

LAND AT COLLEGE FARM, PENRYN, CORNWALL

Centred on NGR SW 7840 3410

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

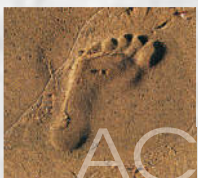
Planning reference: Cornwall Council PA12/06118,
condition 15

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On behalf of:
Linden Homes

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archaeology

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Summary

A trench evaluation was carried out by AC archaeology in September 2014 on land at College Farm, Penryn, Cornwall (centred on NGR SW 7840 3410). The development area occupies 0.77 hectares of land previously utilised as rough pastoral farmland.

The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of 4 trenches. In trench 4 a single, heavily truncated, undated pit was exposed. Across the site made ground associated with the construction of an adjacent railway embankment was also present. The topography and known historic use of the area indicate that the land was unsuitable for settlement and arable cultivation.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation undertaken by AC archaeology on 30 September 2014 on land at College Farm, Penryn, Cornwall (centred on SW 7840, 3410; Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Linden Homes and was required under condition 15 of the grant of planning permission (Cornwall Council reference PA12/06118) for "Development of 41 residential units, off site highways and drainage works".
- 1.2 The site is located on the southern edge of Penryn, and is bounded by College Hill (Glasney College) to the east and southeast, by terraced houses fronting Glasney Place to the north, and the railway line from Truro to Falmouth to the south, which is carried on an embankment, leading to a viaduct west of the site. It covers an area of approximately 0.77ha, with the ground sloping from south to north from approximately 36 to 26m aOD. The underlying solid geology comprises Devonian green grey slates of the Mylor Slate Formation (British Geological Survey 2013). No superficial geological deposits are reported and the soil coverage consists of well-drained brown earth soils with a fine loam to silt texture typical of the Denbigh 1 Association (Cranfield University 2014).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site lies in an area containing a number of heritage assets. These include Glasney College, a 13th-century religious house located to the northeast of the site. Its remains are designated as a Scheduled Monument. It was eventually demolished in the 16th century as a result of the Reformation, but the last building was not destroyed until the 18th century. The development site is located within medieval deer park located to the south of the College. Documentary evidence indicates that by 1311 the area was known as a 'free warren' and that 'the park' had been disparked by 1450.
- 2.2 Early maps of the development site are inconclusive about activity on the site, although Lord Burghley's map of 1580 shows a wooded area bisected by leats supplying the college and the nearby Bishop's Palace (Newell 2005, 17). It is not until the publication of the 1880 Ordnance Survey map that College Farm is shown in detail occupying the northeast corner of the site. There was also a gas works directly to the east of the property. These structures went through a number of changes between 1880 and 1907 and the gasworks were finally demolished by the 1970s. A leat that flowed through the site served china stone mills and two corn mills. The Truro to Falmouth branch of the Cornwall Railway opened in August 1863, and utilised a number of high-level wooden viaducts to cross the steep valleys (St John Thomas 1981, 159). The viaducts were replaced in the 1920s and 1930s and at Penryn the railway line was realigned slightly to the north of its original course.

- 2.3** Later 20th-century Ordnance Survey maps record that the leat had been infilled or removed, and depict a number of small enclosures in the northwest quadrant of the site, one of which contained buildings. More recent aerial photographs show extensive trees internal to the site that were subsequently cut down and vegetation marks possibly representing subsequent boundaries to short-term pastoral plots.
- 2.4** The site has been subject to a previous geophysical survey and a geotechnical survey (both summarised in Smith 2012). These identified that the north and west ends of the site has been raised and consolidated up to one or two metres above the old land surface. Scanning with a magnetometer showed that the ground was unsuitable for surveying, and no archaeological features were identified.

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 site.

4. METHODOLOGY (Fig. 2)

- 4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by CgMs Consulting (Smith 2012), and in line with the Institute for Archaeologists 2008 document *Standards and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation*. Access was only available in the western half of the site, which coincided with the undeveloped farmland away from the former buildings of College Farm. Trenches were located in available space to provide sample coverage of the proposed development area. The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of four trenches totalling 116m in length, with each trench measuring 1.90m wide (Fig. 2). The removal of soil overburden was undertaken under the control and direction of the site archaeologist.
- 4.2** All deposits and features 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, and 1:50. All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

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

5.1 Introduction

A single archaeological feature was present in one of the trenches and this is discussed in more detail below. The remaining three trenches (1, 2 and 3) did not contain any archaeological features but did illustrate a sequence of soils and deposits (Plates 1-4). In each trench the natural geology was identified. The overlying soil sequence varied considerably as a result of localised topographic positions and historic land use. All of the trenches and contexts are summarised in tabulated form in Appendix 1. The detailed plan and section of trench 4 is included as Fig. 3. No finds were recovered from any of the trenches.

5.2 Trench 4 (Plan, Fig. 3a and section Fig. 3b; Plate 5)

Trench 4 was positioned on the central southern edge of the site. It measured 30m long and was aligned NW-SE. The trench contained a single archaeological feature, pit F403, that was cut into the natural geology (402). It was present beneath 0.12m made ground, 0.26m of subsoil (401) and 0.30m of topsoil (400).

Pit F403 was identified at the SE end of the trench and measured 0.70m in diameter by 0.12m deep. The feature had an irregular, symmetrical profile with rounded sides and breaks of slope down to a rounded, irregular base. The pit contained a single fill (404) that had a distinctive dark black to reddish-brown colour, a silty clay texture and a soft consistency, with inclusions of moderate charcoal, small sub-rounded to sub-angular granite and burnt sand and silty sand. No finds were recovered from the fill.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1** Overall the evaluation has identified only a single discrete archaeological feature in trench 4 and this represents the base of a pit whose fill contains evidence for burning. However extreme truncation by later land use has occurred and only a very small remnant of the feature survives. The feature was not dated.
- 6.2** The results of the geotechnical investigation and observations made during the geophysical survey indicated that the ground level across much of the site had been artificially raised. The trench evaluation has confirmed these observations, with made ground deposits being exposed in every trench. On the basis of the nature and extent of these deposits their deposition is interpreted as being associated with the construction of the railway embankment to the south of the site. The results of the geotechnical investigation also indicate that at the eastern end of the site further more recent (later 20th-century) landscaping has taken place.
- 6.3** Topographically, the area is currently steep, and prior to the raising up of the ground level would have been even steeper (Smith 2012, Appendix 2). It is therefore concluded that it is unlikely to have been unsuitable or utilised for early (prehistoric or Romano-British) settlement. During the medieval period the site lay within the deer park of Glasney College, and may not therefore have been extensively cultivated. The steep topography would make pasture or woodland uses preferable to arable cultivation. This is reflected in the general lack of and/or shallowness of historic cultivation soils.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1** The results of the evaluation have confirmed the soil sequence and recent history of the site put forward in earlier surveys. The natural topography was very steep and unsuitable for historic settlement or arable cultivation. A single, discrete, heavily truncated, undated pit was excavated. No other archaeological features were identified and there were significant alterations to the landscape of the site during the construction of the adjacent railway embankment and viaduct in the 19th century.

8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 8.1** The 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 deposited at the Cornwall Record Office in Truro.
- 8.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 193757, which includes a digital copy of this report.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Linden Homes, and managed for them by Adam Davis and for AC archaeology by John Valentin. The site work was conducted by Dr Ben Pears and the illustrations for this report prepared by Elisabeth Patkai.

10. SOURCES CONSULTED

British Geological Survey online 2013, www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience

Cranfield University 2014 Soil Mapping data for assessment area

Newell, K., 2005, *Cornwall and Scilly Urban Survey, Historic characterisation for regeneration, Penryn*, HES Report No. **2005R070**

St John Thomas, D., *A Regional History of the Railways of Great Britain Volume 1 the West Country*

Smith, M. 2012, *Written Scheme of Investigation: Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation at College Farm, Penryn, Cornwall*, CgMs Consulting unpublished report Ref. **MS/KB/12201**



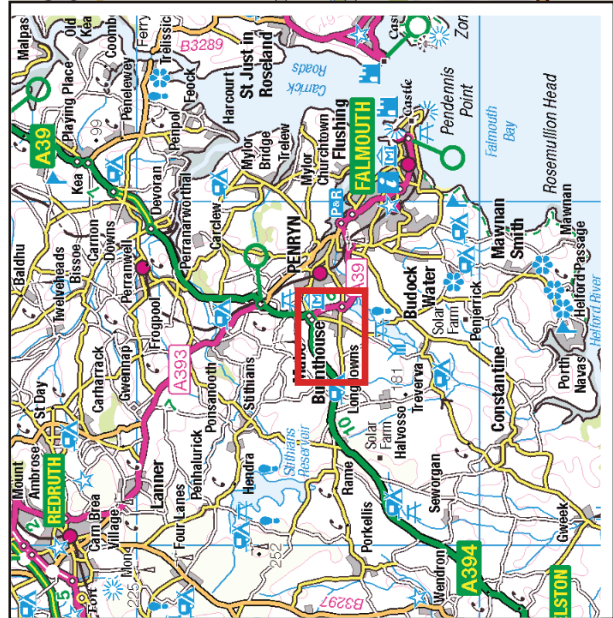
Site boundary

PROJECT
Land at College Farm,
Penryn, Cornwall

TITLE
Fig. 1: Location of site

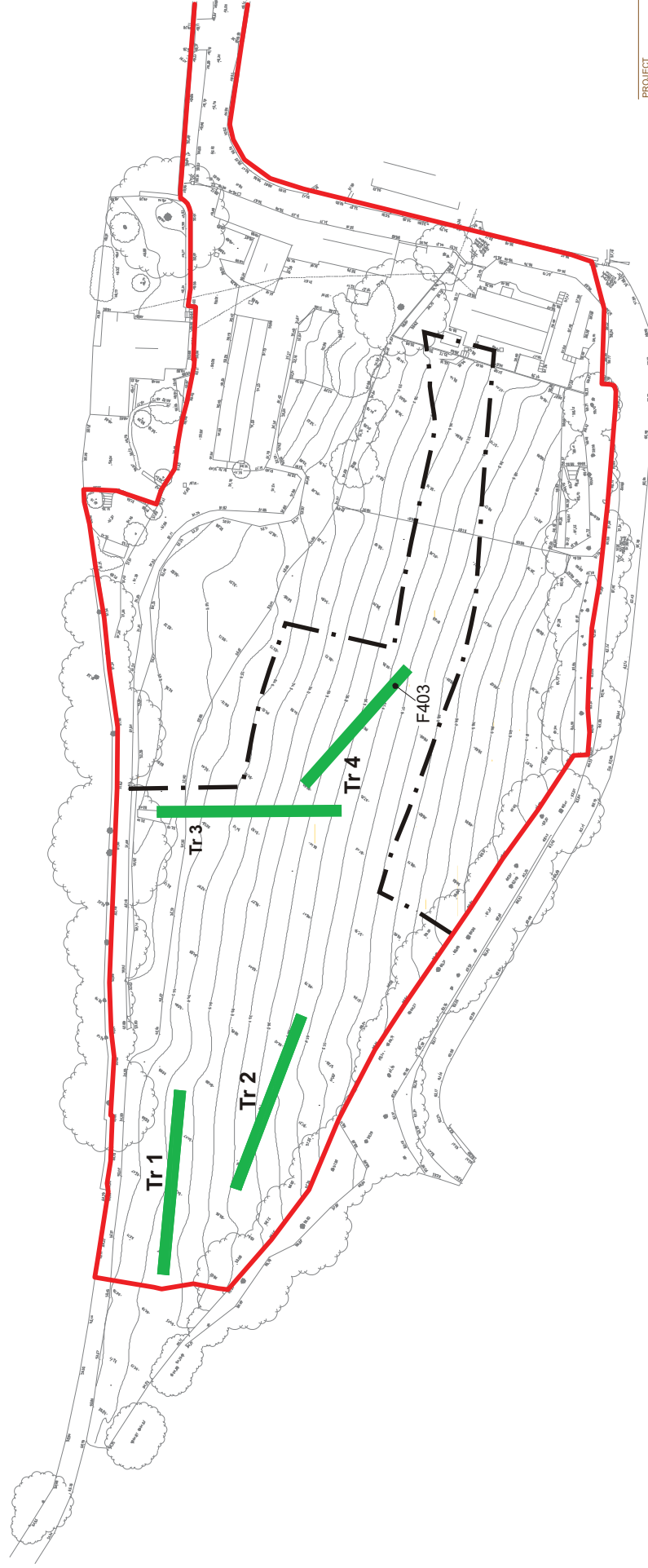


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Scale 1:1250@A4

- Site Boundary
- Evaluation trenches (30m x 1.8m)
- Area available for evaluation

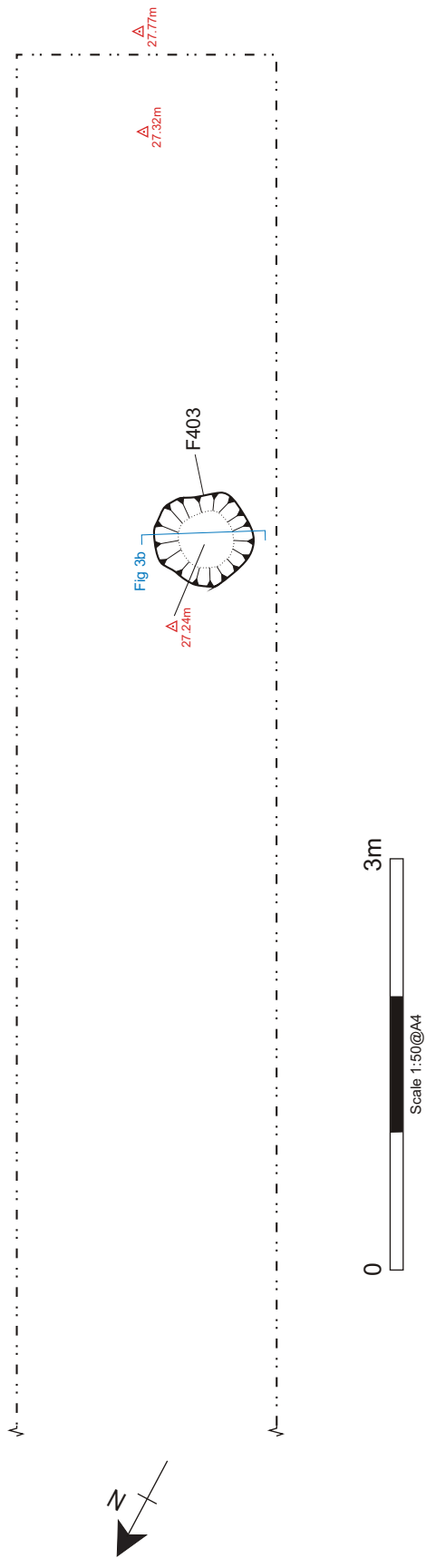


PROJECT
**Land at College Farm,
 Penryn, Cornwall**

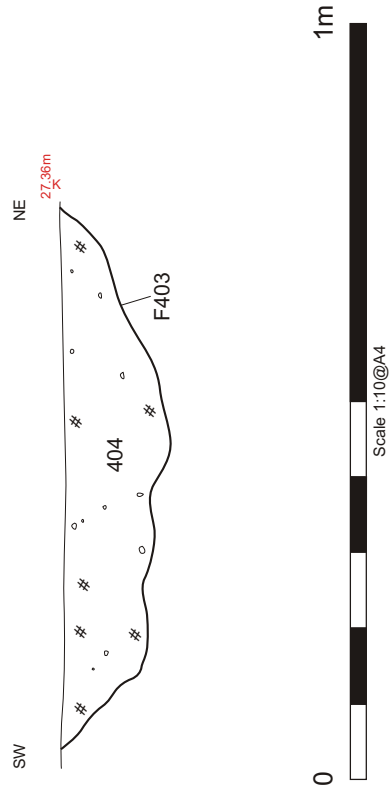
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**Fig. 2: Trench location
 plan**



a) Trench 4, plan



b) Section of F403



PROJECT

Land at College Farm,
Penryn, Cornwall

TITLE

Fig. 3: Trench 4, location
plan and section



archaeology



Plate 1: Trench 1, general view from the east. 1m scale.



Plate 2: Trench 1, section through deposits at the ESE end of the trench, view from the NNE. 1m scale.



Plate 3: Trench 2, section through deposits at ESE end of trench, view from the NNE. 1m scale.



Plate 4: Trench 3, section through deposits at north end of trench, view from the west. 1m scale.



Plate 5: Trench 4, Pit F403, view from the SE. 0.25m scale.

Appendix 1

Tabulated trench descriptions

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1		Length 30m	Width 1.9m	Alignment WNW-ESE
Context	Description	Average Depth	Interpretation	
100	Dark grey-brown firm silty clay loam with frequent roots and moderate quartz, shale and sandstone inclusions	0-0.27m	Modern topsoil	
101	Mixed grey, yellow, orange and red silty sand and silty clay sand with moderate sandstone, shale and granite sub-angular and sub-rounded inclusions, 10-30mm long	0.27-0.37m	19th-century made ground	
102	Dark grey-brown to very dark grey-brown loose silty loam sand	0.37-0.67m	Buried topsoil	
103	Light yellow-brown and orange-brown sand and silty sand gravel with frequent to medium to large quartz and shale fragments, 10-40mm long	0.67m+	Natural	

Trench 2		Length 30m	Width 1.9m	Alignment WNW-ESE
Context	Description	Average Depth	Interpretation	
263	Mixed yellow, grey, brown and red firm silty clay with moderate to large granite, brick and frequent charcoal inclusions	0-0.12m	19th-century made ground	
200	Dark grey-brown firm silty sand clay, with small charcoal, coal, brick and granite, shale and slate inclusions	0.12-0.42m	Buried topsoil	
201	Dark yellow and grey-brown firm sandy clay with very rare, very small inclusions of charcoal, quartz and granite	0.42-0.60m	Subsoil	
202	Light yellow-brown and orange-brown sand and silty sand and gravel	0.60m+	Natural	

Trench 3		Length 26m	Width 1.9m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Average Depth	Interpretation	
300	Dark grey to brown-grey friable silty clay loam with very rare small granite inclusions	0-0.05m	Topsoil (truncated)	
303	Dark grey-brown firm silty clay with moderate to large granite, brick and charcoal inclusions	0.05-0.35m	19th-century made ground	
301	Dark orange-brown friable silty sand with very rare small to medium quartz, and granite inclusions 10-25mm long	0.35-0.45m	Subsoil	
302	Light yellow-brown and orange-brown sand and silty sand and gravel	0.45m+	Natural	

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 4		Length 30m	Width 1.9m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Average Depth	Interpretation	
400	Dark grey to brown-grey friable silty clay loam	0-0.30m	Topsoil (truncated)	
401	Light grey-brown friable silty sand loam with very rare small to medium granite and slate inclusions 20-50mm long	0.32-0.58m	Subsoil	
405	Dark yellow and orange sand	0.58-0.70m	19th-century	made ground
402	Light yellow-brown and orange-brown sand and silty sand and gravel	0.70m+	Natural	
403	Cut of pit	0.70-0.82m	Pit	
404	Dark brown and reddish-brown soft silty clay with rare small burnt granite fragments c. 10-30mm and frequent charcoal inclusions	0.70-0.82m	Fill of F403	

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