

PHASES 5 AND 6 DEVELOPMENT AREAS, SEATON NEIGHBOURHOOD, PLYMOUTH

Centred on NGR SX 497 598

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Plymouth City Council planning ref: 12/02027/OUT (Condition
43)

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On behalf of
Persimmon Homes South West

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AC archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation on land that forms phases 5 and 6 of the Seaton Neighbourhood Development, Plymouth (SX 497 588) was undertaken by AC archaeology during October 2014. The site mainly occupies two fields of pasture and meadow. The northern part of the site lies within the footprint of the former Coleridge Training Ground associated with Seaton Barracks. A desk-based appraisal of the known archaeology in the surrounding area and the study of the historical development of the area have highlighted the proposed development site as having potential for the survival of archaeological deposits and features of prehistoric date and possible survival of features relating to military use of the site.

The archaeological trench evaluation established that the northern portion of the site had undergone significant landscaping during the 20th century which will have removed any pre-existing archaeological features or deposits. The southern portion is located on a steep slope unfavourable for early settlement. A natural tree bowl and a modern pit were the only features exposed. No finds predating the late 19th century were recovered.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1; Plates 1 and 2)

- 1.1** This document describes the results of an archaeological trench evaluation carried out by AC archaeology between 23 and to 30 October 2014 on land forming phases 5 and 6 of the Seaton Neighbourhood development, Plymouth (NGR SX 497 588; Fig. 1). This work was commissioned by Persimmon Homes South West and required as a condition (No. 43) of outline planning permission granted by Plymouth City Council for phases 5 and 6. Advice on the scope of the archaeological investigations was provided by the Plymouth City Council Historic Environment Officer (hereafter PCCHEO).
- 1.2** The Phase 5 and 6 areas comprise parts of four adjacent plots, with the construction area within the north side of the site occupying approximately 5.2 hectares. The land is currently mostly pasture/meadow fields, which are generally level on the north side at around 104m aOD (above Ordnance Datum), with the ground then dropping off steeply down to the south at around 40m aOD. The underlying solid geology comprises Middle Devonian Slates (shillet).

2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** A desk-based assessment for the overall scheme has been previously prepared (Exeter Archaeology 2007). This established that within the phase 5 and 6 development areas there is the potential for the presence of previously unrecorded buried archaeological remains and if present, these most would likely date to the later prehistoric period. In the northern part of the site earthworks representing two potential Bronze Age barrows were noted (Exeter Archaeology 2007, Site 2), along with a level terraced area to the immediate east (Site 12), which may have been constructed for military training purposes.
- 2.2** Historically, the site was farmland comprising a single large field, and parts of two further fields. The larger plot was divided into two in the third quarter of the 20th

century when a rifle range and sports ground were constructed in the northern third of the field. After the barracks closed, this part of the site was subsequently relandscaped and partially used for car parking. It therefore seems unlikely that the earthworks recorded in 2007 represent prehistoric features, but relate to demolition activities.

3. AIMS OF THE WORK

- 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. The results of the work will be reviewed and used by the PCCHEO to inform any subsequent mitigation if required as a second stage of archaeological works.

4. METHODOLOGY (Fig. 1)

- 4.1** The trench evaluation comprised the machine excavation of 18 trenches totalling 520m in length, with each trench 1.5m wide. The trenches were located in areas that will be affected by development in order to provide representative coverage of the site, and where the topography has the potential for survival of buried archaeological remains.
- 4.2** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with an approved project design prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2014).
- 4.3** 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 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate. All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum and were recorded using a Leica Viva CS10 GPS unit.

5. RESULTS (Fig. 2; Plate 3; Appendix 1)

- 5.1** Of the 18 trenches only two contained archaeological or possible archaeological features (Trenches 8 and 18) and this is discussed in detail below. Full descriptions of the trenches are presented in Appendix 1. In general across the site the exposed layer sequence can be broadly split into two groups. In trenches 1-8 it consisted of 0.14-0.20m of grey-brown to brown silty loam topsoil overlying the degraded shillet natural. The layer sequence in trenches 9-18 consisted of 0.13-0.38m of dark brown silty loam topsoil overlying 0.11-0.20m of reddish brown silty clay subsoil, which in turn sat directly on the degraded shillet natural.

5.2 Trench 8 (plan Fig. 2a, section Fig. 2b)

This trench was aligned east to west and measured 30m long. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.30m onto natural that consisted of degraded shillet fragments in red to yellow mixed clay matrix (8001). Approximately half way along the length of the trench a single pit feature (F8002) was recorded cutting the natural (8001).

Pit F8002 was roughly circular and measured 2.72m long by at least 1.50m wide and 0.9m deep. It had moderate, slightly undulating and tapering sides and a well-rounded base. The fill sequence consisted of a basal primary fill (8003) which was 0.14m thick and consisted of compact mid yellow to grey brown silty clay with moderate amounts of angular shillet inclusions (>40mm long), deriving from initial weathering of the cut edges and upcast material. This was followed by a secondary fill (8004) which was 0.22m thick and consisted of compact mid red brown silty clay loam. The tertiary fill (8005) was 0.24m thick and consisted of mid grey-brown compact silty clay with occasional stones and abundant charcoal flecks. The feature was capped with an upper fill (8006), 0.35m thick, consisting of mid red brown compact silty clay. No finds were recovered from any of the fills. The upper fill was sealed by the topsoil 8000.

5.3 Trench 16 (plan Fig. 2c, section Fig. 2d)

This trench was aligned east to west and measured 30m long. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.58m onto natural consisting of degraded shillet in a clay matrix (1602), which was observed to slope steeply down to the south. Towards the east end of the trench a single possible feature F1603 was present cutting the natural (1602).

Feature F1603 was ovate in plan and measured at east 1.60m long, 1.25m wide and up to 0.75m deep. It had a broadly symmetrical profile with sharp, steep sides and a relatively flat base. The primary fill (1606) was 0.26m thick and consisted of light greenish grey to light grey silty sandy clay with inclusions of shillet fragments and sub-rounded quartz and quartzite fragments. This was sealed by secondary fill 1605 which was 0.14m thick and consisted of reddish orange compacted silty clay with common charcoal fragments and small sub-round to sub-angular quartz and shillet fragments, some of which were burnt. Tertiary fill 1604 was 0.20m thick and consisted of light to mid grey silty sandy loam with inclusions of shillet throughout and larger quartz pebbles and cobbles at the top of the deposit. No finds were recovered from this feature. The upper fill material was sealed by the subsoil 1601.

6. THE FINDS *by Charlotte Coles*

6.1 All finds recovered on site during the evaluation were retained and cleaned. They were then quantified according to material type within each context. The finds from this excavation consisted of a small assemblage of post-medieval and modern pottery, CBM, slate and coal. All of the finds came from the subsoil with no finds from secure contexts. They are summarised in Table 1 below.

Context	Context Description	Post-Medieval Pot		CBM		Slate		Coal	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
9001	Subsoil	9	85						
10001	Subsoil	8	20	1	17	1	1		
15001	Subsoil	2	8					3	12
Total		19	113	1	17	1	1	3	12

Table 1. Finds quantification.

6.2 Post-Medieval Pottery

A total of 19 pieces of post-medieval pottery was recovered from the subsoil in three trenches. These are all 19th- or 20th-century industrial wares, including five sherds of blue-and-white and purple-and-white transfer-printed Staffordshire ware.

6.3 Other finds

Single pieces of modern brick was recovered from context 10001 and slate were retrieved from context 10001. Three small pieces of coal were found in context 15001.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The marked difference in the exposed layer sequence between the two groups of trenches relates to the existing topography and later 20th-century land use of the site. Those trenches with a deeper profile (trenches 9-18) were located on the sloping ground within the southern portion of the site. Those trenches which displayed a shallower profile (trenches 1-8) were located on flat ground in the northern portion of the site. This area has undergone substantial landscaping during construction in the mid 20th century of the former Coleridge Training Ground associated with Seaton Barracks, and its subsequent removal. The deposit sequence here comprised a post sports ground topsoil overlying natural.

7.2 Pit F8002 was located within the footprint of the former training ground. The fills indicate it may have remained open for a period of time before being deliberately backfilled. The purpose of this feature remains unclear but given its very regular profile it is probably associated with the former training ground.

7.3 Feature F1603 was located on the sloping ground in the southern portion of the site. It appears to represent a natural tree bowl with evidence for *in situ* burning of a large tree stump, rather than being a dug feature.

7.4 All of the finds recovered came from subsoil deposits in trenches in the southern half of the site. All material was either late post-medieval or modern in date (essentially spanning the period of military use of the area) with no earlier finds present.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The evaluation has demonstrated that the northern and southern portions of the site have undergone different development processes.

8.2 Landscaping of the northern portion of the site during the 20th century has removed any features or material of archaeological significance. The southern portion retains a more intact soil profile. Here the finds from the subsoil are all late post-medieval or modern, and this may indicate that the land was historically largely used for pasture, a practice that would be suitable on the steep topography of the area. This steep topography, as evident on the surface and at the levels of the exposed natural, would be unfavourable for earlier (prehistoric or Romano-British) settlement).

8.3 No significant archaeological features or deposits have been exposed, and no evidence for land uses prior to the late 19th century has been identified. It is concluded that there is very low potential for archaeological features and deposits to be present within the areas of the site that will be impacted upon by the development. In view of the general topography of the area, and the lack of features and finds from the evaluation, it is also considered that the remainder of the Seaton Neighbourhood development area will have very low archaeological potential.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

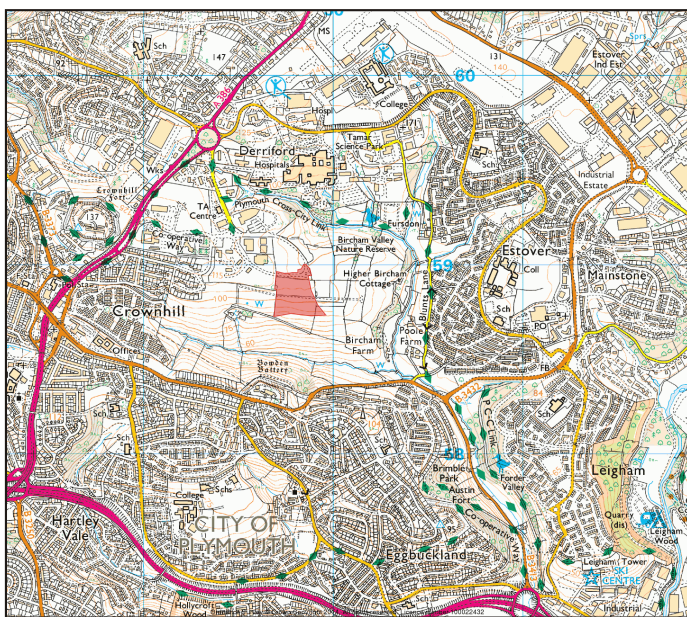
- 9.1** The finds, paper and digital archives are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. If no further fieldwork is required then in line with the approved project design it is proposed that the archive will be disposed of, with this report deposited with the Plymouth Historic Environment Record and the ADS through OASIS.
- 9.2** An online OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 194757, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 10.1** The evaluation was commissioned by Persimmon Homes South West, and was managed for Persimmon Homes by Bill Richardson, and for AC archaeology by John Valentin. The fieldwork was carried out by Ben Pears, Naomi Kysh, Abigail Brown and Jon Hall. The finds were assessed by Charlotte Coles and the report figures were prepared by Elisabeth Patkai. The advice of Mike Daniells, PCCHEO, is gratefully acknowledged.

11. SOURCES CONSULTED

- Exeter Archaeology, 2007, *Archaeological Assessment of Proposed Development at Forder Valley, Derriford, Plymouth*, Unpublished Exeter Archaeology Document.
- Valentin, J, 2014, *Phases 5 and 6 Development Areas, Seaton Neighbourhood, Plymouth, Centred on NGR SX 497 588, Project Design for an Archaeological Trench Evaluation, Planning Reference: Plymouth City Council 12/02027/OUT (condition 43)*, AC archaeology document number ACD998/1/0



- Site boundary
- Evaluation trenches with archaeological features shown



0 100m
Scale 1:3500@A4

PROJECT
Phases 5 and 6 development areas,
Seaton Neighbourhood, Plymouth

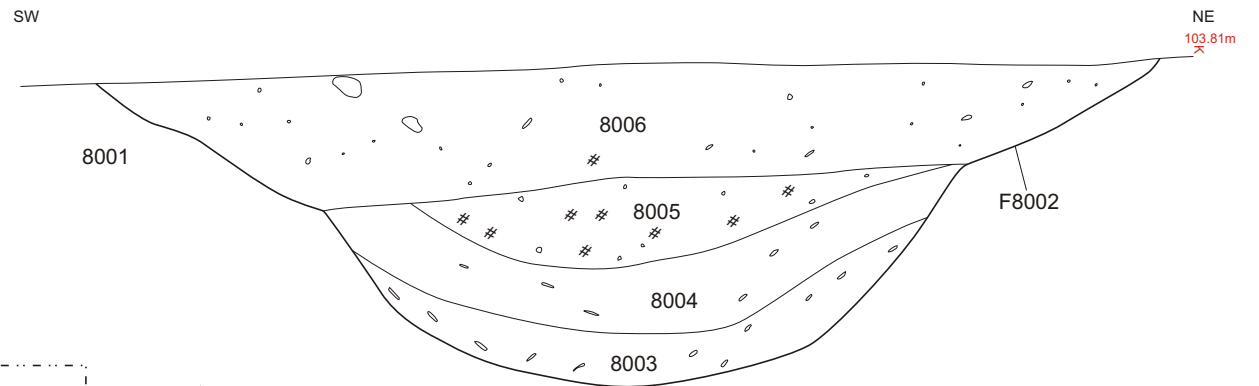
TITLE
Fig. 1: Site location and trench plan
with archaeological features shown



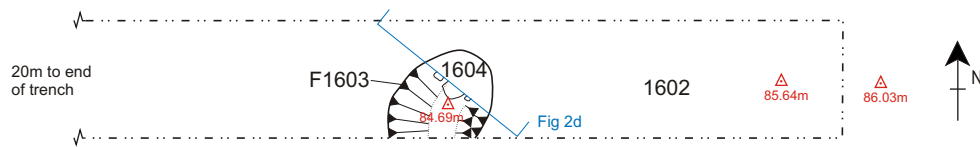
a) Trench 8, plan



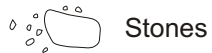
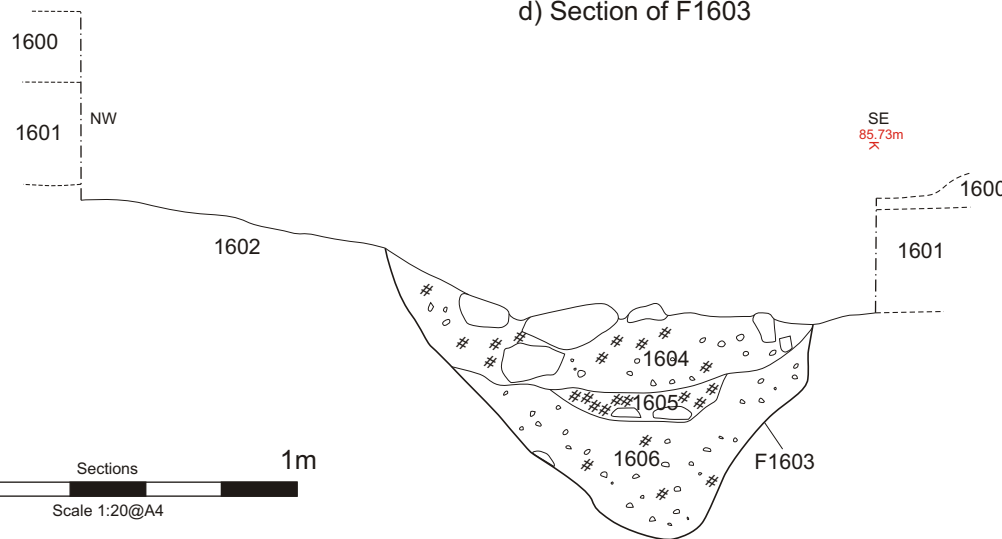
b) Section of F8002



c) Trench 16, plan



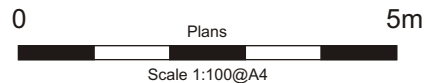
d) Section of F1603



Stones



Charcoal



PROJECT
Phases 5 and 6
development areas, Seaton
Neighbourhood, Plymouth

TITLE
Fig. 2: Trenches 8 and 16,
plans and sections





Plate 1: General view of northern portion of site, looking west.



Plate 2: General view of southern portion of the site, looking southeast.



Plate 3: Section of F8002, view from the southeast, 0.50m scale.

Appendix 1

Tabulated trench descriptions

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 1			Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation		
1000	Dark orangey brown silty loam	0-0.18m	Modern topsoil		
1001	Yellow beige degraded shillet	0.18+m	Natural		

Trench 2			Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation		
2000	Dark grey brown silty loam	0-0.20m	Modern topsoil		
2001	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.20m+	Natural		

Trench 3			Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation		
3000	Dark orangey brown silty loam	0-0.14m	Modern topsoil		
3001	Purple/ yellow/ grey degraded shillet	0.14+m	Natural		

Trench 4			Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation		
4000	Dark orangey brown silty loam	0-0.15m	Modern topsoil		
4001	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.15+m	Natural		

Trench 5			Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation		
5000	Mid grey brown silty loam	0-0.16m	Modern topsoil		
5001	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.16+m	Natural		

Trench 6			Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation		
6000	Mid grey brown silty loam	0-0.20m	Modern topsoil		
6001	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.20+m	Natural		

Trench 7			Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation		
7000	Mid grey brown silty loam	0-0.20m	Modern topsoil		
7001	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.20+m	Natural		

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 8		Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation	
8000	Dark grey brown silty loam shillet inclusions >10mm long, occasional gravels	0-0.20m	Modern topsoil	
8001	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.20+m	Natural	
F8002	Circular cut feature, moderate break of slope, moderate slightly undulating sides becoming sharper towards base. Rounded base	0.20-1.10m	Modern pit	
8003	Mid yellow brown silty clay, compact, moderate angular shillet >40mm long	0.96-1.10m	Primary fill of F8002	
8004	Mid red brown silty clay loam, compact, moderate platy shillet >30mm long	0.74-0.96m	Secondary fill of F8002	
8005	Mid grey brown, silty clay, compact, occasional sub-angular stones >30mm long and platy shillet >20mm long	0.50-0.74m	Tertiary fill of F8002	
8006	Mid red brown silty clay, compact, occasional sub angular pebbles >70mm and frequent shillet inclusions >60mm long	0.15-0.50m	Upper fill of F8002	

Trench 9		Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation	
9000	Dark brown silt loam	0-0.15m	Topsoil	
9001	Reddish brown silty clay	0.15-0.30m	Subsoil	
9002	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.30m+	Natural	

Trench 10		Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation	
10000	Dark brown silt loam	0-0.20m	Topsoil	
10001	Reddish brown silty clay	0.20-0.50m	Subsoil	
10002	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.50m+	Natural	

Trench 11		Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation	
11000	Dark brown silt loam	0-0.20m	Topsoil	
11001	Reddish brown silty clay	0.20- 0.50m	Subsoil	
11002	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.50m+	Natural	

Trench 12		Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation	
12000	Dark brown silt loam	0-0.15m	Topsoil	
12001	Reddish brown silty clay	0.15-0.31m	Subsoil	
12002	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.31m+	Natural	

Trench 13		Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation	
13000	Dark brown silt loam	0-0.13m	Topsoil	
13001	Reddish brown silty clay	0.13-0.24m	Subsoil	
13002	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.24m+	Natural	

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS

Trench 14			Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation		
14000	Dark brown silt loam	0-0.13m	Topsoil		
14001	Reddish brown silty clay	0.13-0.24m	Subsoil		
14002	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.24m+	Natural		

Trench 15			Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation		
15000	Dark brown silt loam	0-0.15m	Topsoil		
15001	Reddish brown silty clay	0.15-0.33m	Subsoil		
15002	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.33m+	Natural		

Trench 16			Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation		
1600	Dark brown silt loam	0-0.38m	Topsoil		
1601	Reddish brown silty clay	0.38-0.58m	Subsoil		
1602	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.58m+	Natural		
F1603	Ovate, sharp steep sides, sharp breaks of slope, flat base	0.58-1.18m	Natural tree bowl		
1604	Light to mid grey, silty sandy loam, shillet inclusions (10-30mm), quartz pebbles and cobbles, common charcoal flecks	0.98-1.18m	Fill of F1603		
1605	Reddish orange silty clay, compact, common charcoal fragments (10-20%), small sub angular shillet fragments and quartz	0.84-0.98m	Fill of F1603		
1606	Light greenish grey to light grey, silty sandy clay, inclusions of shillet fragments (5-15%), sub-round quartz and quartzite fragments	0.58-0.84m	Fill of F1603		

Trench 17			Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation		
1700	Dark brown silt loam	0-0.10m	Topsoil		
1701	Reddish brown silty clay	0.10-0.30m	Subsoil		
1702	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.30m+	Natural		

Trench 18			Length 30m	Width 1.50m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth below ground	Interpretation		
1800	Dark brown silt loam	0-0.15m	Topsoil		
1801	Reddish brown silty clay	0.15-0.28m	Subsoil		
1802	Yellow grey degraded shillet	0.28m+	Natural		

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