

LAND AT FARLEIGH MEADOWS, WASHFIELD LANE, TIVERTON, DEVON

Centred on NGR SS 94586 13569

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

Planning Reference: Mid Devon District Council
12/00277/MOUT (condition 22)

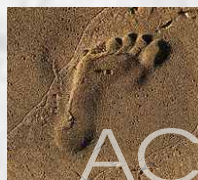
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On behalf of:
Taylor Wimpey Exeter

Report No: ACD897/2/0

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AC archaeology

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Summary

Evaluative trenching undertaken on land at Farleigh Meadows, Washfield Lane, Tiverton by AC archaeology in June 2014 comprised the excavation of ten trenches totalling 200m in length. Trenches were positioned to target anomalies identified by a previous geophysical survey.

The evaluation revealed a possible enclosure defined by a ditch, along with a projecting section of ditch and three pit features. Finds of Bronze Age pottery indicate a prehistoric date for the ditch features. More widespread was a small assemblage of worked flint, some of Neolithic date. A post-medieval field boundary on a different alignment to the historically mapped field pattern was also exposed.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation on land at Farleigh Meadows, Washfield Lane, Tiverton (SS 94586 13569), required under condition 22 of the grant of planning permission (Mid Devon District Council Ref: 12/00277/MOUT) for 'outline' consent for the erection of up to 300 dwellings, creation of new vehicular access and associated works. It forms the first stage of archaeological mitigation for the scheme.
- 1.2 The archaeological works were commissioned by Taylor Wimpey Exeter and carried out by AC archaeology between the 23rd and 26th June 2014.
- 1.3 The site covers an area of approximately 5ha and is located to the west of the River Exe, on a gently-sloping shoulder of farmland overlooking the river floodplain at c. 70m aOD. The underlying geology is Permian breccia of the Halberton Breccia Formation overlain by Quaternary colluvium.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A desk based assessment of the site was prepared by Wessex Archaeology in 2008. This concluded that there were no known heritage assets recorded on the site, and a total of 15 post-medieval assets were identified within the study area. However, this dearth of assets may in part be due to the lack of archaeological fieldwork in the area. Assets of prehistoric and Roman date have been recorded east of the river, to the northeast of the site.
- 2.2 A geophysical survey was undertaken in 2014 by Substrata. This identified a small number of linear anomalies, including a group of curvilinear anomalies that may represent part of an enclosure at the northern end of the site.

3. AIM

- 3.1 The aim of the trench evaluation was to test anomalies identified by the previous geophysical survey and to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of ten trenches totalling 200m in length, and each measuring 1.80m wide (Fig. 1). Trenches were positioned to target a series of linear geophysical anomalies. Trenches 4-6 were positioned to achieve a representative sample of the interior of the possible enclosure. Removal of soil overburden was undertaken using a machine fitted with a toothless bucket under the direction of the site archaeologist.
- 4.2 All features and deposits revealed were recorded using the standard AC archaeology *pro-forma* recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2* (revised August 2012). Detailed sections or plans were produced at a scale of 1:10, 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate. All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

5. RESULTS (Figs 2-5; Plates 1-10; Appendix 1)

5.1 Introduction

A consistent overburden was exposed across the site typically comprising up to 0.3m of mid grey-brown silty sand topsoil overlying an agricultural subsoil, approximately 0.15m thick, consisting of firm mid brown sandy-silt with occasional small sub-rounded pebbles and rare fragments of coke/coal. In Trench 10, the subsoil was observed to have been cut through by a field boundary of post-medieval date. Elsewhere, features were identified cutting the natural subsoil which consisted of mixed red and yellow gravels and sands. Trenches 5, 6 and 9 contained no features and are not discussed below. All of the trenches are described in Appendix 1.

5.2 Trench 1 (Detailed plan Fig. 2a and section Fig. 2b; Plates 2-3)

This trench was 20m long, aligned NW-SE, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.7m in a sondage at the northern end. Natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.45m below agricultural subsoil (101) and topsoil (100). A single linear feature (F103) crossed the trench at its approximate centre. It is described below.

Ditch F103 was aligned NE-SW and was exposed to a maximum length of 1.8m. It measured 1.46m wide and 0.56m deep with moderately steep sides and a concave base. It contained a sequence of three fills. Primary fill (104) was composed of mid reddish-brown silty loam. Secondary fills 105 and 106 comprised light reddish-brown silty loam and mid reddish-brown silty loam respectively. Fill 105 contained two sherds of Bronze Age pottery and fill 106 contained a piece of worked flint.

5.3 Trench 2 (Detailed plan Fig. 2c and section Fig. 2d; Plates 4-5)

This trench was 20m long and aligned N-S. Natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.40m below agricultural subsoil (201) and topsoil (200). A single linear feature (F203) crossed the trench at its approximate centre. It is described below.

Ditch F203 was aligned E-W and was exposed to a maximum length of 1.8m. It measured 1m wide and 0.45m deep with steep-sloping sides and a rounded base. It contained two fills. Primary fill (205) contained mid reddish-brown silty sand and the secondary fill (204) was composed of dark reddish-brown silty sand with abundant sub-angular stone (<0.2m). Both fills contained pottery of Middle Bronze Age date and fill 205 also contained a piece of worked flint.

5.4 Trench 3 (Detailed plan Fig. 3a and sections Figs 3b-d; Plate 6)

This trench was 20m long and aligned ENE-WSW. Natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.7m below agricultural subsoil (301) and topsoil (300). A single linear feature (F307) crossed the trench at its approximate centre and to the ENE were two pits (F303 and F305)

and these are described below. To the WSW of linear F307 was tree throw 310, which is not described below.

Ditch F307 was aligned NNE-SSW and was 1.31m wide and exposed to a maximum length of 1.8m, but not excavated. Part of the feature was exposed in the trench section and shown to have two fills (308 and 309). Upper fill 309 consisted of a mid reddish brown silty loam. Lower fill 308 was a mid brownish red sandy loam. There were no finds.

Pit F303 was oval in plan and measured 0.5m long by 0.43m wide and 0.17m deep with moderately steep sides and a rounded base. It contained a single fill (304) which consisted of mid reddish-brown silty sand. There were no finds.

Pit F305 measured 0.23m in diameter and 0.07m deep with moderately steep sides and a rounded base. It contained a single fill (306) which consisted of mid reddish-brown silty sand. There were no finds.

5.5 Trench 4 (Detailed plan Fig. 3e and section Fig. 3f; Plate 7)

This trench was 20m long and aligned NW-SE. Natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.74m below agricultural subsoil (401) and topsoil (400). A single pit feature (F403) was partially exposed in the trench.

Pit F403 was not fully revealed in the trench but appeared to be sub-rectangular in plan. It was 0.16m deep, and had steep sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill (404) of mid-pale brown sandy loam with no finds.

5.6 Trench 7 (Detailed plan Fig. 4a and section Fig. 4b; Plate 8)

This trench was 20m long and aligned N-S. Natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.74m below agricultural subsoil (701), topsoil (700) and patches of colluvium (702). A single linear feature (F704) was partially exposed in the trench.

Ditch F704 was aligned E-W and was exposed to a maximum length of 1.8m. It measured 1.4m wide and 0.6m deep with a V-shaped profile. It contained four fills (705-8). Primary fill (705) was a pale brown silty sand derived from weathering of the natural subsoil (703). Secondary fill (706) was composed of mid yellowish-brown sandy loam. Tertiary fill (707) was a mid brown loam and contained some charcoal. Upper fill (708) also consisted of mid brown loam but had rare charcoal pieces. There were no finds.

5.7 Trench 8 (Detailed plan Fig. 4c and section 4d; Plate 9)

This trench was 20m long and aligned NW-SE. Natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.69m below agricultural subsoil (801), topsoil (800) and patches of colluvium (802). A single linear feature (F803) was revealed in the trench.

Ditch F803 matched the position of the anomaly identified in the geophysics survey, was aligned NE-SW, measured 1m wide, and exposed to a maximum length of 1.8m, but not excavated. Part of the feature was exposed in the trench section and an upper fill (804) consisting of a reddish-brown sandy silt with charcoal flecking exposed. There were no finds.

5.8 Trench 10 (Detailed plan Fig. 5a and section Fig. 5b; Plate 10)

This trench was 20m long and aligned N-S. Natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.69m below agricultural subsoil (1001), topsoil (1000) and patches of colluvium (1002). The trench contained a slighted hedgebank (1004) and related boundary ditch (F1005), east-west aligned and of post-medieval date. This was cut by a large modern drainage ditch (F1009).

6. FINDS *by Charlotte Coles and Henrietta Quinnell*

6.1 Introduction

All finds recovered on site during the evaluation were retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. A small collection of Bronze Age pottery and worked flint was recovered.

6.2 Prehistoric Pottery

A total of 189 prehistoric pottery sherds was recovered from three contexts. 187 of the pieces came from ditch F203. These sherds are from three large cooking vessels in an unknown grogged fabric. A total of 167 sherds come from one pot, and this has a thicker body and smoother finish than the other vessels. The lower fill (205) of the ditch only contains the fragments of the third vessel. The pottery is mid Bronze Age in date and one of the sherds of the more complete vessel has a pre-firing perforation below the rim; another example of this type of perforation is seen in one of the vessels from East Holne, Newton St Cyres (Quinnell 2013). The reason for the perforation is unknown.

Context	Context Description	Worked Flint		Prehistoric Pottery	
		No	Wgt	No	Wgt
100	Ploughsoil	1	1		
105	Fill of ditch F103			2	1
106	Fill of ditch F103	1	4		
204	Upper fill of ditch F203			181	1201
205	Lower fill of ditch F203	1	6	6	25
801	Subsoil	1	1		
805	Colluvium Layer	1	18		
1000	Topsoil	1	3		
1001	Subsoil	1	35		
Total		7	68	189	1227

Table 1: The finds. Weights are in grams

6.3 Worked flint

A total of seven pieces of worked flint was recovered from seven contexts, of which four pieces came from the overlying soil sequence. These include one blade from a colluvium in Trench 8 (805) and a core from the subsoil of Trench 10; these are both likely to be Neolithic in date.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The evaluation has revealed a probable enclosure ditch (F203, F307, F704 and F803). The ditch has undoubtedly been truncated by later agricultural activity but measured up to 1.4m wide and 0.6m deep. It had a V-shaped profile and contained up to four fills. The fills of F203 produced an assemblage of pottery, largely from a single vessel, which has been identified as dating to the middle of the Bronze Age. The line of the ditch matched the anomalies identified on the geophysical survey, as did a further from this ditch, which projected at right angles from the probable enclosure; this was located in Trench 1. This ditch (F103) was of similar dimensions, but with a rounded base, but also contained a small amount of mid Bronze Age pottery.

7.2 The ditched enclosure as identified in the geophysics is of irregular shape in plan and is likely to continue beyond the limits of the site to the northwest into land already developed for housing. The enclosure would have a minimum internal dimension of approximately 130m and would cover an area of at least 1.4ha. However, it is impossible to be sure that part of an

enclosure has been identified; the irregular shape, along with the projection to the northeast, may indicate instead that what is revealed is a collection of well-preserved field boundary ditches. Whichever is the case, this location, on a shoulder of a hill overlooking the middle reaches of the River Exe, was the focus for Bronze Age settlement.

- 7.3** The pottery and charcoal in the ditch fills indicate settlement activity in the vicinity of the site. The pits (F303, F305 and F403) were generally clean with only rare charcoal flecks and no finds so are undated, but indicate that less-prominent settlement features may survive on the site.
- 7.4** Evidence for settlement during the Bronze Age in lowland Devon has in recent years come to light in the areas to the southeast of Exeter. At Old Rydon Lane, on the east side of Exeter, part of a Bronze Age trapezoidal shaped enclosure was excavated and found to contain a double-ring post-built roundhouse (Gilbert 2012; see also Pink and Farnell 2014). The eastern ditch of the enclosure was 49.5m long with maximum dimensions of 2m wide and 0.50m deep. The enclosure was located within a field system that also produced finds of Bronze Age date, but the excavator also speculates that there may have been a much larger outer enclosure which was only partially revealed in the area of geophysics and excavation. The ditch for this putative enclosure was more substantial than those for the field system with a maximum width of 1.05m and depth of 0.64m. The two sides of this enclosure, that could be identified, were each 250m long. Gilbert (2012) concluded that these were more akin to territorial boundaries, rather than boundaries to cultivation plots.
- 7.5** There is a small corpus of lowland Bronze Age settlement sites elsewhere in Devon (reviewed in Salvatore and Quinnell 2011). For example, the area of Langage Farm appears to have been a dispersed settlement of roundhouses set within sub-rectangular ditched fields. Such a pattern of houses and fields is typical of the areas of the Bronze Age field systems defined by the reaves in the upland areas on the south and east of Dartmoor (Newman 2011). It is interesting to note this pattern continuing to lower altitudes off of Dartmoor as the absence of lowland Bronze Age agricultural settlement has previously been regarded as puzzling (e.g. Fleming 2008, 136).
- 7.6** The post-medieval hedgebank (F1005 and 1004) revealed in Trench 10 is east-west aligned and does not appear in historic mapping. It is also on a different orientation to the general pattern of fields in the area and may relate to an earlier pattern of enclosure.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1** The majority of the targeted anomalies highlighted by the geophysical survey, located within the northwest corner of the site, have been shown to represent a collection of ditches of Bronze Age date and finds from their fills indicate that this location was the focus of settlement at that time. Several small undated pits were exposed to either side of the enclosure ditch.
- 8.2** Evidence of Bronze Age settlement in lowland Devon is rare and this is potentially an important find.
- 8.3** Elsewhere within the site there is very low archaeological interest; an earlier post-medieval pattern of field enclosure appears to pre-date the pattern of fields mapped historically.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 9.1** The finds, paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, 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. A temporary deposition number of RAMM14/37 has been obtained from the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter.

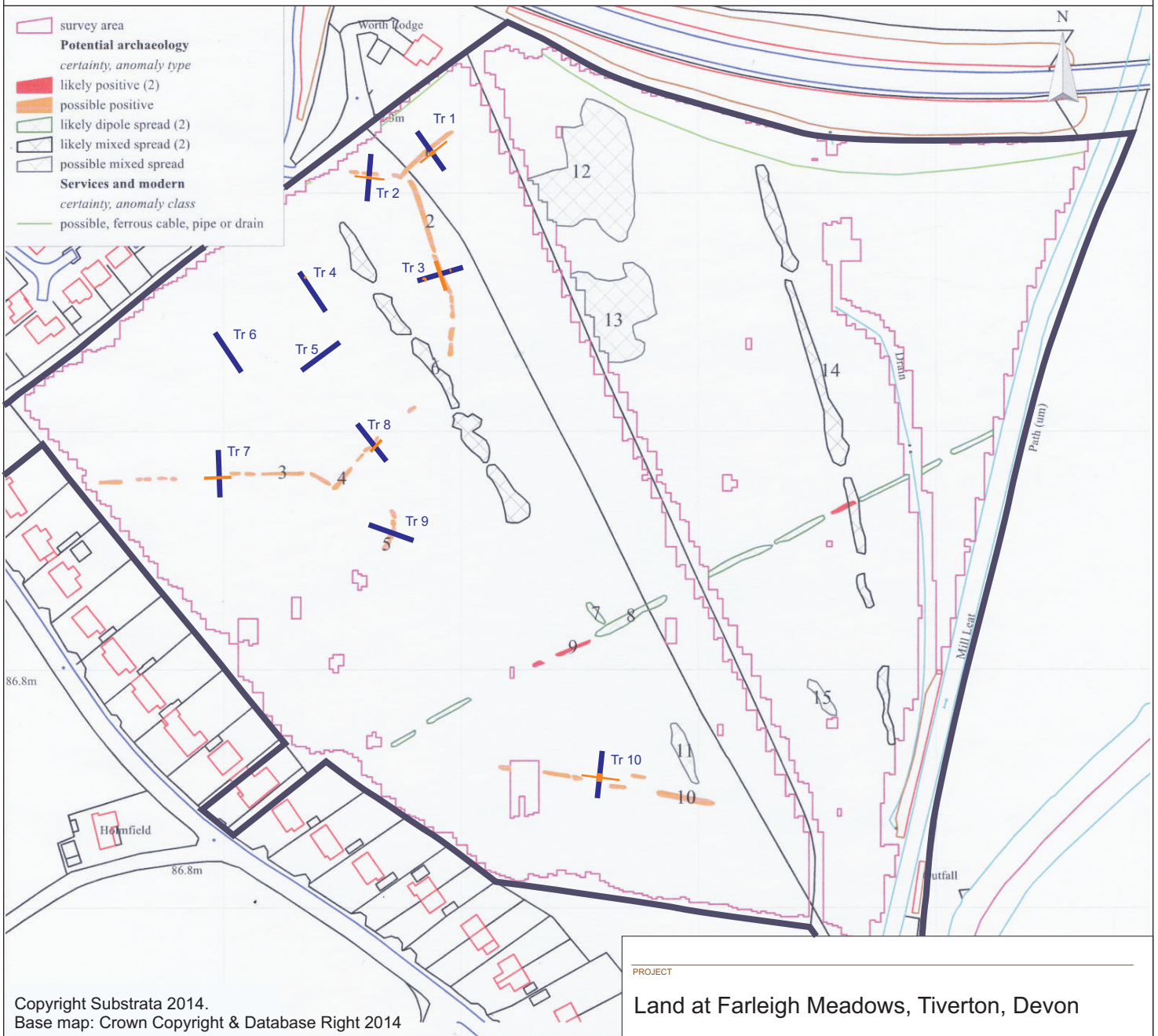
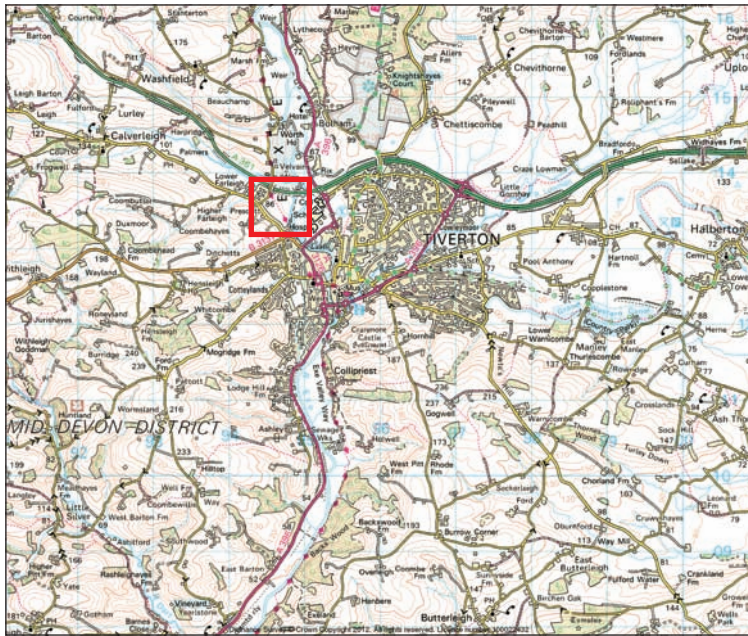
- 9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 182902, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

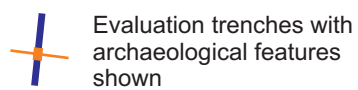
- 10.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey Exeter and managed by Simon Hughes for AC archaeology. The site work was undertaken by Alex Farnell with Elisabeth Patkai and Simon Hughes. The illustrations were prepared by Elisabeth Patkai.

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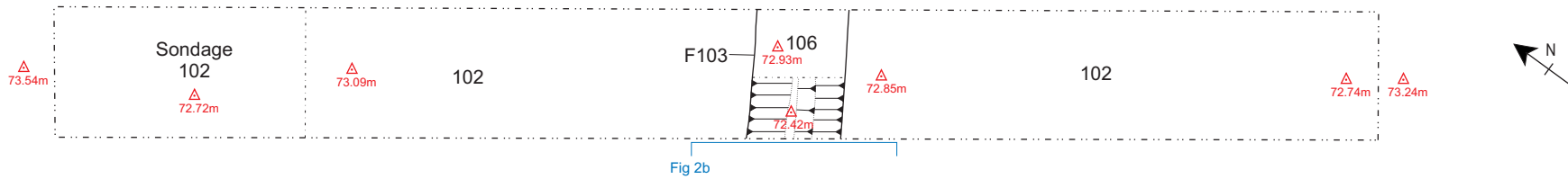
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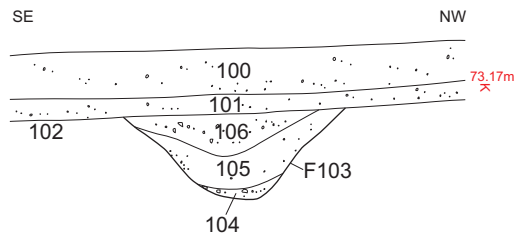
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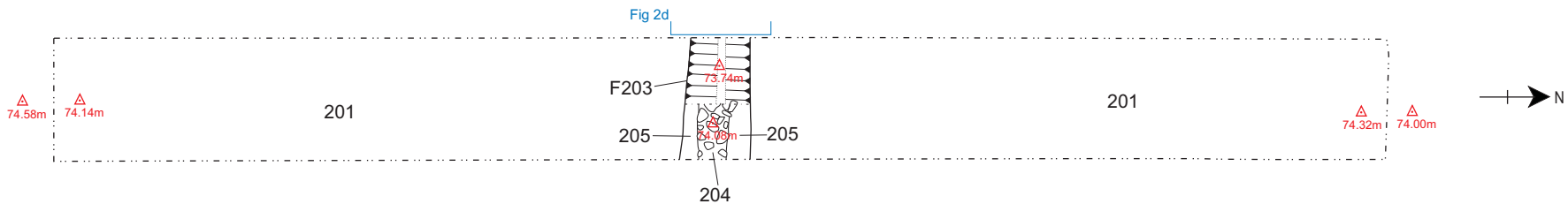
a) Trench 1, plan



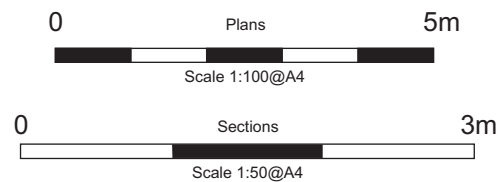
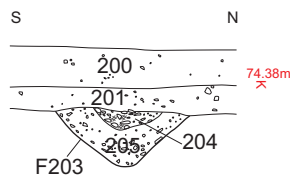
b) Section of F103



c) Trench 2, plan



d) Section of F203

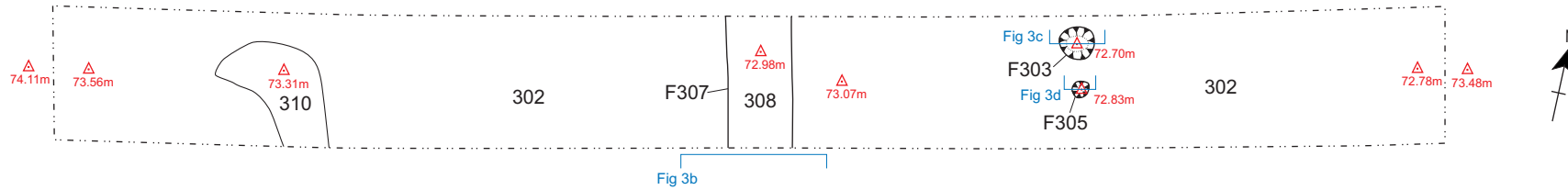


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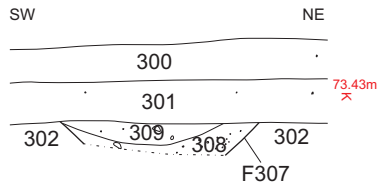
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Fig. 2: Trenches 1 and 2,
plans and sections



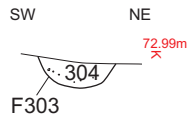
a) Trench 3, plan



b) Section of F307



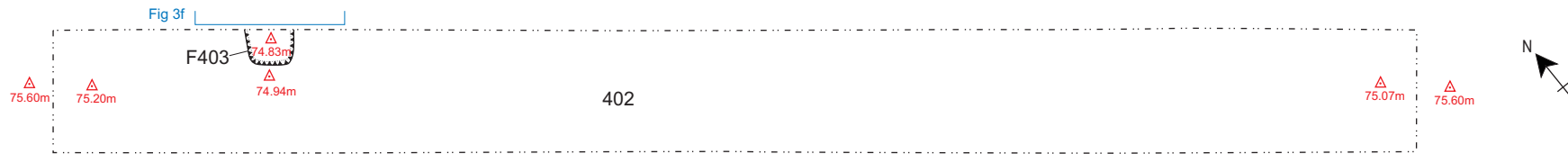
c) Section of F303



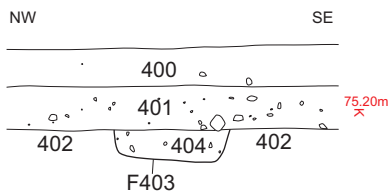
d) Section of F305



e) Trench 4, plan



f) Section of F403

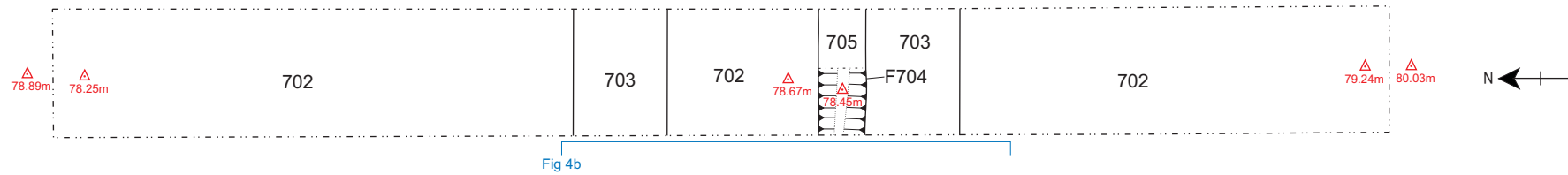


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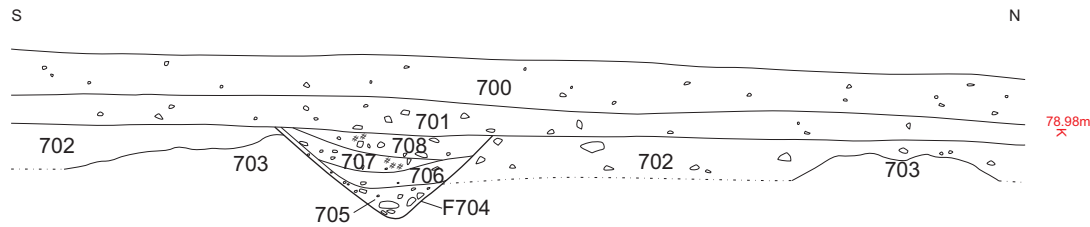
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Fig. 3: Trenches 3 and 4,
plans and sections



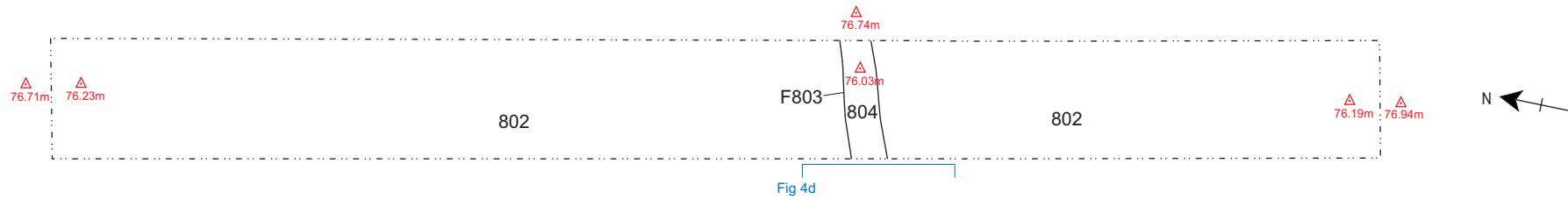
a) Trench 7, plan



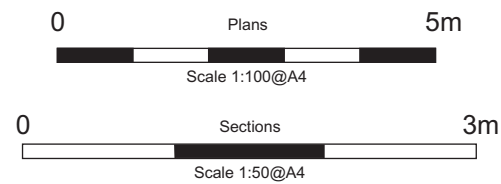
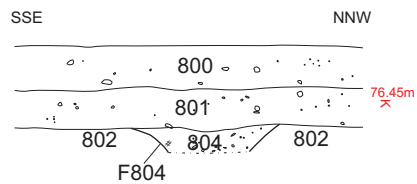
b) Section of F704



c) Trench 8, plan



d) Section of F804

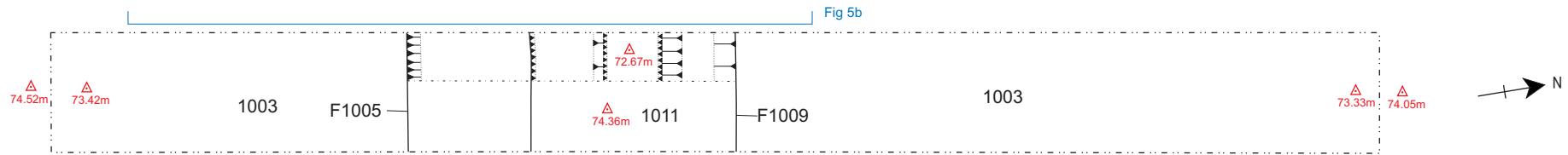


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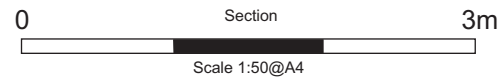
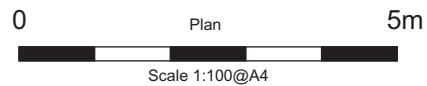
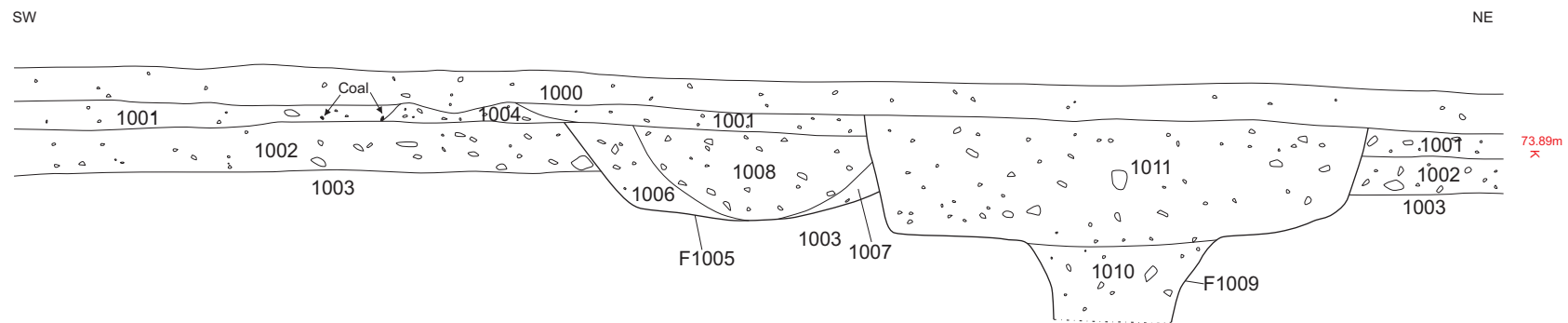
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Fig. 4: Trenches 7 and 8,
plans and sections



a) Trench 10, plan



b) Section of F1005 and F1009



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TITLE
Fig. 5: Trench 10, plan
and section





Plate 1: General view of site. Looking east



Plate 2: Trench 1, northeast-facing section of ditch F109 (scale 1m)



Plate 3: Trench 1, ditch F109, view from the northwest (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Trench 2, with ditch F203, view from the northwest (scale 1m)



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



Plate 6: Trench 3, pits F303 and F304, view from the eastnortheast (scale 1m)



Plate 7: Trench 4, southwest-facing section of pit F403 (scale 1m)



Plate 8: Trench 7, west-facing section of ditch F704 (scale 1m)



Plate 9: Trench 8, linear feature 803, view from the southeast (scale 1m)



Plate 10: Trench 10, east-facing section of ditch F1009 (scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Tabulated trench descriptions

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1			Length 20m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
100	Mid grey-brown silty sand	0-0.30m	Topsoil		
101	Mid brown sandy silt with occasional small sub-rounded pebbles	0.30-0.45m	Subsoil		
102	Mixed red and yellow gravels and sands	0.45m+	Natural subsoil		
103	Cut of linear	0.45-1.01m	Ditch		
104	Mid reddish-brown silty-loam	0.93-1.01m	Primary fill of ditch F103		
105	Light reddish-brown silty loam	0.70-0.93m	Secondary fill of ditch F103		
106	Mid reddish-brown silty-loam	0.45-0.73m	Upper fill of ditch F103		

Trench 2			Length 20m	Width 1.8m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
200	Mid grey-brown silty sand	0-20m	Topsoil		
201	Mid brown sandy silt with occasional small sub-rounded pebbles	0.20-0.40m	Subsoil		
202	Mixed red and yellow gravels and sands	0.40m+	Natural subsoil		
203	Cut of linear	0.40-0.85m	Enclosure ditch		
204	Dark reddish-brown silty sand	0.40-0.85m	Upper fill of ditch F203		
205	Mid reddish-brown silty sand	0.40-0.85m	Primary fill of ditch F203		

Trench 3			Length 20m	Width 1.8m	Alignment ENE-WSW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
300	Mid grey-brown silty sand	0-0.26m	Topsoil		
301	Mid brown sandy silt with occasional small sub-rounded pebbles	0.26-0.55m	Subsoil		
302	Mixed red and yellow gravels and sands	0.55m+	Natural subsoil		
303	Cut of pit	0.55-0.98m	Pit		
304	Mid reddish-brown silty sand	0.55-0.98m	Fill of pit F303		
305	Cut of pit	0.55-0.62m	Pit		
306	Mid reddish-brown silty sand	0.55-0.62m	Fill of pit F305		
307	Linear	0.55m-	Enclosure ditch		

Trench 4			Length 20m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
400	Mid grey-brown silty sand	0-0.3m	Topsoil		
401	Mid brown sandy silt with occasional small sub-rounded pebbles	0.3-0.45m	Subsoil		
402	Mixed red and yellow gravels and sands	0.45m+	Natural subsoil		
403	Cut of pit	0.45-0.61m	Pit		
404	Mid-pale brown sandy loam	0.45-0.61m	Fill of pit F403		

Trench 5			Length 20m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
500	Mid grey-brown silty sand	0-0.30m	Topsoil		
501	Mid brown sandy silt with occasional small sub-rounded pebbles	0.30-0.45m	Subsoil		
502	Mid reddish-brown sandy silt	0.45m+	Colluvium		
503	Mixed red and yellow gravels and sands	0.45m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 6			Length 20m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
600	Mid grey-brown silty sand	0-0.3m	Topsoil		
601	Mid brown sandy silt with occasional small sub-rounded pebbles	0.3-0.5m	Subsoil		
602	Mid reddish-brown sandy silt	0.5-0.8m	Colluvium		
603	Mixed red and yellow gravels and sands	0.8m+	Natural subsoil		

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 7			Length 20m	Width 1.8m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
700	Mid grey-brown silty sand	0-0.3m	Topsoil		
701	Mid brown sandy silt with occasional small sub-rounded pebbles	0.3-0.45m	Subsoil		
702	Mid reddish-brown sandy silt	0.45m+	Colluvium		
703	Mixed red and yellow gravels and sands	0.55m+	Natural subsoil		
704	Cut of linear	0.45-1.05m	Boundary ditch		
705	Pale brown silty sand	0.85-1.05m	Primary fill of ditch F704		
706	Mid yellowish-brown sandy loam	0.71-0.85m	Secondary fill of ditch F704		
707	Mid brown loam	0.56-0.71m	Tertiary fill of ditch F704		
708	Mid brown silty loam	0.45-0.61m	Upper fill of ditch F704		

Trench 8			Length 20m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
800	Mid grey-brown silty sand	0-0.3m	Topsoil		
801	Mid brown sandy silt with occasional small sub-rounded pebbles	0.3-0.58m	Subsoil		
802	Mixed red and yellow gravels and sands	0.58m+	Natural subsoil		
803	Linear	0.58m-	Enclosure ditch		
804	Fill of unexcavated linear 803	0.58m-	Fill of ditch		
805	Mid reddish-brown sandy silt	0.58m+	Colluvium		

Trench 9			Length 20m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
900	Mid grey-brown silty sand	0-0.31m	Topsoil		
901	Mid brown sandy silt with occasional small sub-rounded pebbles	0.31-0.45m	Subsoil		
902	Mid reddish-brown sandy silt	0.45-0.65m	Colluvium		
903	Mixed red and yellow gravels and sands	0.60m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 10			Length 20m	Width 1.8m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
1000	Mid grey-brown silty sand	0-0.3m	Topsoil		
1001	Mid brown sandy silt with occasional small sub-rounded pebbles	0.3-0.45m	Subsoil		
1002	Mid reddish-brown sandy silt	0.45-0.8m	Colluvium		
1003	Mixed red and yellow gravels and sands	0.65m+	Natural subsoil		
1004	Upcast redeposited natural	0.30-0.45m	Slighted hedgebank		
1005	Cut of linear	0.45-0.73m	Hedgebank ditch		
1006	Mid brown silty loam	0.63-0.73m	Primary fill of ditch F1005		
1007	Red sandy silt	0.53-0.73m	Secondary fill of ditch F1005		
1008	Mid reddish-brown sandy silt	0.45-0.67m	Upper fill of ditch F1005		
1009	Cut of linear	0.3-1.7m+	Modern drainage ditch		
1010	Dark reddish brown sandy clay	0.3-0.86m	Upper fill of ditch F1009		
1011	Mottled yellowish and red-brown silty sand	0.86-1.7m+	Fill of ditch F1009		

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