LAND AT MORELEIGH CROSS, STANBOROUGH FARM, HALWELL & MORELEIGH, DEVON

Centred on NGR SX 7683 5275

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Planning ref: South Hams District Council 22/1967/13/F (condition 34)

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with a contribution by
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On behalf of
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AC archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation, comprising the excavation of six trenches totalling 75m was undertaken by AC archaeology in July 2014 on land at Moreleigh Cross, Stanborough Farm, Halwell & Moreleigh, Devon,. Trenches targeted anomalies identified by a previous geophysical survey, in particular part a possible square enclosure in the northwest corner of the site.

Two parallel linear features of later post medieval date were exposed in trench 1. They correspond to linear geophysical anomalies previously interpreted as a possible square enclosure. They most likely represent post-medieval drainage channels. No other features were present, and non-archaeological origins for the other anomalies are put forward.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1; Plate 1)

1.1 This document sets out the results of a targeted archaeological trench evaluation on land at Moreleigh Cross, Stanborough Farm, Halwell & Moreleigh, Devon (SX 7683 5275). The work was required as a condition (34) of the grant of planning permission for a residential development of 12 homes by South Hams District Council (planning reference 22/1967/13/F), as advised by the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (DCHET).

1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by Mr John Balsdon and carried out by AC archaeology on 29 and 30 July 2014.

1.3 The site covers approximately 2.5 hectares and is located within part of a larger pasture field situated on the southeast side of Moreleigh Cross. It lies on level ground at around 170m aOD, with the underlying geology comprising siltstone and sandstone of the Meadfoot Group. The site location is shown on Fig 1, and the general topography in Plate 1.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 2)

2.1 Prehistoric worked flint was found to the immediate east of the proposed development during monitoring of a new water pipeline (Devon County Historic Environment Record (DCHER) entry MDV44476). In addition, a probable prehistoric rectilinear enclosure is recorded as a cropmark to the north of the site (MDV43017), while to the southeast of the site undated pits and linear features have been previously recorded (MDV80548). A ring ditch, probably representing the ploughed out remains of a Bronze Age barrow, is recorded as a soilmark approximately 500m to the south of the site (MDV7639).

2.2 The 1840 Halwell tithe map and the first and second edition 25-inch Ordnance Survey maps depict five fields between Stanborough House and Moreleigh Cross. The site is located within the northwest corner of the northwest field. The fields are also shown on the 1946 RAF photographic coverage, and were combined into the present single large field during the later 20th century.

2.3 A geophysical survey of the site (Dean in prep.) has identified a series of possible archaeological anomalies including linear features and pit-like anomalies (Fig. 2). In particular, part of a possible square enclosure with associated internal features was located immediately southeast of Moreleigh Cross.

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, with particular reference to the results of the previous geophysical survey.

4. METHODOLOGY (Fig. 2)

4.1 The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of six trenches measuring a total of 75m in length. Trenches were positioned to target geophysical anomalies and to achieve representative coverage of the site. The work was carried out in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2014).

4.2 Soil overburden was removed using a wheeled excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, under the direction of the site archaeologist. Archaeological deposits exposed were cleaned and investigated by hand. Archaeological features were sampled in accordance with the project design, then 100% excavated within the trenches for finds retrieval.

4.2 All features and deposits 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.

5. RESULTS (Fig. 3; Plates 2-4; Appendix 1)

5.1 The typical soil profile encountered comprised natural subsoil encountered at a depth of approximately 0.4m, overlain by up to 0.25m of mid reddish-brown, silty-loam subsoil, sealed by mid grey-brown sandy-silt topsoil up to 0.3m thick. This profile varied across the site with a clear subsoil layer being absent from trenches 2 and 5. Trenches 2-6 were archaeologically sterile. Disturbance of the natural subsoil in trenches 4-6 was investigated and found to be the result of bioturbation. Modern service trenches and land drains were identified in trenches 1, 3 and 5 but were not excavated. Features of possible archaeological interest were limited to trench 1 and are described below. Contexts from all trenches are tabulated in Appendix 1.

5.2 **Trench 1** (Fig. 3; Plates 2-4)
This trench was L shaped, aligned northeast-southwest / northwest-southeast, measured 10m long, 1.5m wide and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.6m. Natural subsoil was encountered at a maximum depth of 0.5m below up to 0.2m of subsoil (101) and 0.3m of topsoil (100). Two linear features (F108 and F109) cut the natural subsoil (Plate 2) and were sealed by subsoil layer 101. They are described below. A modern northeast-southwest aligned service trench or land drain crossed the trench, cutting subsoil 101.

Ditch F108 (Plate 3) was aligned northwest-southeast and was exposed to a maximum length of 1.5m. It measured 1.5m wide and 0.36m deep with a asymmetric profile, steep on the west side, shallow and slightly convex on the east side with a gradual break of slope to a concave base. It contained a single fill (107) comprising pale brown, firm silty-clay with moderate small-medium sub-angular mudstone fragments. A single iron nail was recovered from the fill.

Gully F109 was aligned northwest-southeast and was exposed to a maximum length of 2.65m with a rounded terminus to the south; it continued beyond the limit of excavation to the north. It measured 0.9m wide and 0.12m deep with a wide shallow, concave, profile. Two segments were excavated (F103 and F105). It contained a single fill (104/106) composed of mid reddish-

brown moderately compact, silty-clay with rare small sub-angular mudstone fragments. An iron object and several fragments of clinker were recovered from fill 104.

6. FINDS, By Charlotte Coles

6.1 All finds recovered on site during the evaluation were retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. They were then quantified according to material type within each context and the assemblage was scanned to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. This is discussed briefly below. The finds include several pieces of Iron, clinker and a single sherd of post-medieval pottery (Table 1).

Context	Description	Iron		Post-Medieval Pottery		Clinker	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
104	Fill of gully 103	1	136			6	6
107	Fill of ditch 108	1	8				
300	Topsoil			1	9		
Total		2	144	1	9	6	6

Table1: Finds quantification

6.2 Iron

A total of two pieces of iron was recovered from two contexts. These are a flat corroded piece of iron, possibly part of a tool, from context 104, and a bent nail from context 107. These are both likely to be post-medieval.

6.3 Post-Medieval Pottery

A single piece of post-medieval pottery from context 300 was recovered. This is a piece of blue-and-white transfer-printed industrial china, dated to the 19th or 20th century.

6.4 Clinker

A total of six small fragments of clinker was recovered from context 104. They are likely to be of 19th-century date.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 Two parallel linear features (ditch F108 and gully F109) were exposed in Trench 1 in the northwest corner of the site, corresponding to the geophysical survey anomalies. Gully 109 was shallow and its south end terminated. Finds of later post-medieval date were recovered from the fills of both features. They are most likely associated with a short-lived phase of activity, perhaps relating to a temporary agricultural activity in the corner of the field or drainage from the adjacent road.

7.2 Ditch F108 and gully F109 correspond well with linear anomalies identified by geophysical survey. These had been interpreted as a part of a possible sub-rectangular enclosure/s. This interpretation is not, however, supported by the results of the evaluation. One of the anomalies forming the southern side of the enclosure is field drain, whilst the other is geological in origin.

7.3 Other geophysical anomalies targeted by the evaluation proved to be either a service trench (trench 5), geological in origin (trench 3) or result of bioturbation (possible pit-type anomalies in trenches 2, 4 and 6.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The geophysical survey identified a possible sub-rectangular anomaly group and other possible linear anomalies.

8.2 The results of the trench evaluation indicate that the sub-rectangular anomaly group is actually formed from a pair of parallel gullies or ditches of later post-medieval date. These are not considered to be significant archaeological features. Elsewhere, no archaeological features were exposed, and non-archaeological interpretations for the geophysical anomalies are put forward.

8.3 In summary, the evaluation has demonstrated that the site contains no significant archaeological features, and that the development will have no major impact on buried remains.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

9.1 In line with section 7.4 of the project design no archive will be prepared or deposited. The results of the fieldwork will be held by the HER in the form of the final report and the creation of an OASIS entry (see below).

9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 186788 which includes a digital copy of this report.

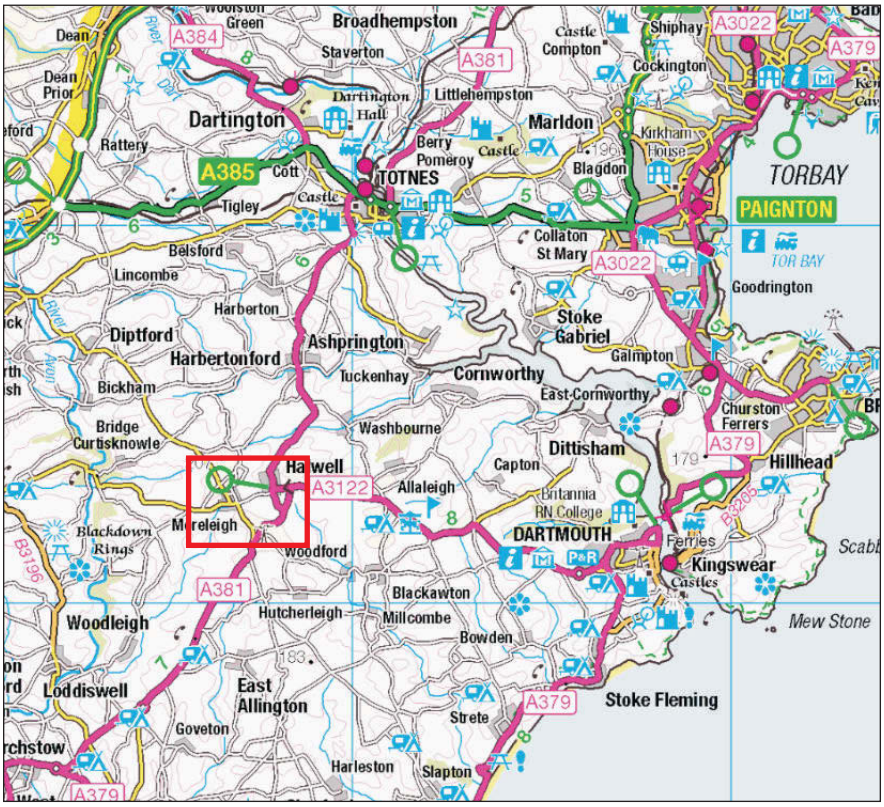
10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

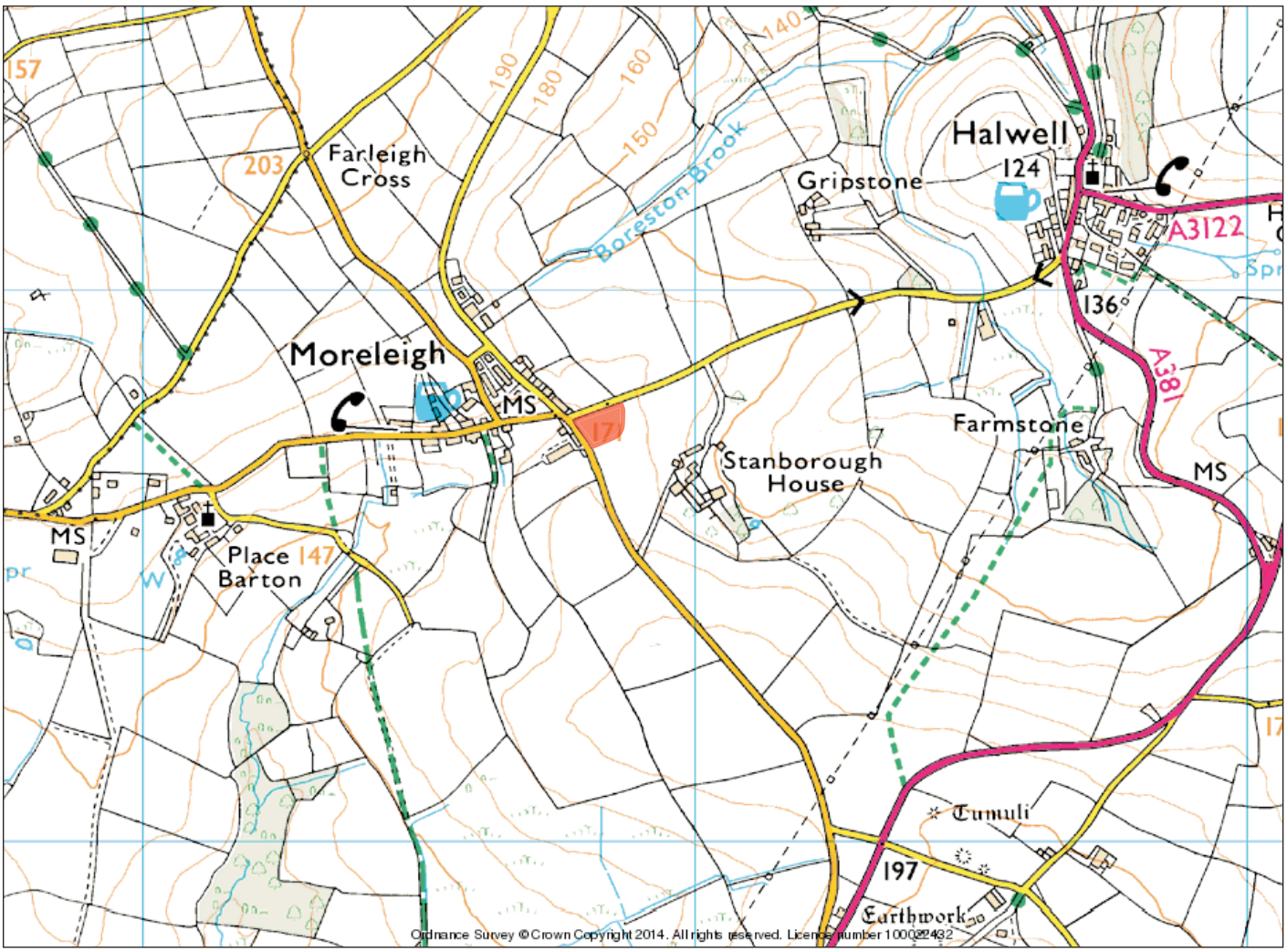
10.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Mr John Balsdon and administered for AC archaeology by John Valentin. The site work was undertaken by Alex Farnell with the assistance of Stella De-Villiers and Chris Caine. The finds were assessed by Charlotte Coles, and the report illustrations were prepared by Elisabeth Patkai.

11. REFERENCES

Dean, R., in prep., *An archaeological gradiometer survey, Land at Moreleigh Cross, Stanborough Farm, Devon,* Substrata report.

Valentin J. 2014, *Land at Moreleigh Cross, Stanborough Farm, Moreleigh, Devon,* (Centred on NGR SX 7683 5275), *Project Design for programme of archaeological works, Planning ref. South Hams District Council 22/1967/13/F (Condition 34)*, AC archaeology document no. **ACD935/1/0**.





0 1km

Scale 1:15,000@A4

Location of site

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Fig. 1: Site location

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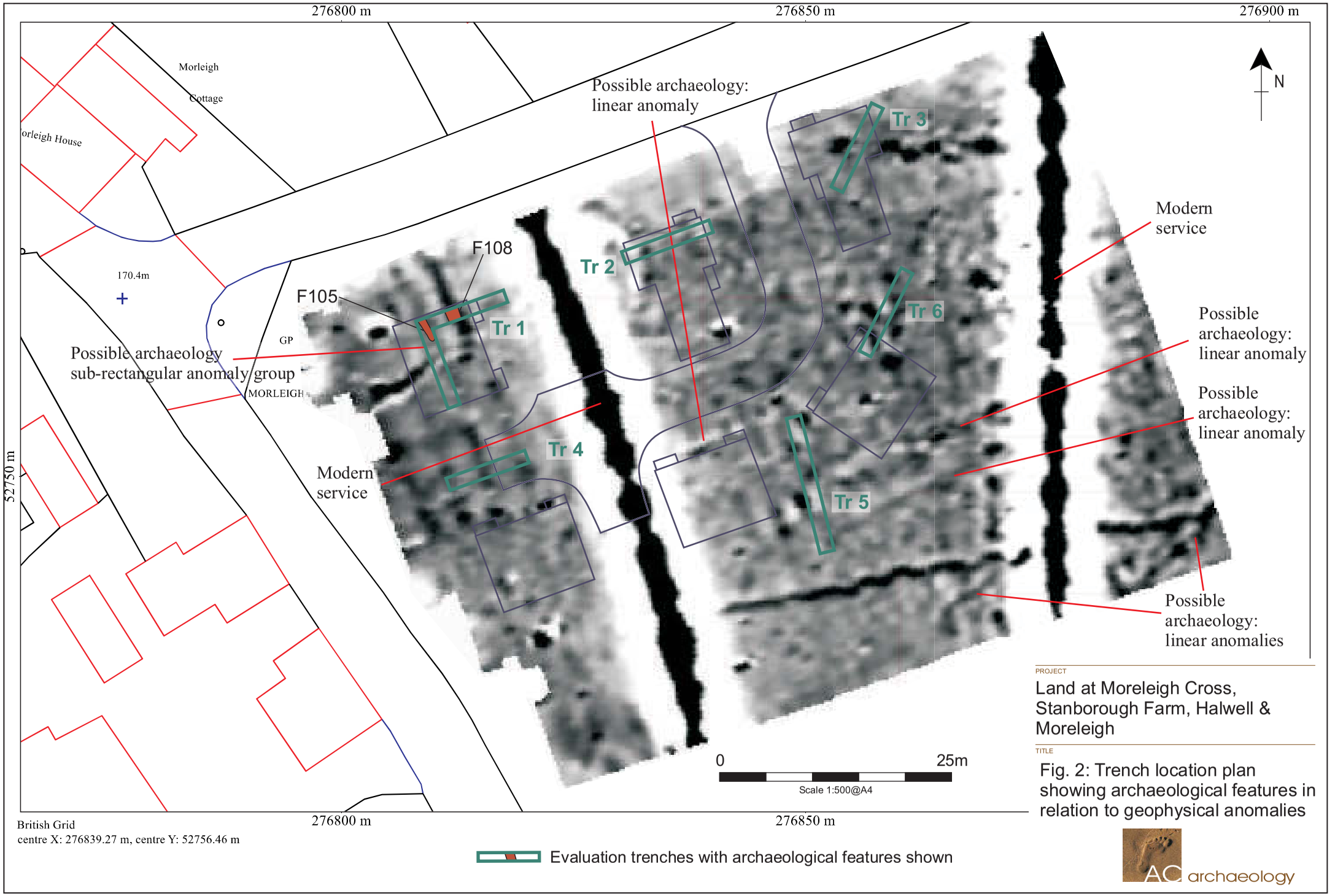

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Fig. 2: Trench location plan showing archaeological features in relation to geophysical anomalies

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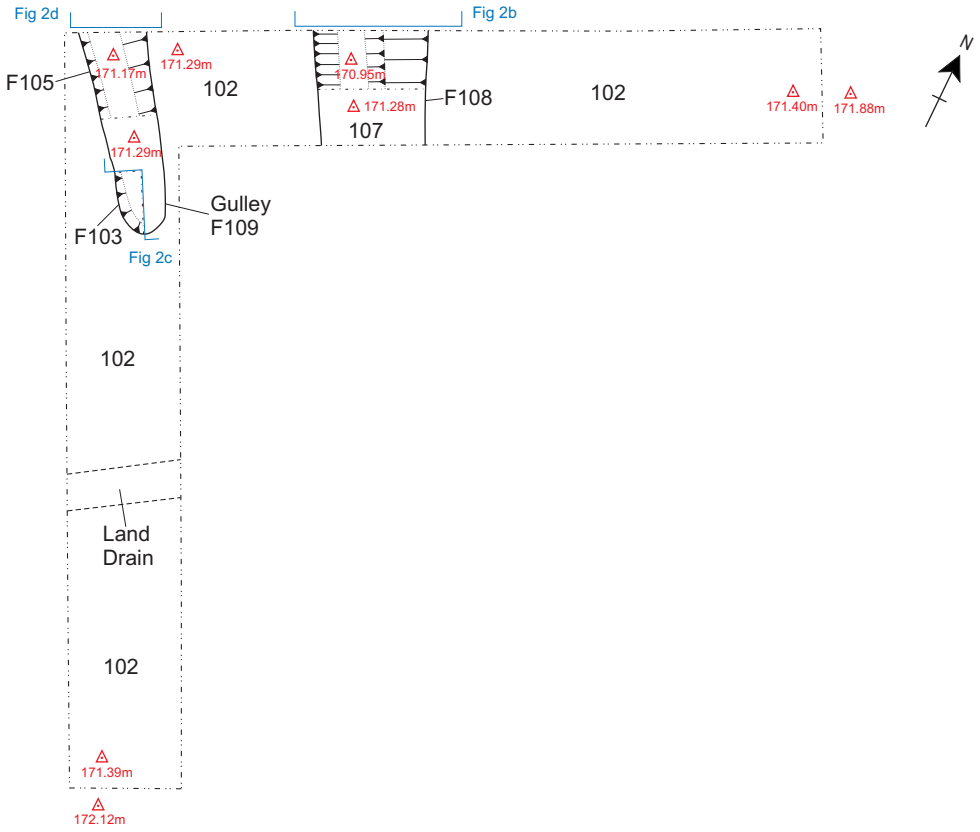
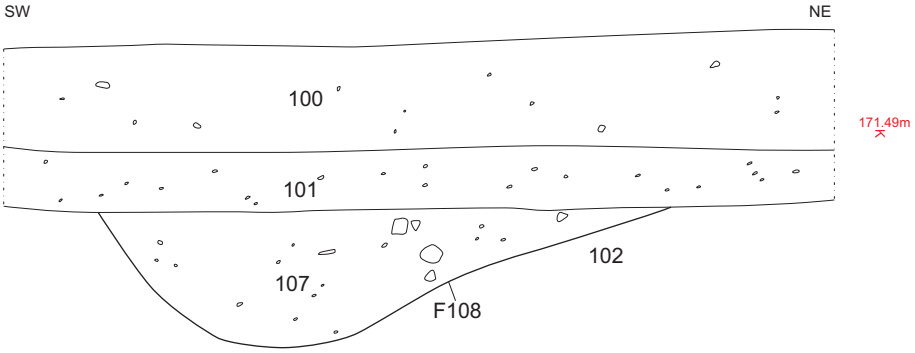
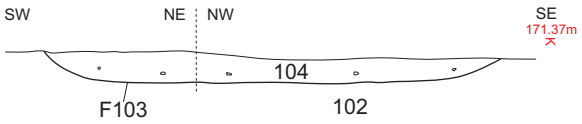
a) Trench 1, plan



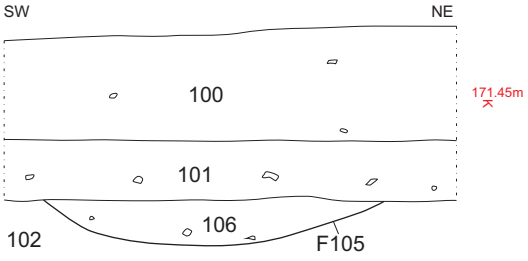
b) Section of F108

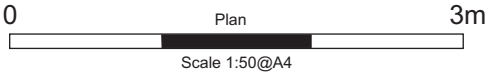


c) Section of F103



d) Section of F105





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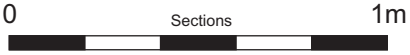

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Fig. 3: Trenches 1 and 4, plans and sections

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Plate 1: General site view, looking west

Plate 2: Trench 1, general shot showing ditch F108 and gully F109, looking northwest (scale 1m)

Plate 3: Ditch F108, south-facing section, looking north (scale 1m)

Plate 4: Gully F109, looking northwest (scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Tabulated context descriptions

Trench 1			**Length** 20m	**Width** 1.5m	**Alignment** NE-SW/NW-SE
Context	**Description**	**Depth**	**Interpretation**		
100	Mid grey-brown friable sandy silt with common small mudstone fragments	0-0.30m	Topsoil		
101	Mid reddish-brown friable silty loam, with rare .small mudstone fragments	0.3-0.5m	Subsoil		
102	Grey-brown silty clay with degraded mudstone (shillet)	0.5m+	Natural		
103	NW-SE aligned shallow linear gully terminus	0.5-0.62m	Segment through gully F109		
104	Mid reddish-brown, compact, silty clay with rare mudstone fragments	0.5-0.62m	Fill of gully segment 103		
105	NW-SE aligned shallow linear gully	0.5-0.62m	Segment through gully F109		
106	Mid reddish-brown, compact silty-clay with rare small mudstone fragments	0.5-0.62m	Fill of gully segment 105		
107	Mid-pale reddish-brown, firm silty-clay with occasional small-medium mudstone fragments	0.5-0.87m	Fill of ditch F108		
108	NW-SE aligned ditch	0.5-0.87m	Cut of PM ditch		
109	Group number for gully segments F103 and F105	-	NW-SE aligned gully		

Trench 2			**Length** 10m	**Width** 1.5m	**Alignment** NE-SW
Context	**Description**	**Depth**	**Interpretation**		
200	Mid grey-brown friable sandy silt with common small mudstone fragments	0-0.26m	Topsoil		
201	Yellowish Silty clay with degraded mudstone (shillet)	0.26m+	Natural		

Trench 3			**Length** 10m	**Width** 1.5m	**Alignment** NNE-SSW
Context	**Description**	**Depth**	**Interpretation**		
300	Mid grey-brown friable sandy silt with common small mudstone fragments	0-0.3	Topsoil		
301	Mid reddish-brown friable silty loam, with common small mudstone fragments	0.3-0.35mm	Subsoil		
302	Greyish silty clay with degraded mudstone (shillet)	0.35+	Natural		

Trench 4			**Length** 10m	**Width** 1.5m	**Alignment** NE-SW
Context	**Description**	**Depth**	**Interpretation**		
400	Mid grey-brown friable sandy silt with common small mudstone fragments	0-0.4m	Topsoil		
401	Mid reddish-brown friable silty loam, with occasional small mudstone fragments	0.4-0.6m	Subsoil		
402	Greyish silty clay with degraded mudstone (shillet)	0.6m+	Natural		

Trench 5			**Length** 15m	**Width** 1.5m	**Alignment** N-S
Context	**Description**	**Depth**	**Interpretation**		
500	Mid grey-brown friable sandy silt with occasional small mudstone fragments	0-0.4m	Topsoil		
501	Silty clay with degraded mudstone (shillet)	0.4m+	Natural		

Trench 6			**Length** 10m	**Width** 1.5m	**Alignment** NNE-SSW
Context	**Description**	**Depth**	**Interpretation**		
600	Mid grey-brown friable sandy silt with common small mudstone fragments	0-0.25m	Topsoil		
601	Mid reddish-brown friable silty loam, with common small mudstone fragments	0.25-0.5m	Subsoil		
602	Silty clay with degraded mudstone (shillet)	0.5m+	Natural		

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