

Land at Town Farm, Milton Damerel, Devon

Centred on NGR SS 3850 1075

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

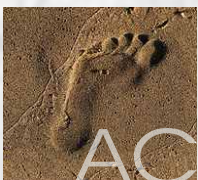
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On behalf of:
BSA Heritage Ltd

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AC archaeology

LAND AT TOWN FARM, MILTON DAMEREL, DEVON

Centred on NGR SS 3850 1075

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation, comprising the excavation of five trenches totalling 87m in length, was undertaken by AC archaeology on land at Town Farm, Milton Damerel in July and August 2014. The trenches were positioned to target earthwork features relating to a putative medieval settlement and to establish the nature of deposits within an area of disturbed waste ground to the west.

The evaluation exposed little evidence of medieval activity, besides a small assemblage of residual pottery sherds recovered from later layers. Remains encountered comprised three hollow ways, a metalled surface and a gully, all apparently in use into the 18th-19th century and infilled in the late 20th century.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation on land at Town Farm, Milton Damerel, Devon (NGR SS 3850 1075), carried out in support of a future planning application for a residential development and related access and landscaping.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by BSA Heritage Ltd on behalf of Drew Properties Ltd and carried out by AC archaeology Ltd during July and August 2014.
- 1.3 The site is located at the centre of Milton Damerel, to the east of the Grade II* listed Church of Holy Trinity. It occupies two plots comprising waste ground and former silage clamps to the west and pasture to the east, with a total area of approximately 1 hectare (Plate 1). The plots are positioned on ground at around 140m aOD sloping down gradually to the east and northeast. The underlying geology comprises sandstone of the Bude Formation (British Geological Society 2014).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Milton Damerel is first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 as *Midelitone* which probably derives from 'middle farm' (Gover *et al.* 1932). By 1339 it had become *Milton Daumarle* (Devon Historic Environment Record [HER] ref. MDV29109).
- 2.2 The site has been the subject of a previous Heritage Statement (BSA 2014). This established that the principal archaeological interest in the site is the presence of earthworks that are considered to represent evidence for a shrunken medieval settlement (MDV11674). These are located partially in the application area but also extend to the east and were mapped by the Ordnance Survey in the 1970s. They were thought to represent the positions of crofts with building platforms and a hollow way extending to the east. Further earthworks lie to the north and northeast of the church (MDVs 11672 and 11673). The Church of Holy Trinity is believed to have late 13th century origins (National Heritage List no. 1162778).

3. AIM

- 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 comprised the machine excavation of five trenches measuring a total of 87m in length, with each 1.50m wide (Fig. 2). Trenches were positioned to target earthworks, where recorded within the development area, and to investigate the survival of possible remains within the area affected by previous construction of silage clamps. Removal of soil overburden was undertaken under the direction of the site archaeologist. Where exposed, archaeological features and deposits were cleaned and investigated by hand.
- 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 levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Trench 1

This trench was aligned east-west, measured 19.6m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.6m. It was widened to 3m along a short stretch towards the eastern end to investigate a low earthwork coinciding with a modern field drain. This earthwork was shown in section to comprise material overlying the modern fill of the adjacent field drain and to have been created by the excavation and subsequent reinstatement of it. Natural subsoil was encountered at a typical depth of 0.5m, overlain by up to 0.3m of reddish brown colluvial subsoil. Two NE-SW aligned land drains cut this subsoil. These were in turn sealed by up to 0.2m of grey-brown topsoil which had been cut by the modern field drain feature discussed above.

5.2 Trench 2 (Detailed plan Fig. 3a, sections Figs 3b-c; Plate 2)

This trench was aligned east-west, measured 19m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.36m. Natural subsoil (203) was encountered at this depth. Two linear features (F205 and F207) cut the natural subsoil and are described below.

The overlying deposit sequence comprised a layer of subsoil (201/202) overlain by topsoil varying in depth between 0.06 and 0.25m. Subsoil layer 201/202 measured up to 0.18m thick and comprised a pale grey friable silty clay with common small-medium sub-angular sandstone fragments (201) becoming mid grey, gleyed, intermittently waterlogged clay loam (202) at the far western extent of the trench. There was no clear interface between these two contexts. Layer 202 produced a small collection of earlier post-medieval pottery.

Gully F205 was aligned approximately NE-SW, was exposed to a length of 6.5m and measured 0.8m wide and 0.08m deep with moderately sloping sides and a flat base. It is likely to have been truncated by ploughing. It contained a single fill composed of mid grey, silty-clay with rare sub-angular pebbles.

Possible hollow way (sunken lane) F207 was linear in plan, aligned approximately NE-SW, exposed to a length of 1.5m and measured 2.54m wide by 0.65m deep. In profile it was deeper on its NW side where it cut into the gently east facing slope, with moderate – steeply sloping sides and a flattish base. At the base of the cut on the NW side, a flat level platform appeared to have formed the base for a rough revetment to the cut on this side. Partially collapsed fabric of this revetment (211) remained *in situ*. It comprised roughly squared and irregular, randomly coursed, un-bonded, sandstone pieces measuring up to 0.13 x 0.15 x 0.06m. Further fragmentary *in situ* masonry was recorded above this, where a number of un-bonded, roughly squared, sandstone blocks (209) had been lain in a pitched fashion and had remained

apparently undisturbed despite the collapse of the lower revetment. A deposit of densely packed gravel (208) lay within a linear depression at the base of the cut. This deposit appeared to abut revetment 211 and served to level/consolidate the base of the lane which it seems likely had become worn from use and erosion. Two further fills (210 and 212) represented abandonment. Fill 210 was composed of loose sandstone rubble in a mid brown silty-clay matrix. It overlay gravel layer 208 and is likely to derive from collapse of the former revetment. Upper fill 212 was composed of mid yellowish-brown, slightly sandy-silt. It appeared to represent rapid, deliberate infilling of the feature. A small assemblage of post-medieval pottery was recovered from backfill 212.

5.3 Trench 3 (Detailed plan Fig. 3d, section Fig. 3e; Plate 3)

This trench was aligned NE-SW, measured 23.4m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m. Natural subsoil (302) was encountered at a depth of 0.3m below a thin agricultural subsoil (301) composed of yellowish-brown, clay-silt. At the northeast end of the trench the subsoil was cut by a broad flat-based linear feature (F310) aligned approximately E-W and which continued beyond the limit of excavation to the northeast.

Hollow way F310 measured at least 6m wide and 0.80m deep. At the break of slope to the base of the cut was a line of *in situ* kerb stones (311). This comprised a single course of roughly hewn sandstone blocks measuring up to 0.3m x 0.15m x 0.1m, unbonded and lain in a pitched fashion. It retained a contemporary metalled surface (304) that comprised small – medium, random shaped, sub-angular sandstone cobbles. Its patchy survival extended across the base of the cut where exposed. Two fills (309 and 315) abutted kerb stones 311 to the south and represent primary weathering and secondary stabilisation of the cut. Overlying deposits relating to abandonment comprised four fills (303, 305, 312 and 314). Fills 303, 305 and 312 consisted of waterlogged clay-silt and silt. Layer 303 was particularly dark in colour with a high organic content. Upper fill 314 comprised layers of modern infill composed of dark grey-brown silty-clay and redeposited natural with modern inclusions including plastic sacking. A layer of mid grey-brown topsoil up to 0.3m deep was above this. A small assemblage of medieval pottery was recovered from cobbled surface 304, alongside sherds of post-medieval date from this and overlying deposits.

5.4 Trench 4 (Detailed plan Fig. 4a, section Fig. 4b; Plate 4)

This trench was aligned NW-SE, measured 10m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.8m. Natural subsoil (403) was encountered at a typical depth of 1.2m. At the SE end of the trench natural subsoil had been cut by what appeared to be the southern side of a probable hollow way (F406), extending on an approximate east-west alignment.

Hollow way F406 measured at least 2.40m wide and 0.60m deep. Disturbed stonework (405) at the base of the cut appeared to be remains of former revetment or kerbing. It comprised a single course of sandstone blocks measuring up to 0.2m x 0.15m x 0.1m, unbonded and lain in a pitched fashion. A deposit composed of very dark grey organic rich silt (407) had accumulated at the base of the cut. Investigation of the base was limited due to the depth of the trench at this point and the ingress of water below the depth of c. 1.6m, and no cobbled surface was exposed within the cut. At the top of cut F406, directly overlying natural subsoil, was a remnant bank (404) composed of mid yellow brown silty-sand with shillet inclusions. Material slumped from this bank had overlain disturbed revetment 405. The bank was exposed in the SW facing trench section and terminated to the NW within the trench. A rough cobbled surface (402) overlay natural subsoil at the top of cut F406 and appeared to abut bank material 404 and continued further to the south. This surface was overlain by a layer of accumulated organic rich material (401), which produced two fragments of 18th-19th century glass and one sherd of post medieval pottery. Bank 404 and layer 401 were in turn sealed by a thick modern levelling layer comprised principally of redeposited natural siltstone and clay with inclusions of concrete block and plastic (400).

5.5 Trench 5 (Detailed plan Fig. 4c and section Fig. 4d)

This trench was aligned north-south, measured 15m in length and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.3m. Natural subsoil (505) was encountered at the northern end of the trench at a depth of 0.8m and was sealed by modern levelling layer 500. With no surviving pre-modern deposits overlying the natural, it seems likely that some significant recent truncation had occurred. A single linear feature (F502) was partially revealed in the southern end of the trench.

Hollow way F502 was revealed on its northern edge. It was most certainly an extension of hollow way F310 exposed in Trench 3 and appeared to have suffered a degree of truncation and also lacked the surviving kerb stones and well-preserved cobbled surface seen in Trench 3. Natural subsoil at the base of the cut was overlain by a patchy deposit of coarse rubble (504), which may have been part of a surface or sub-surface. Seven sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from this layer. A layer of soft mid grey silt (503) had accumulated over this rubble layer and the natural subsoil where it was exposed within the base of hollow way F502. A deposit composed of very dark grey humic silty clay with inclusions of plastic sacking overlay 503 and infilled hollow way F502. Modern levelling deposit 500 sealed layer 501 and natural subsoil. This was composed principally of redeposited natural siltstone and clay.

6. FINDS *by Kerry Kerr-Peterson*

6.1 Introduction

All finds recovered on site have been cleaned and quantified according to material type within each context. The assemblage has been scanned to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented, with this information discussed below. A large proportion of the finds are post-medieval to modern, ranging in date from the 17th through to the 20th centuries. There are seven sherds of residual medieval pottery. Finds totals by material type are given in Table 1.

6.2 The pottery

There are a total of 81 sherds of pottery, weighing 1,290kg from 13 contexts. Seven of the sherds (13g) are medieval in date and were recovered from five contexts. These all consist of small fragments of North Devon medieval coarseware dating to c. AD 1200 – 1350. All of these pieces are residual within post-medieval contexts.

There are 74 sherds of post-medieval pottery, weighing 1,277kg which were recovered from 13 contexts. The majority of the post-medieval wares are North Devon gravel tempered or gravel free wares of 17th or 18th century date. Three pieces of North Devon plain sgraffito ware dish were recovered from context 202 and to the 17th or 18th century. One piece of South Somerset lead glazed earthenware from context 300 is of the same date. There are also 14 pieces of industrially produced white wares and transfer printed wares dating to the 19th or 20th centuries from most of the contexts and a piece of English stoneware from context 504. The most interesting pieces come from context 212. These include the base of a cheese press or straining vessel with pierced holes in the base and a fragment which has a chip of another vessel adhering to a blob of glaze. Both of these date to the 17th or 18th century.

6.3 The other finds

There are three pieces of clay tobacco pipe, weighing 24g from three post-medieval contexts. These are mostly plain stem fragments which are generally not closely datable. One piece of bowl from context (200) is dated to c. AD 1690 – 1720.

There are 15 pieces of ceramic building material, weighing 683g, recovered from seven contexts. Four of the pieces are medieval North Devon gravel tempered type and consist of plain floor tiles and one possible ridge tile. All of these medieval fragments date to the 13th or

14th century and are residual within post-medieval contexts. The majority of the ceramic building material is post-medieval, dating to the 19th century or later and consists of industrially produced red brick or tile fragments. One small piece of undiagnostic fired clay, weighing 1g was recovered from context 303.

Nine pieces of glass, weighing 83g were recovered from three post-medieval contexts. These are all pieces of green or clear bottle glass that date to the 18th or 19th centuries.

Four pieces of stone, weighing 86g were recovered from two post-medieval contexts. These are all pieces of slate which could be fragments of roof tiles although there are no nail holes or any other signs of working.

There are three iron objects, weighing 61g from three post-medieval contexts. These are all handmade nails of varying lengths and an L-shaped object from context 303.

Context	Context Description	Iron		Fired clay		Glass		Clay tobacco pipe		CBM		Medieval pottery		Post-medieval pottery		Stone	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
101	Subsoil Trench 1							1	8					2	40		
200	Topsoil Trench 2							1	12					1	28		
202	Subsoil Trench 2							1	4			1	5	7	98	1	51
211	Disturbed revetment													10	135		
212	Infill of hollow way F207											1	1	4	80		
300	Topsoil Trench 3	1	12			1	10			3	76	1	0.4	4	31	3	35
301	Subsoil Trench 3					3	57			1	12			2	28		
303	Fill of hollow way F310	1	45	1	1	2	9			2	8			12	168		
304	Metalled surface									3	73	4	7	23	316		
312	Fill of hollow way F310	1	4							4	164			1	4		
401	Soil layer					3	7							1	12		
504	Rubble layer									2	350			7	337		
Totals		3	61	1	1	9	83	3	24	15	683	7	13	74	1277	4	86

Table 1: Finds quantification by type. Weight in grams (g). CBM=ceramic building material.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The evaluation has exposed remains relating to three former hollow ways in Trench 2, Trenches 3 and 5 and Trench 4. In Trench 4 an associated former hedgebank was recorded on the northwest side of the hollow way in addition to a metalled surface. The hollow way in Trenches 3 and 5 matched the east-leading hollow way identified by the Ordnance Survey mapping. Nothing survived of the putative crofts in Trenches 1 and 2 and it is likely that some truncation had occurred, although gully F205 may have been a foundation trench, but there was no associated domestic material. All of the hollow ways had been disturbed and infilled

relatively recently and there was little to indicate that their origins were earlier than perhaps the 17th or 18th century.

- 7.2 In Trench 5 recent truncation of the soil profile was clearly evident with very modern material directly overlying the natural subsoil. A substantial depth of modern levelling was encountered across the area to the west of the lane in Trenches 4 and 5.
- 7.3 Evidence of earlier activity on the site was limited to a handful of residual medieval coarseware sherds recovered from post-medieval contexts. Comparison can be made with the extensive excavations at Hennard Jefford ahead of the flooding of the Wolf Valley for the Roadford reservoir where a single farmstead had survived the shrinkage of a post-medieval hamlet whose earthworks were shown to have resulted from landscaping for house terraces, trackways and yards. This landscaping had caused the almost total removal of the undoubted previously existing medieval settlement within a ditched enclosure (see e.g. Henderson and Weddell 1994, 131).

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The evaluation exposed little evidence, in the form of a few residual sherds of pottery, of the putative shrunken medieval village on the site. A variable degree of truncation had occurred across the site most severely around Trench 4. The surviving deeper features comprised a series of hollow ways apparently in use into the 18th or 19th century. Evidence for medieval activity on the site, if it had previously existed, appears to have been removed by later activities.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

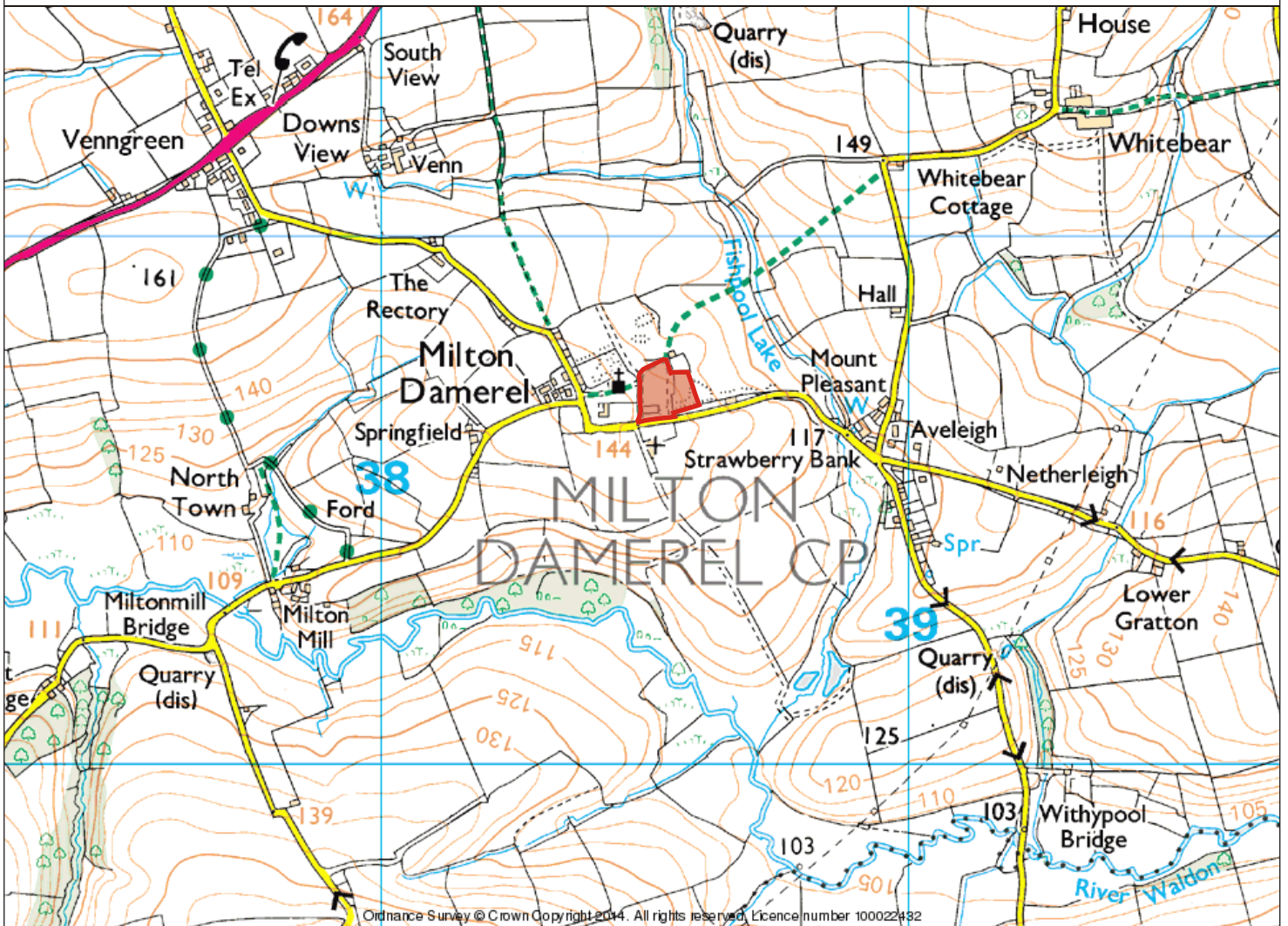
- 9.1 The finds, paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. It will be held until the need for any further archaeological work on the site via condition is established and whether the creation of a digital archive 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 190006, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 10.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Ben Stephenson of BSA Heritage Ltd on behalf of Drew Properties Ltd. The site work was undertaken by Alex Farnell, Jon Hall and Rebecca Jones, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Elisabeth Patkai. The collaborative role of Ann Dick, Devon Archaeology Officer, is duly acknowledged.

11. REFERENCES

- British Geological Survey 2014, www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience
- BSA Heritage 2014, *Milton Damerel, Torrridge District, Devon, Heritage Statement*. Unpublished BSA Heritage report. Ref. BSA138.
- Gover, J.E.B., Mawer. A. and Stenton, F.M. 1932, *The Place-Names of Devon*.
- Henderson, C.G. and Weddell, P.J. 1994, Medieval settlements on Dartmoor and in West Devon: the evidence from excavations. *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society* 52, 119-140.
- Hughes, S. 2014, *Land at Town Farm, Milton Damerel, Devon: Method statement for an archaeological trench evaluation*. Unpublished document ref. ACD945/1/0



PROJECT



Land at Town Farm, Milton Damerel, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



0 100m
Scale 1:1500@A4

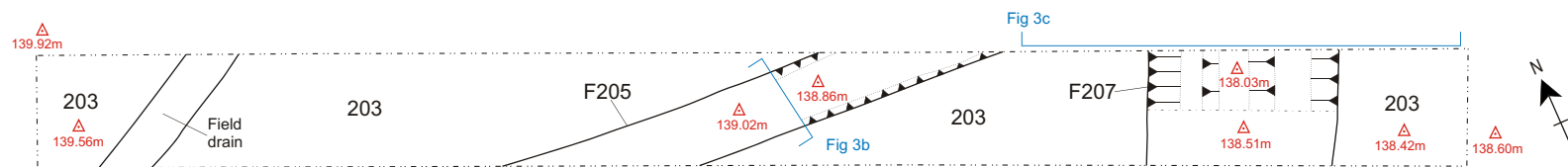
 Trenches with archaeological features shown
 Boundary of proposed development

PROJECT
Land at Town Farm,
Milton Damerel, Devon

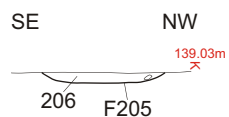
TITLE
Fig. 2: Trench location
plan with archaeological
features shown



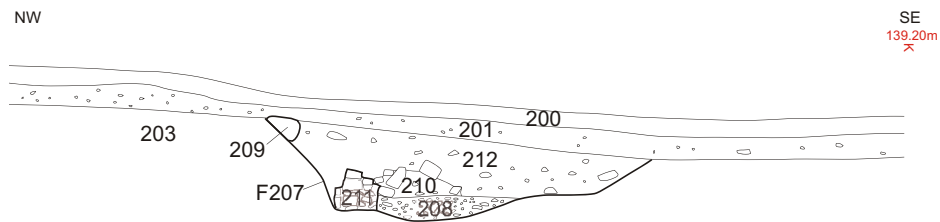
a) Trench 2, plan



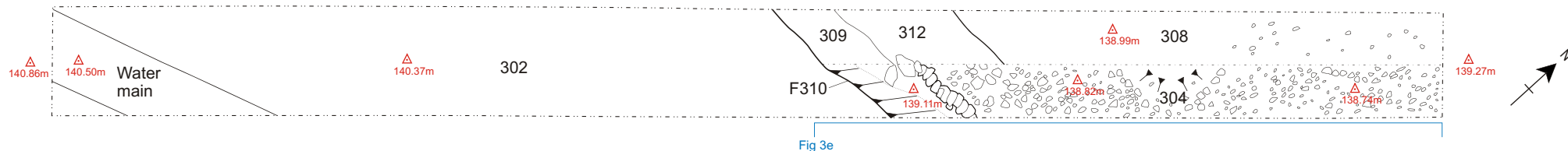
b) Section of F205



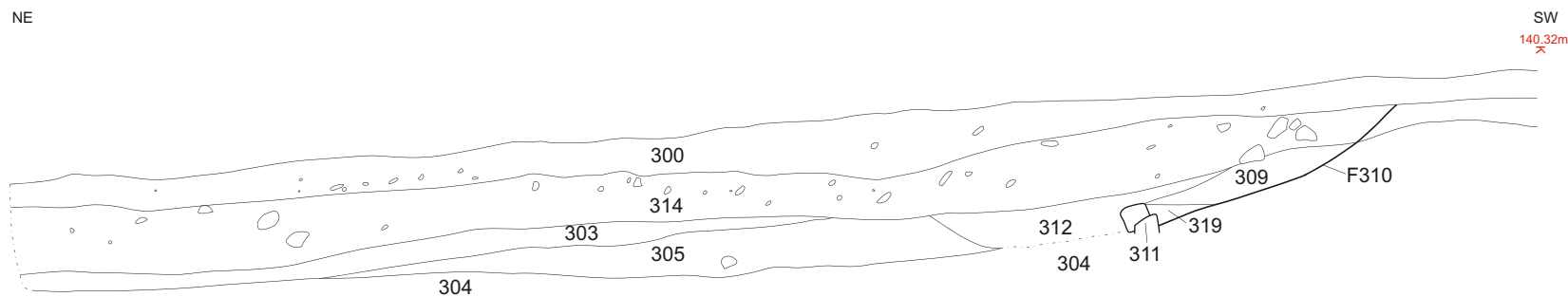
c) Section of F207



d) Trench 3, plan



e) Section of F310

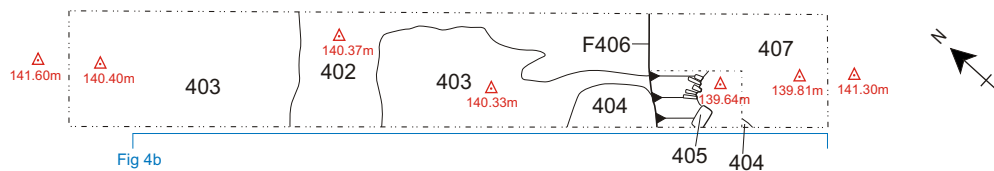


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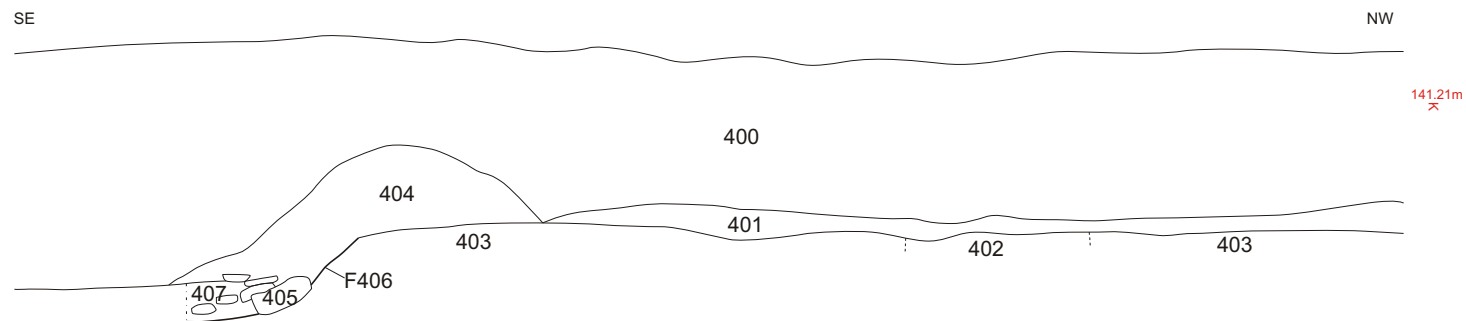
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Fig. 3: Trenches 2 and 3,
plans and sections



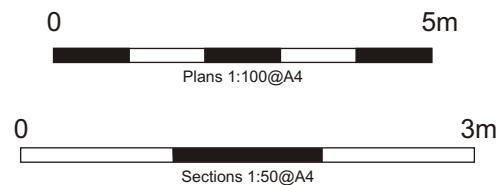
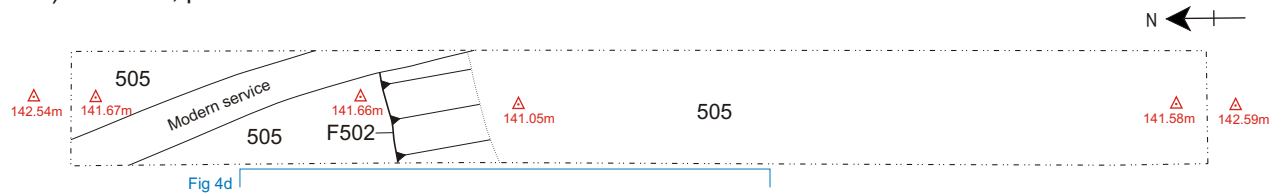
a) Trench 4, plan



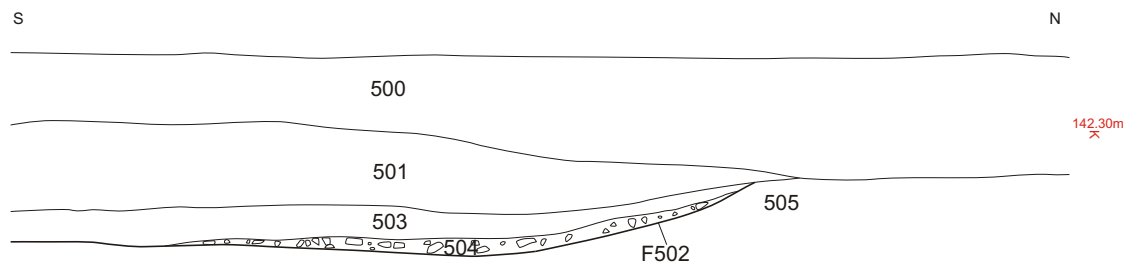
b) Section of F406



c) Trench 5, plan



d) Section of F502



PROJECT
Land at Town Farm,
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TITLE
Fig. 4: Trenches 4 and 5,
plans and sections





Plate 1: General view of site. Trench 3 in foreground. Looking north.



Plate 2: Trench 2, possible hollow way F207. Looking northwest (scale 1m)



Plate 3: Trench 3, hollow way F310. Looking east (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Trench 4 section showing hedgebank (404) buried by modern levelling. Looking southeast (scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Tabulated trench descriptions

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		Length	Width	Alignment
		19.6m	1.5m	E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
100	Red brown clay silt	0-0.2m	Topsoil	
101	Mid reddish-brown silty-loam	0.2-0.3m	Subsoil	
102	Mid grey silt	0.25-0.3m	Subsoil	
103	Sandstone	0.3m+	Natural bedrock	
104			Fill of F105	
F105	Linear feature		Modern land drain	
106			Fill of F107	
F107	Linear feature		Modern land drain	
108			Fill of F109	
F109	Linear feature		Modern water pipe	

Trench 2		Length	Width	Alignment
		19m	1.5m	E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
200	Mid brown silty-loam	0-0.25m	Topsoil	
201	Mid reddish-brown silty-loam	0.25-0.3m	Subsoil	
202	Mid grey clay loam	0.3m+	Subsoil	
203		-	Void	
204	Yellow and grey clay and sandstone	0.3m+	Natural subsoil	
F205	NE-SW aligned linear, measuring 0.8m wide and 0.08m deep	-	Cut of gully	
206	Mid grey silty-clay with rare sub angular pebbles	-	Fill of F205	
F207	N-S aligned linear measuring 2.54m wide and 0.65m deep with asymmetric profile.	-	Cut of hollow way	
208	Dark grey clay-silt with abundant small and occasional medium sub-angular gravel		Primary fill of F207, probable consolidation or sub-surface material.	
209	Sandstone blocks, single course, unbonded		Remnant of <i>in situ</i> revetment to western edge of F207	
210	Mid brown clay-silt with common sandstone cobbles and occasional medium – large boulders		Rubble collapse of former revetment to west side of F207	
211	Sandstone blocks roughly squared, unbonded and random coursed		Disturbed revetment to west side of F207	
212	Mid yellow brown sandy-silt with occasional sub-angular pebbles	-	Upper fill of F207	

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 3		Length	Width	Alignment
		23.4m	1.5m	NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
300	Grey-brown silty-loam	0-0.12m	Topsoil	
301	Mid yellowish brown clay-silt	0.12-0.3m	Colluvial subsoil	
302	Yellow clay with siltstone	0.3m+	Natural subsoil	
303	Dark bluish grey organic silt	-	Accumulated material overlying cobbles 304	
304	Surface comprising sub-rounded sandstone cobbles	-	Cobbled surface within base of hollow way F310	
305	Dark brown Clay silt	-	Accumulated material overlying cobbles 304	
306		-	Void	
307		-	Void	
308		-	Void	
309	Yellowish brown clay silt moderate pebbles and cobbles	-	Weathered material on the SW side of hollow way F310	
F310	E-W aligned linear cut	-	Cut of hollow way	
311	Alignment of sandstone blocks	-	Kerbing at base of cut 310	
312	Mid grey clay-silt with occasional stone pebbles	-	Accumulated material within hollow way F310	
313			Void	
314	Yellowish brown clay with common siltstone frags	-	Modern infill of hollow way F310	
315	Mid grey clay-silt frequent sub-angular sandstone frags	-	Weathered material at base of cut F310	

Trench 4		Length	Width	Alignment
		10m	1.5m	N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
400	Yellowish brown clay with siltstone fragments and modern inclusions	0-1.6m	Modern levelling	
401	Dark grey silt	-	Accumulation over surface 402	
402	Small sub-rounded pebbles	-	Metalled surface	
403	Yellow and grey siltstone	1.2m+	Natural subsoil	
404	Mid yellow brown silty-sand with shillet inclusions.	-	Former hedgebank	
405	Sandstone blocks, unbonded	-	Collapsed revetment or kerbing on the side of cut F406	
F406	E-W aligned linear cut, exposed only on its southern edge.		Cut of probable hollow way	
407	Very dark grey silt		Accumulated material at base of cut F406	

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 5		Length	Width	Alignment
		15m	1.5m	N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
500	Yellowish brown clay with siltstone fragments and modern inclusions	0-0.8m	Modern levelling	
501	Very dark grey organic silt with modern inclusions (plastic)	-	Modern infill of hollow way F502	
F502	E-W aligned linear measuring 10m+ wide and 0.48m deep	-	Cut of hollow way	
503	Mid grey silt	-	Accumulation of silt at base of hollow way F502	
504	Blue grey clay-silt with frequent small-medium sub-angular cobbles	-	Rubble layer at base of hollow way F502	
505	Yellow and grey siltstone	-	Natural subsoil	

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