

# LAND TO THE REAR OF THE MALT SCOOP INN, MERTON, DEVON

Centred on NGR SS 52696 12209

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Torridge District Council Planning Ref. 1/0728/2014/OUT

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Prepared by:  
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On behalf of:  
Clinton Devon Estates

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Date: September 2014



archaeology

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## Summary

*An archaeological trench evaluation on land to the rear of The Malt Scoop Inn, Merton, Devon (centred on NGR SS 52696 12209), was undertaken by AC archaeology during September 2014. The proposed development area occupies approximately 0.85 hectares of pasture land.*

*The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of three trenches totalling 40m in length, with each trench measuring 1.80m wide. These were positioned to test four linear anomalies identified by a previous geophysical survey. No archaeological features or deposits were identified and the geophysical anomalies are likely to represent variations in the natural geology. A small amount of post-medieval pottery was recovered from the topsoil.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land to the rear of the Malt Scoop Inn, Merton, Devon (centred on SS 52696 12209), was undertaken by AC archaeology during September 2014. The work was carried out in order to provide supporting information for a planning application for residential development and was required by Torridge District Council following consultation with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCCHET). The evaluation was commissioned by Bell Cornwell LLP on behalf of Clinton Devon Estates.
- 1.2 The site comprises a broadly triangular plot, covering approximately 0.85ha, set within the corner formed by Back Lane and Limers' Lane to the north of The Malt Scoop Inn (Fig. 1). It lies on pasture land (Plate 1) that slopes gradually to the southwest at around 91m aOD. The underlying solid geology comprises sandstones of the Bude Formation (British Geological Survey website).

### 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Merton is named 'Mertone' in the Domesday Book of 1086 and the site itself lies to the north of the historic core of the village and to the northeast of All Saints Church which dates to the 15th century.
- 2.2 Recent fieldwork undertaken in the southwest of the village on two separate plots close to the church recorded features dating to the medieval and post-medieval periods (Pears 2014, South West Archaeology in prep.). In one of the plots the archaeology excavated by South West Archaeology is thought to have comprised the structural remains of a possible medieval building (Stephen Reed, Devon Archaeology Officer *pers comm*).

### 3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aim of the trial trench evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the application area. This was with particular reference for the potential for medieval remains on the site. The results of the work as set out in this report will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation as a condition of planning permission, if granted.

## **4. METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists 2009 document *Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluation* and following approval of a trench plan submitted to the DCHET prior to commencement. The work comprised the machine-excavation of three trenches totalling 40m in length, with each trench measuring 1.80m wide (Fig. 2). Trenches were positioned to test linear anomalies identified in a previous geophysical survey. The removal of soil overburden was undertaken under the control and direction of the site archaeologist.
- 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 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 (Fig. 3; Plate 2)**

### **5.1 Trench 1**

This trench was located in the northwestern corner of the application area and it was 15m in length and aligned NW-SE. The recorded layer sequence consisted of 0.45m of dark brown sandy silt topsoil (100) directly above natural subsoil (101) consisting of degraded sandstone and silty clay. No archaeological features, deposits or finds were present.

### **5.2 Trench 2**

This trench was located on the western edge of the application area and it was 10m in length and aligned NW-SE. The trench contained three soil horizons (200, 201 and 202) overlying the natural subsoil (203).

The topsoil (200) was present to a depth of 0.55m. Below this was a colluvial subsoil (201), 0.35m thick, and consisting of a very dark brown soft silty clay. Above the natural subsoil (203) was a 0.10m deposit (202) of mid yellowish brown soft silty clay which appeared to form an interface between the overlying deposits and the natural subsoil. No archaeological features or deposits were present. Two sherds of pottery dating to the post-medieval period were collected from the topsoil (200).

### **5.3 Trench 3**

This trench was located in the southwestern corner of the application area and it was 15m in length and aligned NW-SE. The recorded layer sequence consisted of 0.60m of topsoil (300). As in Trench 1 this was directly above natural subsoil (301). No archaeological features, deposits or finds were present.

## **6. THE FINDS**

- 6.1** A total of two sherds of pottery weighing 142g was recovered from the topsoil (200) in Trench 2. Both are rim sherds, the smallest (weighing 27g) is from an abraded North Devon gravel-tempered dish with internal green glaze. The largest sherd (115g) is from a large bowl or dish of North Devon gravel-free ware with internal green glaze. They are both post-medieval in date.

## **7. DISCUSSION**

- 7.1** The archaeological evaluation did not identify evidence of medieval or earlier activity on the site. The linear anomalies identified by the previous geophysical survey were not found and are likely to be variations in the natural geology and therefore not considered to be of archaeological interest. The soil deposits indicate that there is a natural hollow in the area of Trench 2.
- 7.2** The paucity of finds and the sterile nature of the deposits indicates that the plot has not been the focus for settlement, with agricultural use being historically the prime purpose for the land.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1** The current archaeological evidence for the village of Merton indicates that the focus of the medieval settlement is in the vicinity of the church which is located 130m southwest of the application area. Based on this and the results of the evaluation it is therefore considered unlikely that evidence for early occupation is present on this site.

## **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 via condition is established and whether the creation of a digital archive for deposition at the Archaeology Data Service is required. The archive from this work and any subsequent work will be deposited under an accession number obtained from the Barnstaple and North Devon Museum, Barnstaple.
- 9.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 189977 which includes a digital copy of this report.

## **10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

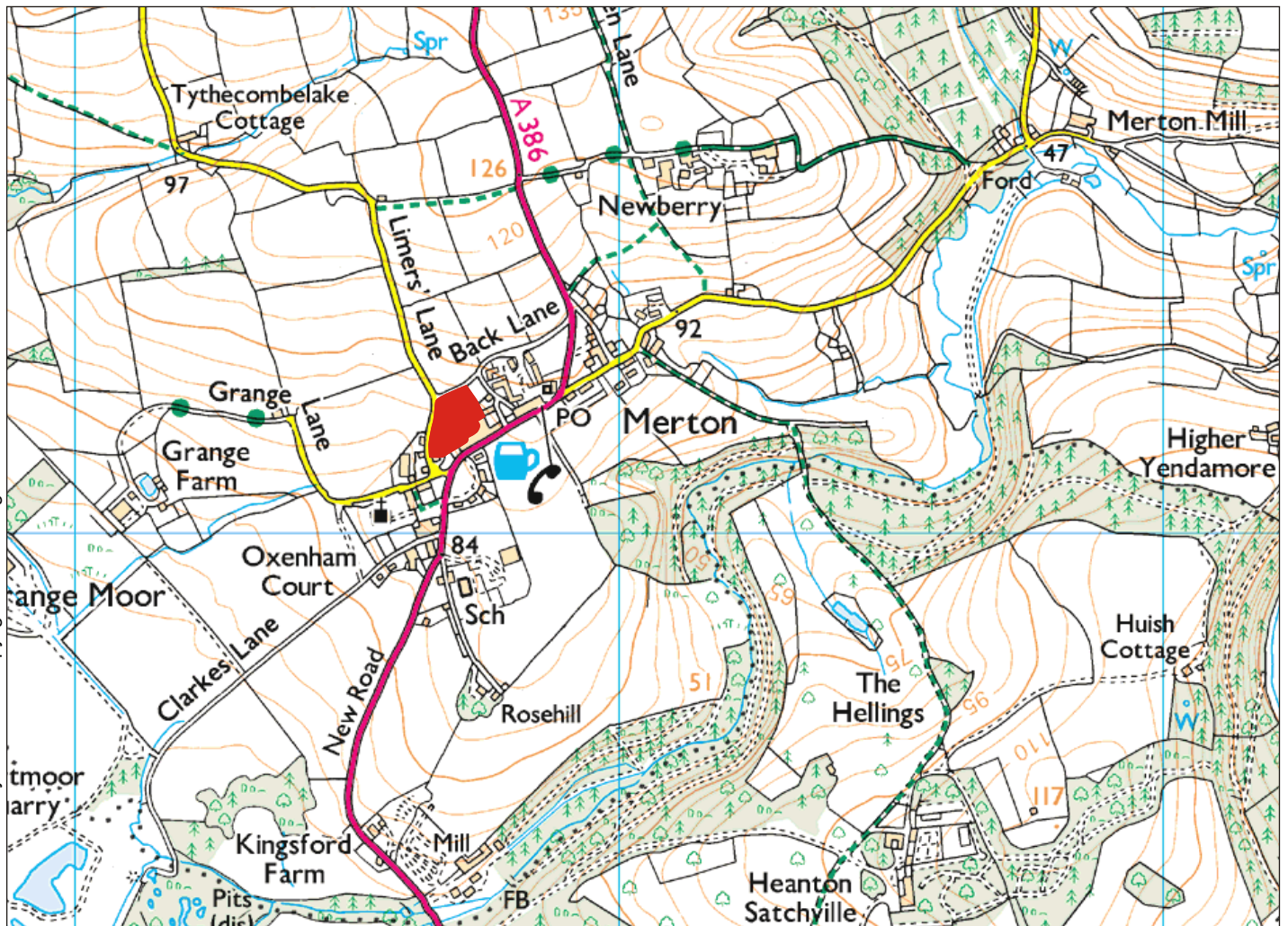
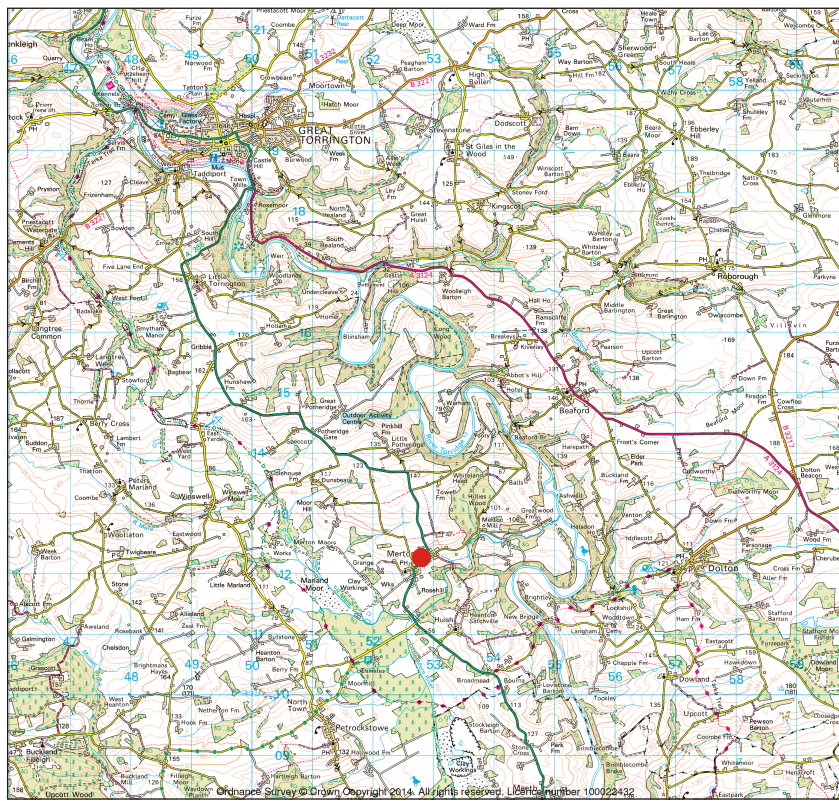
- 10.1** The evaluation was commissioned by Amy Roberts of Bell Cornwell LLP on behalf of Clinton Devon Estates. The guidance of Ann Dick, Devon County Archaeology Officer is duly acknowledged. The site work was conducted by Alex Farnell and Chris Blatchford, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Elisabeth Patkai.

## **11. REFERENCES**

British Geological Survey online 2014 [www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience)

Pears, B. 2014, *Land at Clarks Lane, Merton, Devon: Results of an archaeological trench evaluation*. AC Archaeology report ACD842/2/0.





0 500m

Scale 1:12,500@A4



Location of site

PROJECT

Land to the rear of the Malt Scoop Inn, Merton,  
Devon

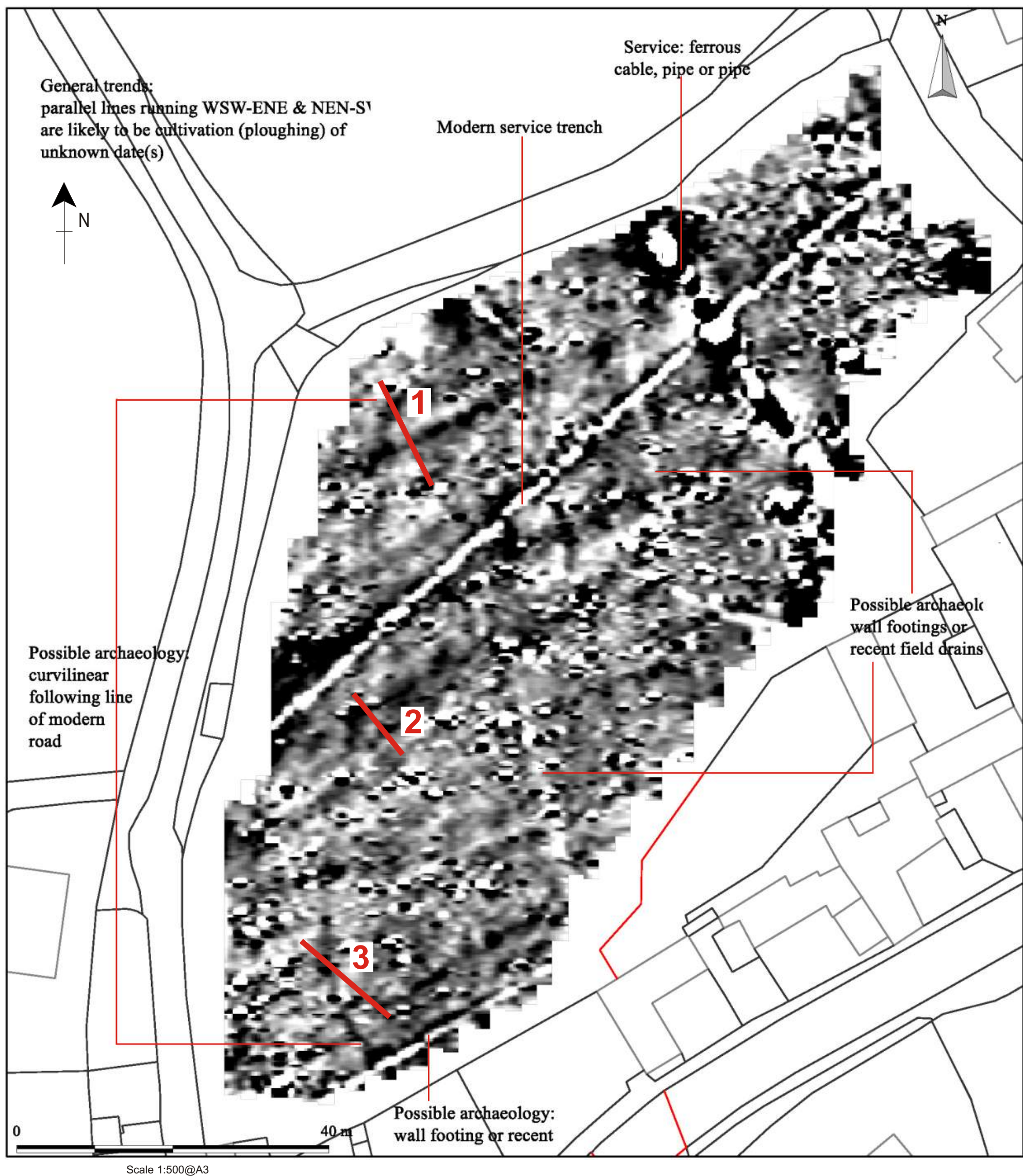
TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location

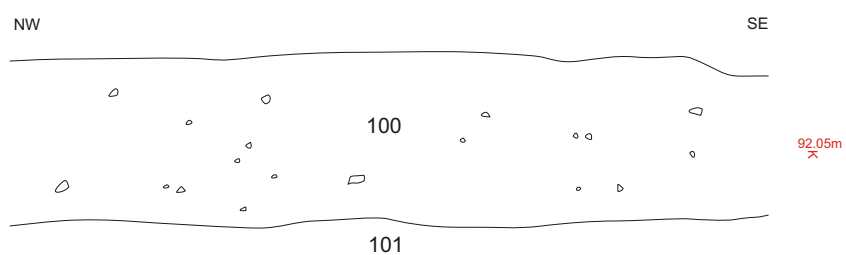


AC archaeology

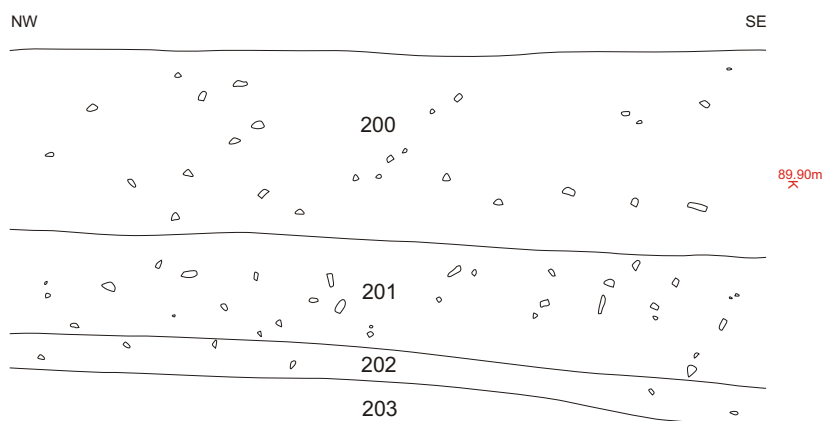




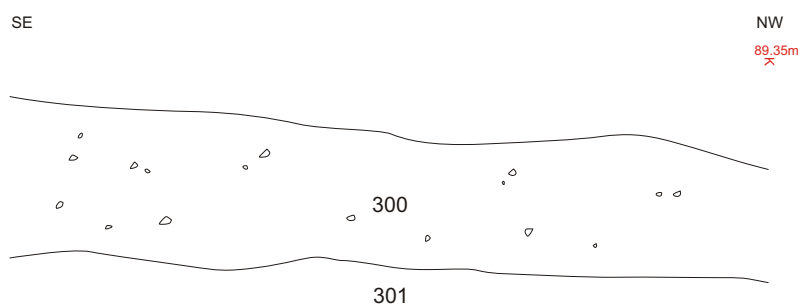
a) Trench 1, section



b) Trench 2, section



c) Trench 3, section



PROJECT

Land to the rear of the Malt Scoop Inn, Merton,  
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TITLE

Fig. 3: Representative sections





Plate 1: View of the site, looking southwest



Plate 2: Trench 2, northeast-facing section

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