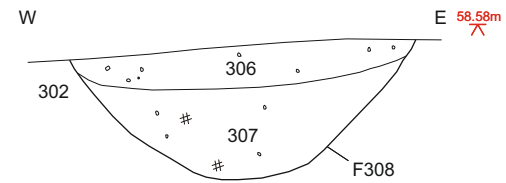
a) Plan of Area 3



b) Section of ditch F303



c) Section of ditch F308



PROJECT

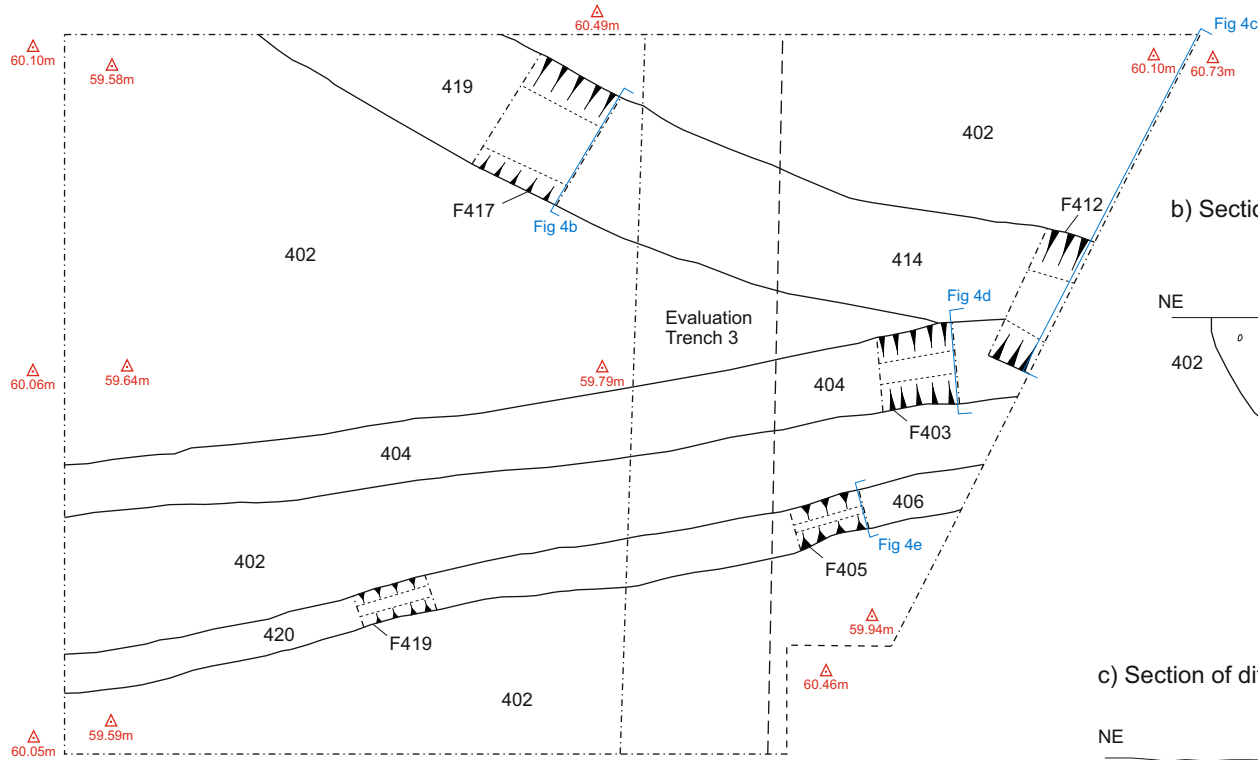
Land at Great Court Farm,  
Berry Pomeroy, Totnes, Devon

TITLE

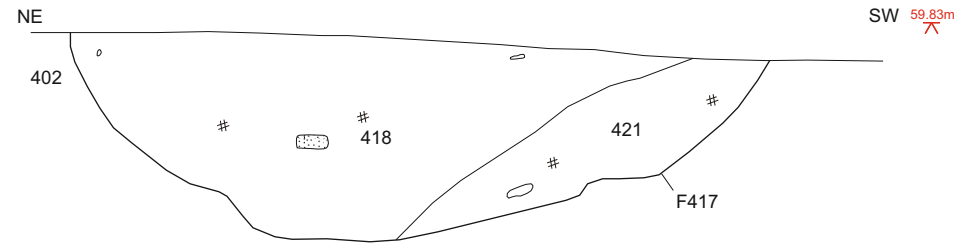
Fig. 3: Area 3, plan and sections



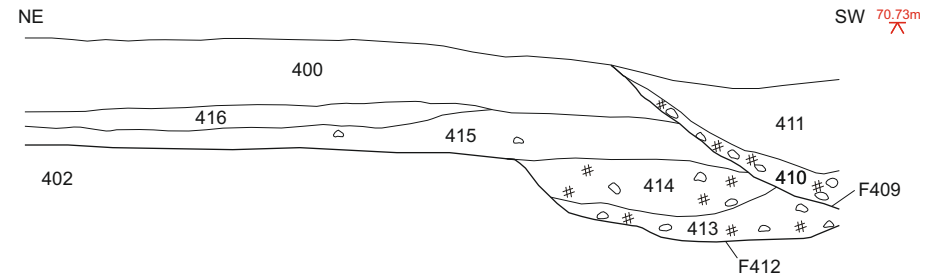
a) Plan of Area 4



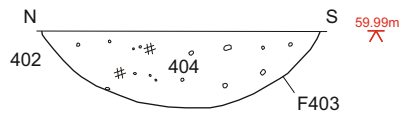
b) Section of ditch F417



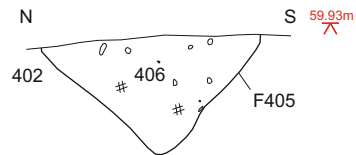
c) Section of ditches F409 and F412



d) Section of ditch F403



e) Section of ditch F405



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Land at Great Court Farm,  
Berry Pomeroy, Totnes, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 4: Area 4, plan and sections



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Plate 1: Area 1, looking east  
(1m and 1m scales)



Plate 2: Area 2, looking east  
(1m and 1m scales)



Plate 3: Area 2, pit F203 and posthole  
F205, looking east  
(0.5m and 0.3m scales)



Plate 4: Area 3, looking southwest

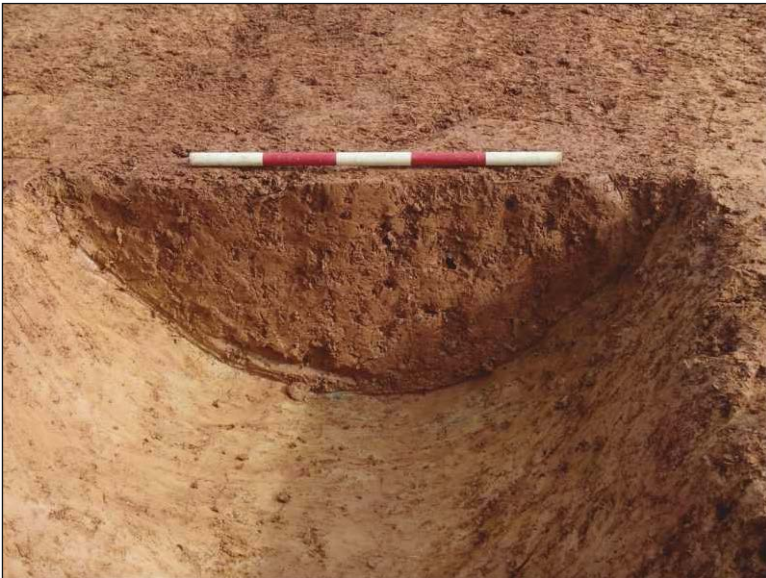


Plate 5: Area 3, ditch F308, looking north (0.5m scale)



Plate 6: Area 4, looking east





Plate 7: Area 4, ditch F405, looking northeast (0.4m scale)



Plate 8: Area 4, ditches F409 and F412, looking east (2m scale)



### Devon Office

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