

LAND TO THE REAR OF COOKS CROSS, SOUTH MOLTON, DEVON

Centred on NGR SS 7127 2563

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

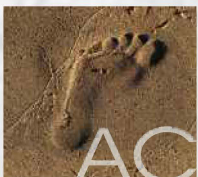
Planning Reference: North Devon District Council 56599
(Condition 8))

Prepared by:
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On behalf of:
EJW Architects

Report No: ACD1096/2/0

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archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation carried out ahead of residential development on land to the rear of Cooks Cross, South Molton, Devon (centred on SS 7127 2563), was undertaken by AC archaeology during March and April 2015. The total development area covers approximately 0.14 hectares of mixed hard standing and wasteland.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of seven trenches totalling 77m in length, with each trench 1.6m wide. These were positioned to provide a representative coverage of the development area. The results have established that there has been a small amount of post-medieval settlement activity close to the site and to a lesser extent medieval evidence. There has also been much disturbance from late post-medieval and modern activity on the site. A small collection of finds includes three sherds of medieval pottery and an assemblage of post-medieval pottery.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land to the rear of Cooks Cross, South Molton, Devon (centred on SS 7127 2563; Fig. 1), was undertaken by AC archaeology during March and April 2015. The evaluation was required by North Devon District Council, as advised by the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCHET), as condition no. 8 of outline planning permission (ref: NDDC 56599) for development of the land as housing. The work was commissioned by EJW Architects on behalf of clients.
- 1.2 The site is located close to the centre of South Molton and is broadly level ground at around 131m aOD. It is situated to the west of South Street, to the east of Raleigh Mead and northwest of Cooks Cross. The site covers approximately 0.14 hectares and is currently cleared wasteland (Plate 1). The underlying solid geology is mudstone and siltstone of the Bude Formation.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site is located within the historic core of the town, with a Minster first recorded at South Molton in the 8th century. The town itself is first recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086, with the site located in an area of presumed medieval settlement. The 1840s South Molton Parish Tithe Map shows the site occupied by a row of terraced houses, which appear to have been demolished sometime in the mid/late 20th century. A recent archaeological excavation on land immediately to the north identified a small number of medieval and post-medieval ditches and pits (Cooke 2015).

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aims of the evaluation were 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, as set out in this report, will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation as a second stage.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Archaeological Work prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2015). It comprised the machine-excavation of 7 trenches (Trenches 1-7; Fig. 2). Trenching totalled 77m in length, with each trench measuring 1.6m wide. Trenches were positioned to give a representative sample of the proposed development area, but were limited by buried services in the south part of the site. The removal of soil overburden within the trenches was carried out under the control and direction of the site archaeologist.
- 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 and 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

5.1 Introduction

Archaeological features and deposits were exposed in trenches 1, 4 and 5 and these are described below. Typical deposit sequences in these areas comprised natural subsoil below c. 0.58-1.27m of modern made ground and garden soils and post-medieval agricultural subsoil. Full context descriptions for all of the trenches are included as Appendix 1.

5.2 Trench 1 (Plan Fig. 3a, sections Figs 3b-c; Plate 2)

This trench was located close to the northern boundary of the development area. It measured 10m long, was aligned E-W and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.10m. Natural subsoil (102) was encountered at a depth of 0.80m below subsoil (101) and topsoil (100). A linear feature (F103) cut natural subsoil at the west end of the trench. Two modern features, a pit (F105) and possible linear terminus or ditch (F107), were observed and are not described.

Ditch F103 was aligned approximately N-S and measured 0.55m wide and 0.30m deep, with a V-shaped profile in the north changing to a U-shape in the south. It contained a single fill (104) consisting of yellow-brown silty sand. It contained three sherds of post-medieval pottery and a single sherd of medieval pottery which was residual in this context.

5.3 Trench 4 (Plan Fig. 3d, section Fig. 3e; Plate 3)

This trench was positioned close to the eastern boundary of the site and was aligned N-S. It measured 12m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.90m. Natural subsoil (402) was encountered at a depth of 0.90m, below subsoil (401) and modern made ground (400). A linear feature (F403) cut natural subsoil at the north end of the trench. The south end of the trench revealed a modern wall with abutting concrete slabs on either side which is not described.

Ditch F403 was aligned E-W and measured 1.20m wide and 0.30m deep. It was steep sided with a flat but undulating base. It contained a single fill (404) consisting of dark brown sandy silt. It contained nine sherds of post-medieval pottery and a single sherd of medieval pottery which was residual in this context.

5.4 Trench 5 (Plan Fig. 4a, section Fig. 4b; Plate 4)

This trench was positioned in the southeast part of the proposed development. It was aligned E-W and measured 12m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.60m where a concrete slab (501) was encountered. Abutting the concrete slab was drystone wall 505 which is described below. Overlying concrete slab 501 was demolition debris (506) and modern made ground (500). A small area of cobbles (502) was exposed beneath concrete slab 501.

Wall 505 was aligned approximately E-W and was exposed in the trench over a distance of 9m with a single break of approximately 1m towards the western end. The cut (F504) for the wall foundation had been dug into subsoil 503. The wall appeared to be of drystone construction and was largely rubble-built using sandstone, shale, slate and occasional brick. In one portion it survived up to seven courses high. The wall, cobbles and concrete slab undoubtedly relate to the yard areas of the former terrace of buildings on the site which were demolished in the 20th century.

6. THE FINDS *by Naomi Payne and Charlotte Coles*

6.1 Introduction

All finds recovered on site during the evaluation were retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. The assemblage consists of a small collection of medieval and post-medieval pottery, iron, bottle glass, clay tobacco pipe, ceramic building material and animal bone. All finds by type and context are presented in Table 1.

Context	Context Description	Medieval pottery		Post-medieval pottery		Iron		Glass		Clay tobacco pipe		CBM		Animal bone	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
101	Trench 1 subsoil	1	1	6	34							5	78		
104	Fill of ditch F103	1	5	3	15										
400	Trench 4 topsoil			5	57	1	114			2	16			4	22
401	Trench 4 subsoil			5	119										
404	Fill of ditch F403	1	3	9	110										
410	Fill of modern pit F409			21	442	3	32	6	130	1	4			16	92
500	Trench 5 topsoil			2	77										
503	Trench 5 subsoil			1	3	1	47							1	2
Total		3	9	52	857	5	193	6	130	3	20	5	78	21	116

Table 1: Finds table (weight is in grams)

6.2 Medieval pottery

Three residual sherds (3g) of medieval pottery were recovered, one from topsoil in Trench 1, one from the single fill of ditch F103, Trench 1 and one from the single fill of ditch F403, Trench 4. All three are small, abraded cooking pot body sherds. They are all fragments of North Devon Medieval Coarseware, which was first manufactured in c. 1200 and continued in production with little discernible change until c. 1450.

6.3 Post-medieval pottery

A total of 52 sherds (857g) of post-medieval pottery was recovered from eight contexts in trenches 1, 4 and 5. A breakdown of the post-medieval pottery is shown in Table 2. The bulk of the assemblage, 35 sherds, is North Devon Gravel Tempered pottery of 17th to 18th century date. Several vessel forms are identifiable including three styles of bowl, a crock, a sgraffito slip ware dish and a chamber pot. There were also several sherds of North Devon Gravel Free pottery, post-1750 industrially made wares and brown stonewares including a salt-glazed sherd from a large bottle which is stamped with an 'E'. The presence of blue-on-white transfer printed pottery in context (410) indicates that pit F409 is 19th century or later in date. Ditches F103 and F403 could be of 17th or 18th century date.

Context	Context Description	NDGT	NDGF	Industrial	Stoneware	Total	Forms
101	Trench 1 subsoil	2		4		6	NDGT type 3C bowl rim
104	Fill of ditch F103	2		1		3	
400	Trench 4 topsoil	3		2		5	
401	Trench 4 subsoil	5				5	NDGT type 11B crock rim
404	Fill of ditch F403	8	1			9	
410	Fill of modern pit F409	12	3	3	3	21	NDGT chamber pot rim, type 1E bowl rim, sgraffito dish body sherd decorated with combed wavy lines; large stoneware bottle body sherd stamped with an 'E'
500	Trench 5 topsoil	2				2	NDGT type 3B bowl rim
503	Trench 5 subsoil	1				1	
Total		35	4	10	3	52	

Table 2: Post-medieval pottery by type

6.4 Iron

Five pieces (193g) of iron were recovered from three contexts. From pit F409 there were three iron finds including two probable nails and an unidentifiable fragment. Two other pieces were derived from overlying deposits and probably had been of structural use. All of the ironwork is likely to be modern in date.

6.5 Glass

Five pieces (130g) of English green bottle glass were recovered from the fill of modern pit F409. They are all body sherds and are likely to be 18th or 19th century in date.

6.6 Clay tobacco pipe

Three fragments (20g) of clay tobacco pipe were recovered from Trench 4. They are all stem fragments with no discernible features and as such they cannot be closely dated.

6.7 Ceramic building material

Five fragments (78g) of post-medieval ceramic building material were recovered from the subsoil in Trench 1. The fragments include one piece of glazed floor tile and four pieces of brick.

6.8 Animal bone by Charlotte Coles

A total of 21 pieces of animal bone was recovered from three contexts. The only identifiable fragments are a dog radius and a dog metapodial from the topsoil (400), and a sheep/goat humerus, a sheep/goat mandible and a cat humerus from the fill of modern pit F409. A rib from a medium-sized mammal was recovered from subsoil (503) in Trench 5. The sheep/goat mandible was from an animal with an age at death of 5-7 months.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The presence of archaeological features was limited to only three trenches. There was much evidence for modern disturbance and made ground. The earliest evidence comes from three sherds of medieval pottery, although these are residual and provide only limited evidence for activity in the general area during that period.

7.2 Ditch F403 in Trench 4 is probably on the line of an east-west field boundary. This may originally have been the line of a medieval boundary, but appears to have been formalised by enclosure in the 17th century (Lord and Weaver 2007) and matches the date derived from the pottery. The other ditch of this date (F103 in Trench 1) does roughly conform to the historic field pattern but does not match a mapped boundary and may be related to field drainage.

7.3 The most substantial evidence is for the presence of late post-medieval settlement in Trench 5, which continued in use into the 20th century, with cobbled yards concreted over. Although marked on the Tithe Map of 1844 there is little evidence that the settlement in this area significantly pre-dates this time and the evidence indicates that prior to this time the proposed development area was agricultural land on the edge of the historic core of the settlement.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The evaluation has shown that the area has principally been used for agricultural purposes until the late post-medieval period when the urban area of South Molton expanded to take in part of the site. The residences in this area were demolished in the 20th century and the area has generally been left as waste since that time.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

9.1 The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ under the unique project code of ACD1096 and Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon under reference number **NDDMS2015.5**. It will be held until all phases of work have been completed and the need for any further archaeological work on the site is established and whether the creation of a digital archive for deposition at the Archaeology Data Service is required.

9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier **209594**, which will in due course include a digital copy of this report.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

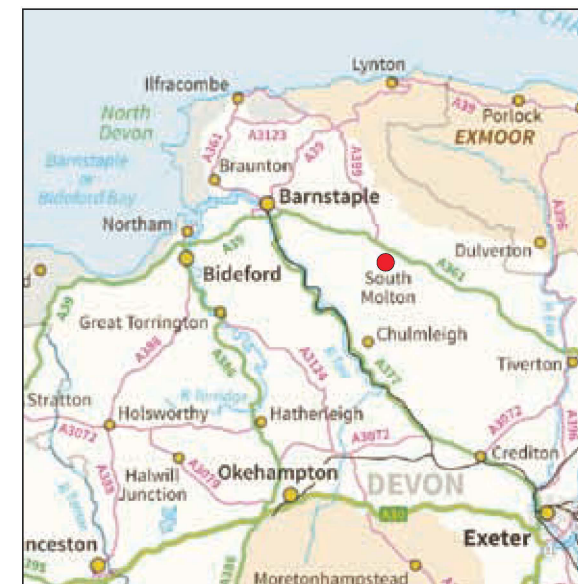
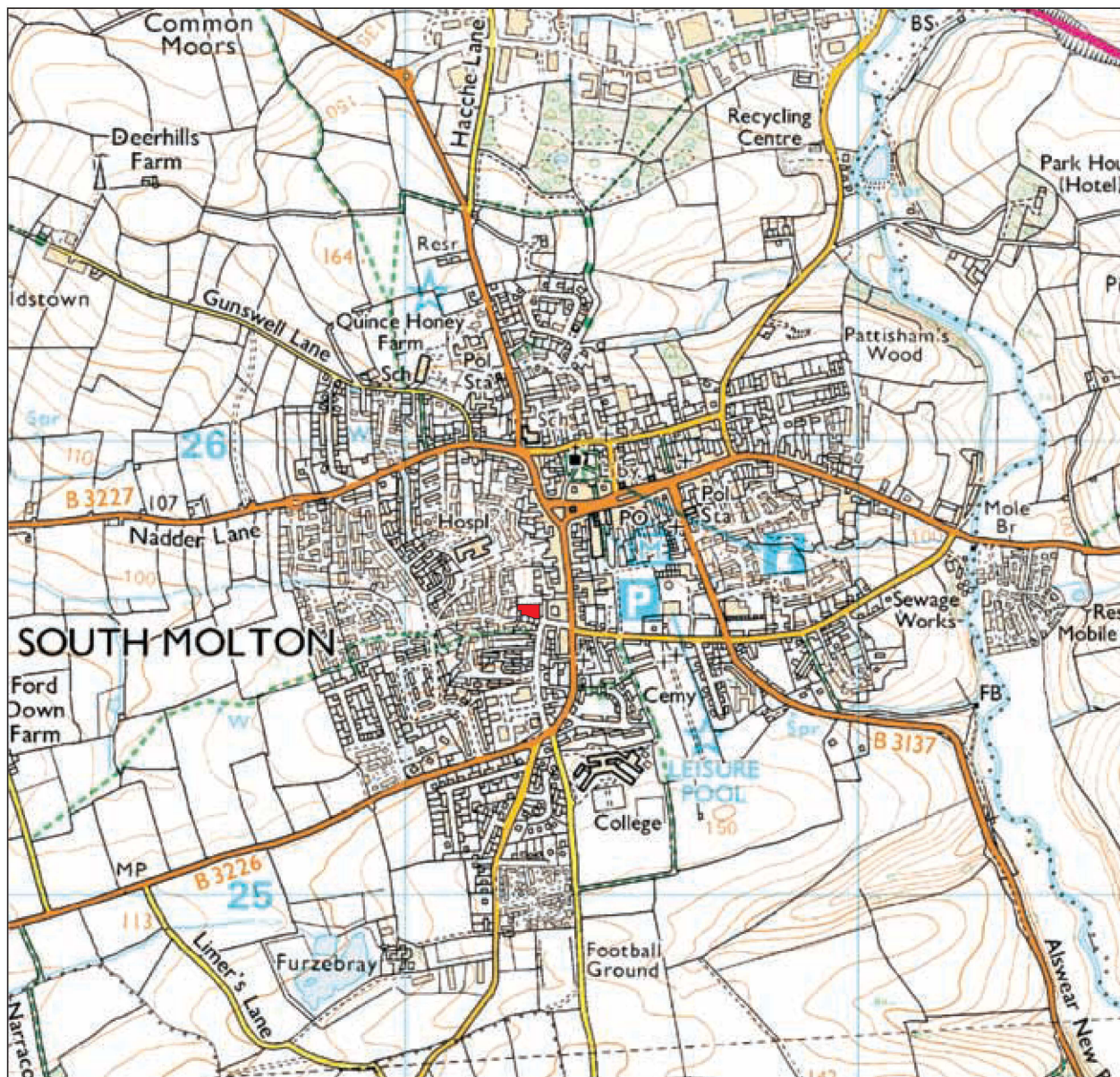
- 10.1** The evaluation was commissioned by EJW Architects on behalf of clients. The site works were carried out by Ben Pears, Stella de-Villiers, Jon Hall and Sean Johnson. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Tony Ives and Stella de-Villiers.

11. REFERENCES

Cooke, P., 2015, *Land at Moors Yard, South Street, South Molton, Devon: Results of Archaeological Excavation*. Unpublished AC archaeology document, ref. ACD1058/5/0.

Lord, J. and Weaver, S., 2007, *South Street Garage, South Molton, Devon: Archaeological Desk Based Assessment*. Unpublished report by CgMs Ltd.

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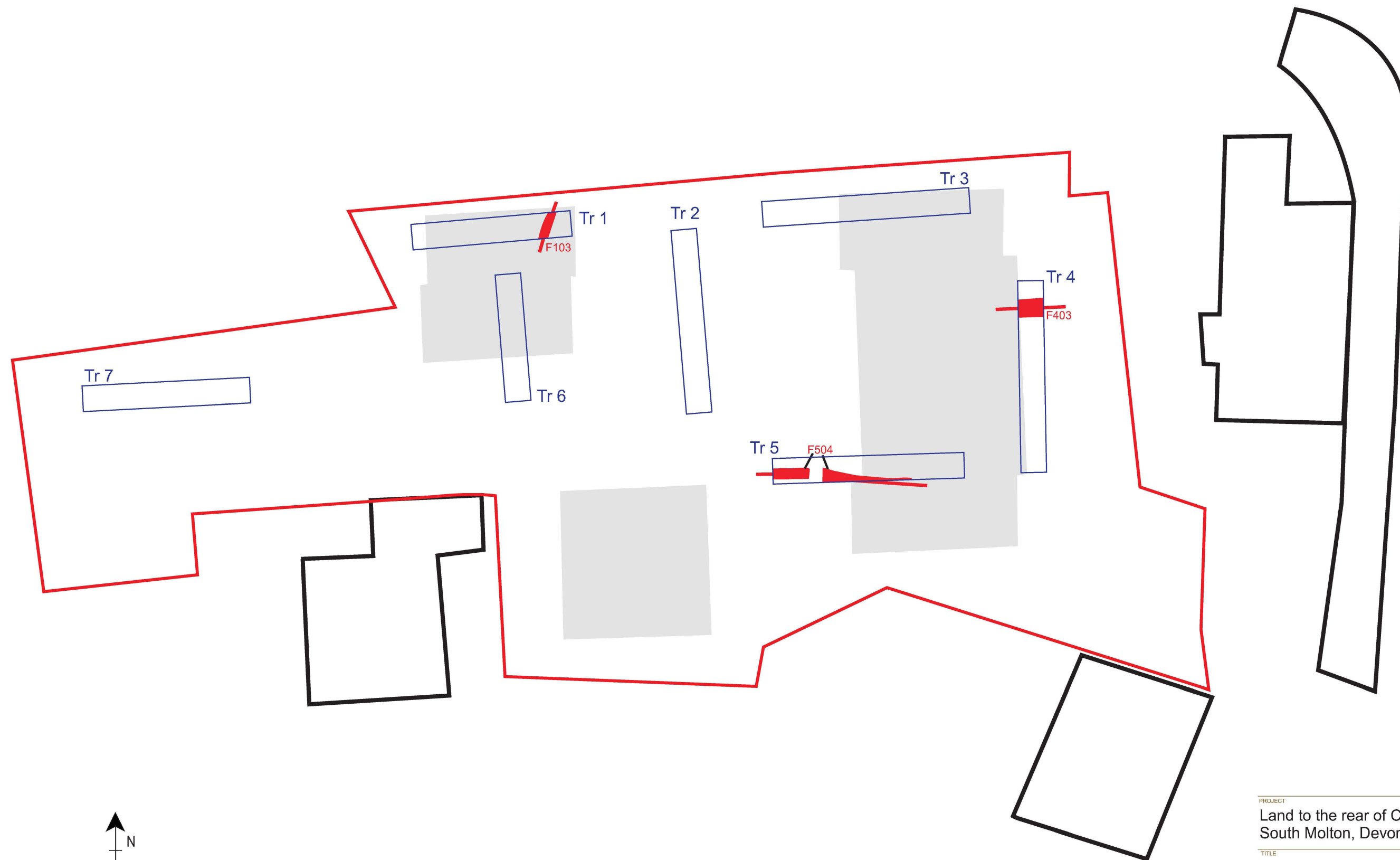
 Application area

PROJECT

Land to the rear of Cooks Cross,
South Molton, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



PROJECT
Land to the rear of Cooks Cross,
South Molton, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 2: Trench locations



0 10m
Scale 1:250@A3



Application
boundary



Evaluation trenches with
archaeological features identified

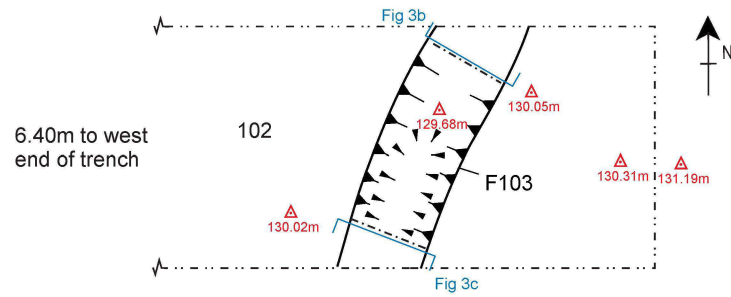


Existing buildings
and roads

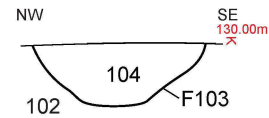


Proposed buildings

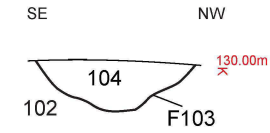
a) Trench 1, plan



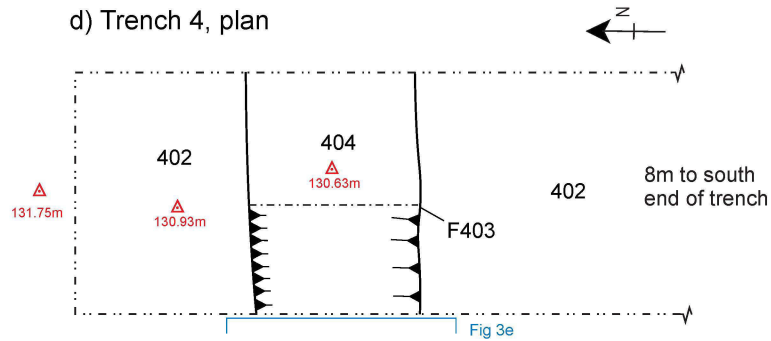
b) Section of F103



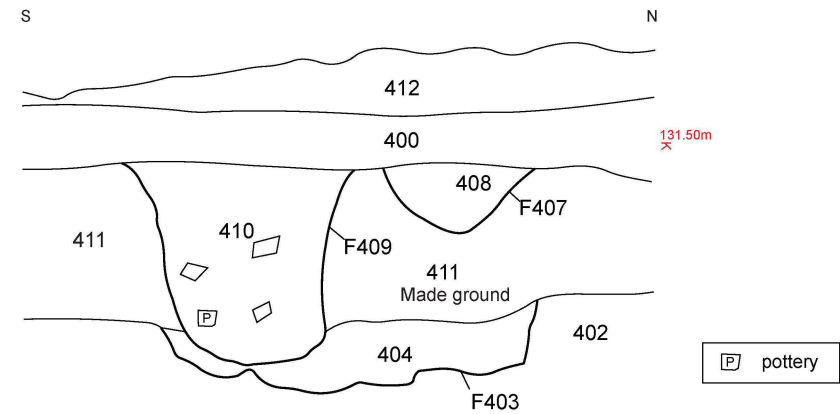
c) Section of F103



d) Trench 4, plan



e) Section of F403



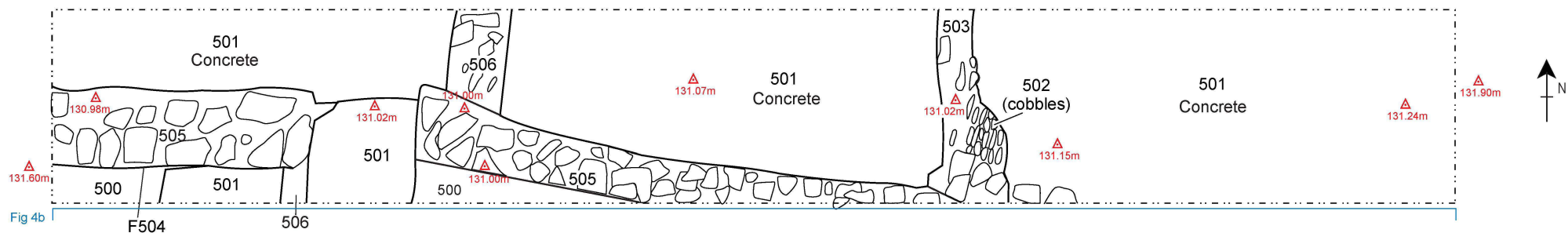
PROJECT

Land to the rear of Cooks Cross,
South Molton, Devon

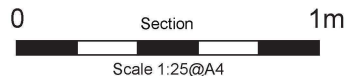
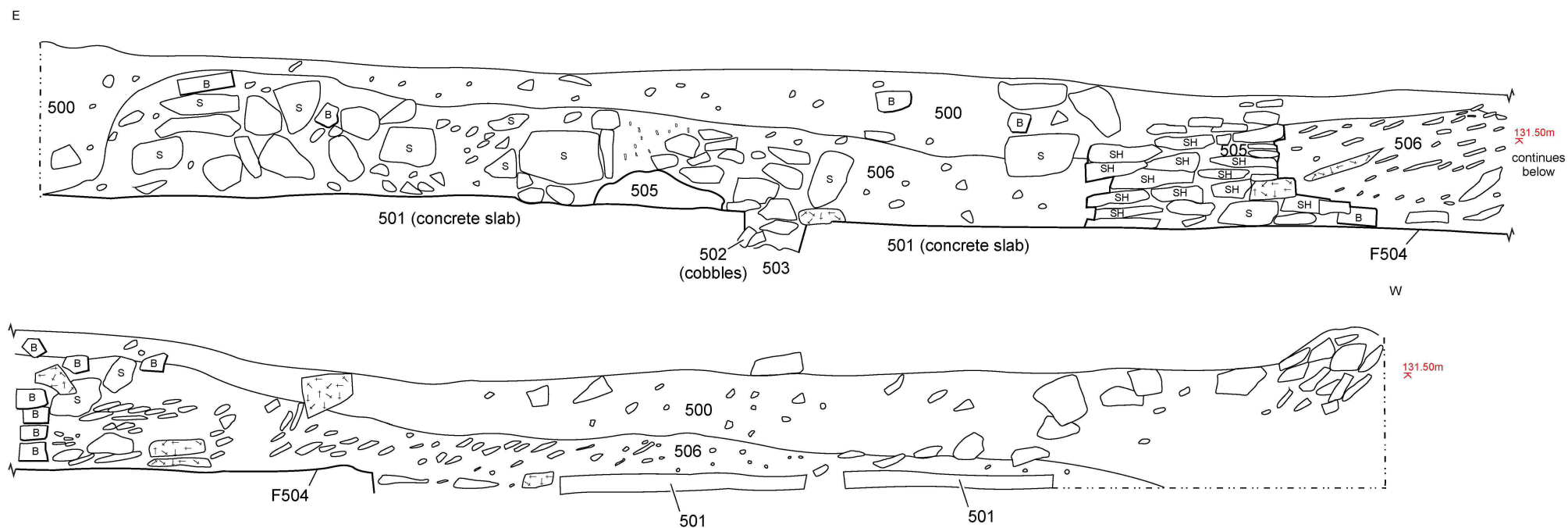
TITLE

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

a) Trench 5, plan



b) Section of trench



	Brick
	Shillet
	Sandstone
	Slate

PROJECT

Land to the rear of Cooks Cross,
South Molton, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 4: Trench 5, plan and
section





Plate 1: General view of the site, looking northeast



Plate 2: Trench 1, Southwest-facing section of ditch F103 (scale 0.5m)



Plate 3: Trench 4, east-facing section of ditch F403 (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Trench 5, looking east (scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trench



APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		Length 10m	Width 1.6m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
100	Dark brown humic loamy-silt	0-0.40m	Topsoil	
101	Grey-brown silt	0.40-0.80m	Subsoil	
102	Yellow-red sandstone on shale	0.80m+	Natural subsoil	
F103	Linear feature, N-S aligned, 0.55m wide and 0.30m deep	-	Cut of ditch	
104	Yellow-brown silt	-	Fill of F103	
F105	Sub-circular feature, 0.40m x 0.35m in diameter and 0.12m deep	-	Modern pit	
106	Dark brown colluvial silt	-	Rapid fill of shallow pit F105	
F107	Linear feature, NW-SE aligned, 0.6m wide and 0.19m deep	-	Cut of modern ditch terminus or possible pit	
108	Black-brown cinder-silt	-	Modern fill of linear F107	

Trench 2		Length 11.5m	Width 1.6m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
200	Gravel	0-0.28m	Modern hard standing	
201	Dark brown and grey-brown silty clay loam	0.28-0.66m	Garden soil	
202	Light brownish grey and dark grey silty loam	0.66-0.89m	Subsoil	
203	Yellow-red sandstone on shale	0.89m+	Natural subsoil	
204	Concrete slab	-	Part of modern structure	
205	Dark grey-yellow-brown silty-clay with inclusions of brick, limestone and sandstone covering concrete slab 204	-	Demolition debris	

Trench 3		Length 13m	Width 1.6m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
300	Dark grey silty-sand	0-0.25m	Made ground	
301	Dark grey to very dark brown-grey silty-sand-loam	0.25-0.65m	Made ground	
302	Dark brown to very dark grey-brown silty clay sand	0.65-1.05m	Garden soil	
303	Light grey silty sand	1.05-1.27m	Subsoil	
304	Yellow-red sandstone on shale	1.27m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 4		Length 12m	Width 1.6m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
400	Dark grey silty-sand-loam	0-0.70m	Made ground	
401	Light yellow-grey-brown silty sand	0.70-0.90m	Subsoil	
402	Yellow-red sandstone on shale	0.90m+	Natural Subsoil	
F403	Linear feature, E-W aligned, 1.20m wide, 0.33m deep	-	Cut of ditch	
404	Dark brown silt	-	Fill of F403	
405	Concrete slab	-	Part of modern structure	
406	Wall	-	Wall	
F407	Circular feature 0.47m in diameter, 0.23m deep	-	Modern pit	
408	Dark grey silty	-	Fill of pit F407	
F409	Circular feature 0.73m in diameter, 0.66m deep	-	Modern pit	
410	Grey-yellow silty shale	-	Fill of pit F409	
411	Yellow-brown silty sand	-	Made ground	
412	Light grey-brown silty sand	-	Mixed topsoil and demolition material	

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 5		Length 12m	Width 1.6m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
500	Dark brown silty loam and rubble	0-0.55m	Modern levelling	
501	Concrete slab	-	Part of modern structure	
502	Cobbles	-	Cobble floor	
503	Grey-yellow silt	-	Subsoil	
F504	Linear feature, E-W aligned, 0.50m wide, 0.50m deep with vertical sides and a flat base revealed over a distance of 12m	-	Cut for wall	
505	Sandstone, shale, slate and broken brick surviving to a maximum of seven courses	-	Drystone wall	
506	Dark yellow-brown sandy silt with fragments of mortar, shale and slate	-	Demolition debris	

Trench 6		Length 8m	Width 1.6m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
600	Gravel	0-0.20m	Modern hard standing	
601	Dark brown to dark grey-brown silty clay loam	0.20-0.55m	Garden soil	
602	Light grey silty sand loam	0.55-0.85m	Subsoil	
603	Yellow-red sandstone on shale	0.85m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 7		Length 10.5m	Width 1.6m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
700	Gravel	0-0.22m	Modern hard standing	
701	Dark brown-grey silty clay loam	0.22-0.58m	Garden soil	
702	Yellow-red sandstone on shale	0.58m+	Natural subsoil	

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