

# MOORS YARD, SOUTH STREET, SOUTH MOLTON, DEVON

Centred on SS 71262 25693

Results of an Archaeological Excavation

Planning Reference: North Devon District Council 58629

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On behalf of:  
CgMs Consulting Ltd

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archaeology

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## Summary

*An archaeological excavation carried out ahead of residential development on land at Moors Yard, South Street, South Molton, Devon (centred on SS 71262 25693), was undertaken by AC archaeology during April 2015. The total development area covered approximately 0.4 hectares of mixed hard standing, out-buildings, wasteland and scrub.*

*The excavation comprised the stripping of an area measuring 19m by 8m, with this targeting an area previously identified as containing possible prehistoric activity. A small number of features were exposed with these principally comprising ditches and small pits. These were largely of medieval to post-medieval date, with the features likely to relate to agricultural plot boundaries and activity on periphery of domestic settlement. A small collection of finds included medieval and post-medieval pottery was recovered. No evidence for the previously suspected prehistoric activity was present.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological excavation on land at Moors Yard, South Street, South Molton, Devon (centred on SS 71262 25693), was undertaken by AC archaeology during April 2015. The excavation was carried out as part of a programme of archaeological work in support of a planning application (ref: NDDC 58629) for redevelopment of the site, following consultation with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCCHET). The proposed development will comprise 34 retirement living apartments including communal areas, car parking and associated landscaping. The work was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of their clients.
- 1.2 The site was located in central South Molton on land to the rear of properties fronting South Street and to the south of Raleigh Mead (Fig. 1). It occupied a roughly square plot measuring approximately 0.4 hectares on what was covered by mixed hard standing, out-buildings, wasteland and scrub. The site was positioned on broadly level ground at around 131m aOD (above Ordnance Datum), with the underlying solid geology consisting of mudstone and siltstone of the Bude Formation (British Geological Survey Online Viewer).

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site had been the subject of a previous archaeological desk-based assessment (Lord and Weaver 2007). This established that it was located on the periphery of the historic core of South Molton, with the majority of the proposed development site formally occupied by agricultural land until the early 20th century. The east portion of the site lay within the rear of former tenements that extend from South Street, with these likely to be medieval in date.
- 2.2 A trial trench evaluation carried out during the previous phase in the programme of archaeological works exposed a small number of archaeological features and deposits across the site (Cooke 2015). These principally included what was thought to represent undated but possible prehistoric activity present on the southern side of the site. This included a curving linear terminal with an adjacent posthole and a separate ditch. In the remaining trenches, a series of probable medieval and post-medieval period plot boundaries were recorded.

### **3. AIM**

- 3.1** The principal aim of the archaeological excavation was to preserve by record any archaeological features present within the agreed area of investigation, which would have been damaged or destroyed by the development.

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1** The excavation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Archaeological Work prepared by AC archaeology (Hughes 2015). It comprised the machine-excavation of an area measuring 19m by 8m (Plate 1), with this targeting the area previously identified as containing possible prehistoric activity (Fig. 2). The removal of soil overburden within the excavation area 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**

The excavation exposed a series of features comprising a number of small pits, a posthole, two ditches and two short linears. Of these, two small pits (F4033 and F4035) were of medieval date, while a ditch (F4055) with re-cut (F4064), five pits (F4013, F4024, F4027, F4037 and F4042), a further ditch (F4006) and a short linear (F4065) were of post-medieval date. The remaining features, comprising a short linear (F4048), posthole (F4007) and eight pits (F4020, F4022, F4029, F4031, F4039, F4046, F4062 and F4044) were undated. Ditch F4006 was investigated during the previous evaluation stage.

Natural subsoil (4003), which consisted of a mid reddish-yellow silty-clay with abundant gravel inclusions, was present at a depth of 0.9m below existing levels. It was overlain by a buried subsoil (4002), subsoil (4001), topsoil (4000) and modern overburden (4009). The excavated features are described in detail by date below with a plan of the features presented as Figure 3 and sections in Figures 4 and 5.

#### **5.2 Medieval**

Pit F4033 was heavily truncated by undated pit F4031 and only the base of the feature survived. It was oval in shape and measured approximately 0.80m long, 0.50m wide and 0.40m deep. It had a single fill (4034) of grey silty-clay which contained a sherd of medieval pottery.

Pit F4035 was sub-circular in shape and measured a maximum of 0.65m in diameter and 0.40m deep with a bowl-shaped profile. It had a single fill (4036) consisting of brown clayey-silt loam, which contained a sherd of medieval pottery.

#### **5.3 Post-medieval**

Ditch F4055 was V-shaped in profile and measured 0.65m wide and 0.30m deep (Plate 6). It had two light grey to light greyish-brown clayey-loam fills (4056 and 4057). No finds were recovered from F4055.

Ditch re-cut F4064 was excavated in three segments (S4010, S4016 and S4058). It was aligned NNW to SSE and measured a maximum of 1.5m wide and 0.36m deep (Plate 5). It contained a maximum of three silty-clay fills. A sherd of post-medieval pottery came from the upper fill (4061) in segment S4058.

Short linear F4065 was aligned approximately northwest to southeast and was 6m long, 0.49m wide and 0.07m deep. Two segments were excavated through the feature (S4018 and S4052) which showed it to terminate in the southeast, while it petered out to the northwest. It contained a single greyish-brown clayey-loam fill (4019/4053). No finds were recovered.

Pit F4013 was sub-rectangular in shape measuring 0.94m long, 0.64m wide and 0.44m deep with steeply-sloping sides and a shallow concave base (Plate 2). It had a single fill (4014) consisting of mottled brown, grey and yellow silty-clay loam, which contained iron objects, clay tobacco pipe and animal bone.

Pit F4024 was oval in shape measuring 1.16m long, 0.78m wide and 0.23m deep with a steep east side and more gradual sloping side on the west and a shallow concave base (Plate 4). It had a single fill (4025) consisting of dark grey-brown silty clay, which contained eight sherds of post-medieval pottery.

Pit F4027 was sub-circular in shape and measured a maximum of 0.68m in diameter and 0.18m deep with gentle sloping sides and a flat base. It had a single fill (4028) consisting of brown silty clay, which contained three sherds of post-medieval pottery, a piece of iron slag and a piece of clay tobacco pipe. Pit F4027 cut pits F4029 and F4031.

Pit F4037 was sub-circular in shape and measured a maximum of 0.48m in diameter and 0.10m deep with a stepped profile. It had a single fill (4038) consisting of greyish-brown silty-clay, which contained, a piece of iron slag, eight fragments of post-medieval brick, a piece of animal bone and two sherds of medieval pottery which were residual in this context.

Pit F4042 was sub-oval in shape and measured 1.40m long, 0.80m wide and 0.10m deep with concave sides and a flat base (Plate 4). It had a single fill (4043) consisting of reddish-brown sandy-clay, which contained a piece of clay tobacco pipe.

#### **5.4 Undated**

Short linear feature F4048 measured approximately 2m long, 1m wide and 0.5m deep. It contained a basal greyish-brown silty-clay fill (4049), which was overlain by two reddish-brown to greyish-brown clayey-silt loam deposits (4050 and 4051). The amorphous nature of this feature may indicate that it was of natural origin. It was cut to the south by posthole F4007.

Posthole F4007 was circular in plan with a diameter of 0.55m and depth of 0.23m with moderately steep sides and a flat base (Plate 7). It had a single fill (4008) of grey-brown clayey-loam.

Pit F4020 was circular in plan with a diameter of 0.40m and depth of 0.09m with shallow irregular sides and concave base. It had a single fill (4021) consisting of dark brown sandy-clay.

Pit F4022 was circular in plan with a diameter of 0.35m and depth of 0.09m with shallow irregular sides and concave base. It had a single fill (4023) consisting of dark brown sandy-clay.

Pit F4029 was cut by post-medieval pit F4027. It had a maximum length of 0.70m and depth of 0.17m with a bowl-shaped profile. It had a single fill (4030) consisting of dark brown clayey-silt loam.

Pit F4031 was truncated by pit F4029 but measured 0.20m deep with a flat base. It had a single fill (4032) consisting of reddish-brown sandy-loam.

Pit F4039 was oval in plan measuring 0.60m long, 0.45m wide and 0.24m deep. It was bowl-shaped and had a single fill (4040) consisting of greyish brown sandy-clay.

Pit F4046 was sub-oval in plan measuring 0.63m long, 0.61m wide and 0.09m deep. It had a single fill (4047) consisting of greyish-brown clayey-loam.

Possible pit F4062 was partially exposed. It measured 0.13m deep and contained a greyish-brown clayey-loam fill (4063).

Feature F4044 was also not fully exposed. It had minimum dimensions of 1m long, 0.95m wide and 0.23m deep. It had very irregular sides and base suggests that it may have been of natural origin. It had a single fill (4045) of dark greyish-brown silty-clay.

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

### 6.1 Introduction

All finds recovered on site during the excavation were retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. The assemblage consists of a small collection of medieval and post-medieval pottery, iron, slag, clay tobacco-pipe, brick and animal bone. The finds are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. All finds by type (weights in grams)

Context	Context description	Medieval pottery		Post-medieval pottery		Iron		Slag		Clay tobacco Pipe		Brick		Animal bone	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
4000	Topsoil	1	25							1	12				
4001	Subsoil	1	6	2	7										
4006	Unexcavated ditch			4	26			1	84						
4014	Fill of pit F4013					3	7			3	9			3	147
4025	Fill of pit F4024			8	22										
4028	Fill of pit F4027			3	48			1	231	1	2				
4034	Fill of pit F4033	1	3												
4036	Fill of pit F4035	1	1												
4038	Fill of pit F4037	2	3					1	1			8	44	1	6
4043	Fill of pit F4042									1	3				
4061	Fill of ditch F4064			1	7										
Total		6	38	18	110	3	7	3	316	6	26	8	44	4	153

## **6.2 Medieval pottery**

Six pieces of medieval pottery (38g) were recovered from four contexts. The sherds from 4000 (topsoil), 4001 (subsoil), 4036 (fill of pit F4035) and 4038 (fill of pit F4037) are all North Devon Medieval Coarseware sherds dating from c. 1200-1450. This group includes a single everted cooking pot rim sherd and a very small glazed jug sherd. Context 4034, the fill of pit F4033, produced a body sherd from an Exeter Fabric 42 jug, which dates from c. 1250-1450/1500.

## **6.3 Post-medieval pottery**

19 pieces of post-medieval pottery (111g) were recovered from six contexts. All of the post-medieval sherds are either locally made North Devon pottery, or industrial products from the Midlands. Context 4001, subsoil, produced a body sherd of 17th or 18th century North Devon Gravel Tempered (NDGT) ware and a piece of modern flower pot. There were two further body sherds of NDGT pottery from the surface of unexcavated feature F4006 and two pieces of locally made flower pot. From pit F4024 there were four sherds of blue-on-white transfer-printed pottery, a sherd of shell-edge ware, two conjoining sherds of blue and white hand-painted china from the rim of a bowl and a sherd of industrially-produced glazed earthenware. This group is of 19th century date. Pit F4027 contained two more body sherds of NDGT ware and a small sherd from an 18th century North Devon Gravel Free slipware plate or dish. There was one further body sherd of NDGT ware from the fill of ditch F4064.

## **6.4 Animal bone**

Four pieces of animal bone (153g) were retrieved from three contexts. The only identifiable piece was a cattle metacarpal from pit F4013.

## **6.5 Other post-medieval finds**

Six pieces of clay tobacco-pipe (26g) were recovered from four contexts. All are stem fragments with the exception of a small piece of undiagnostic bowl from pit F4013. Three fragments of probable iron nail (7g) were also retrieved from this context. Three pieces of undiagnostic iron working slag (316g) were recovered from three contexts. Eight small fragments of brick (44g) were retrieved from pit F4037. These are 19th-20th century in date.

# **7. DISCUSSION**

**7.1** The earliest evidence for activity on the site comprised medieval pits F4033 and F4037, which probably date from the 13th to 15th century. The function of these was not established but with the other residual medieval sherds provide evidence for limited background activity of this date.

**7.2** Ditch re-cut F4064 may be a continuation of the north to south ditch previously exposed in evaluation Trenches 1 and 3 (F1008 and F3007 on Fig.2). This probably represents a former post-medieval boundary. Although undated, the presence of deeper ditch cut F4055 may suggest that it had earlier origins perhaps as a medieval alignment, although this could not be established. The 17th century date of ditch re-cut F4064, as well as previously investigated ditch F4006 corresponds with the date that the land was formally enclosed (Lord and Weaver 2007).

**7.3** The function of the small number of post-medieval pits was not clear, however they are probably related to the periphery of settlement activity. Based on the fill composition of the undated features, the majority of these are of a probable comparable date.

- 7.4** No features relating to prehistoric occupation were present on the site. The activity identified during the previous evaluation was found to be separate features comprising short linear feature F4048, posthole F4007 and NNW to SSW aligned ditch F4064, all of probable medieval or post medieval date.

## **8. CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1** Together the excavation and previous evaluation have shown that the area has principally been used for agricultural purposes and was located on the periphery of the medieval and post-medieval settlement of South Molton.

- 8.2** The previously identified potential for prehistoric activity on the site was not present.

## **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 ACD1058 and Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon under reference number **NDDMS2015.4**. 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 **209995**, which will in due course include a digital copy of this report.

## **10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

- 10.1** The excavation was commissioned by CgMs Consulting on behalf of their clients. The site works were carried out by Paul Cooke, Stella De-Villiers, Laura McArdle, Lewis Ernest and Jon Hall. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Stella De-Villiers.



## 11. REFERENCES

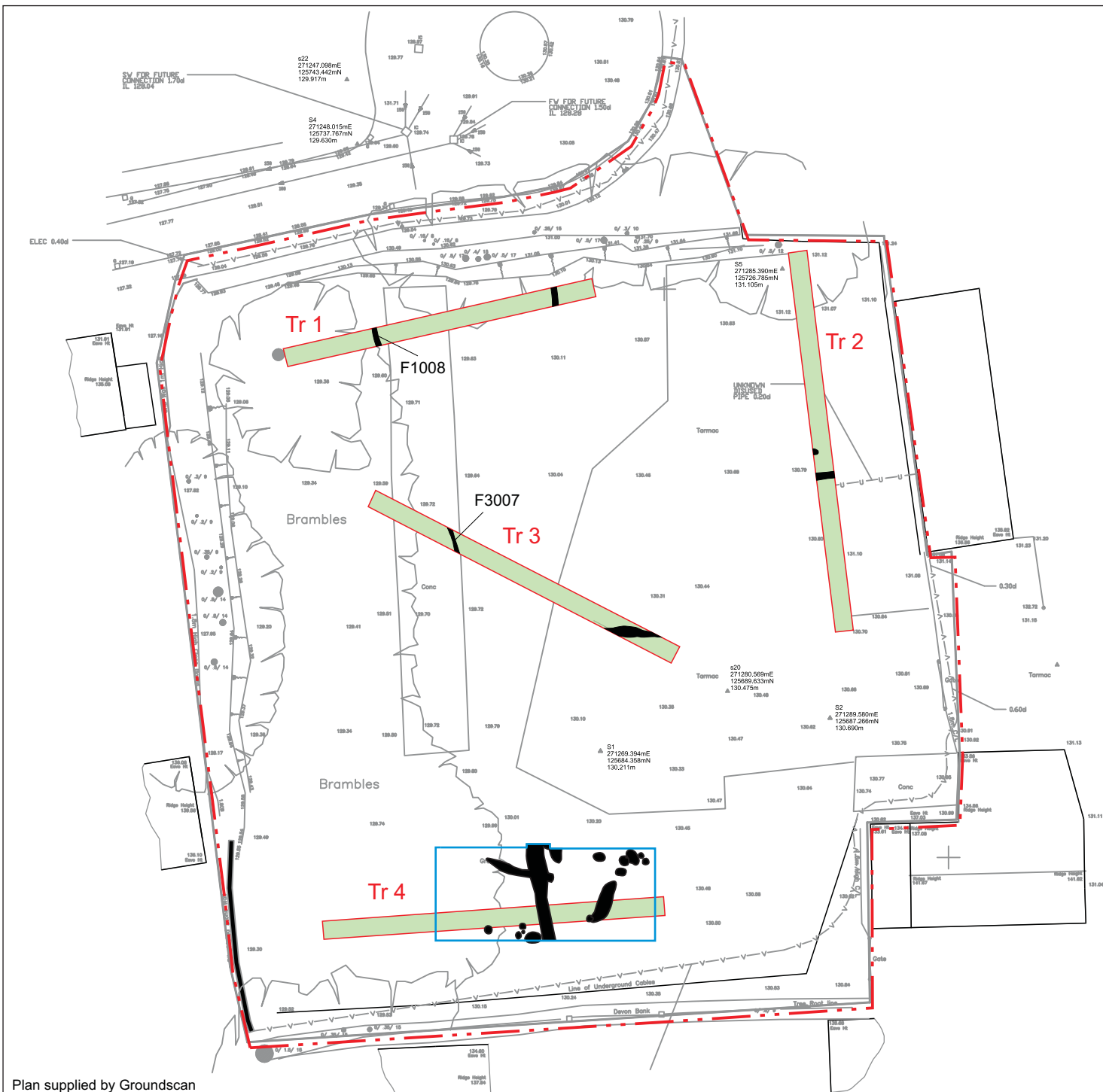
British Geological Society Online Viewer 2015 [www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)

Cooke, P., 2015, *Land to the rear of Moors Yard, South Street, South Molton, Devon: Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief and Trench Evaluation*. Unpublished AC archaeology document, ref. ACD1058/4/0.

Hughes, S., 2015, *Land to rear of Moors Yard, South Street, South Molton, Devon: Project Design for 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.



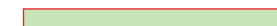


Plan supplied by Groundscan

## Legend



Application area



Evaluation Trenches 1 - 4



Area of excavation

## Period



Medieval and Post-medieval features



Scale 1:500@A4

## PROJECT

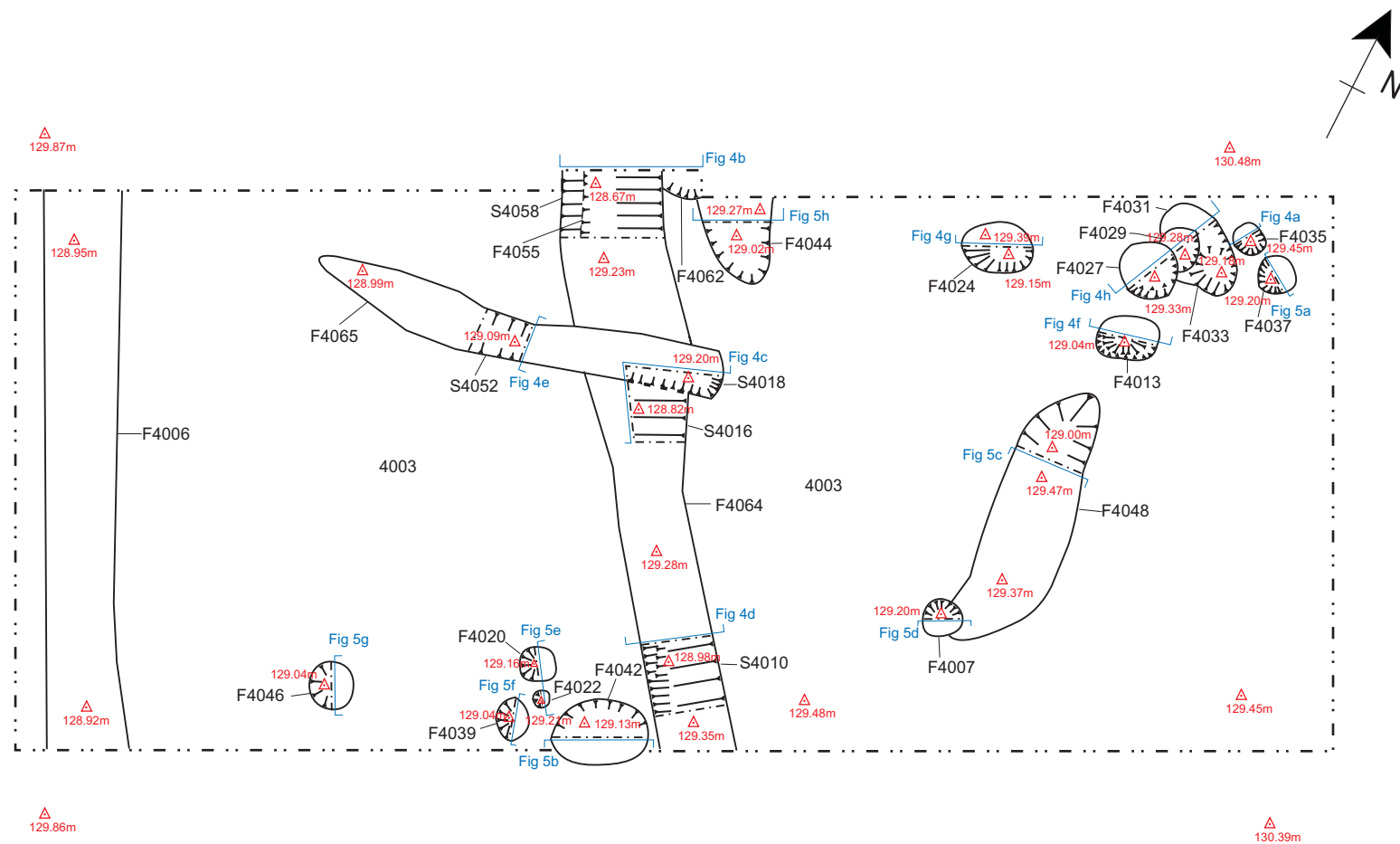
Moors Yard, South Street, South Molton,  
Devon

## TITLE

Fig. 2: Location of excavation in relation to  
previous evaluation trenches

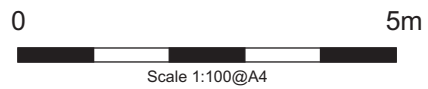


AC archaeology



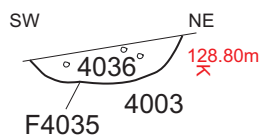
PROJECT  
Moors Yard, South Street,  
South Molton, Devon

TITLE  
Fig. 3: Plan of excavation area

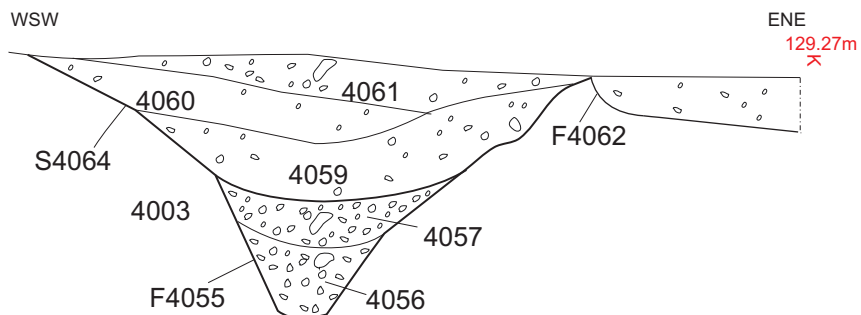




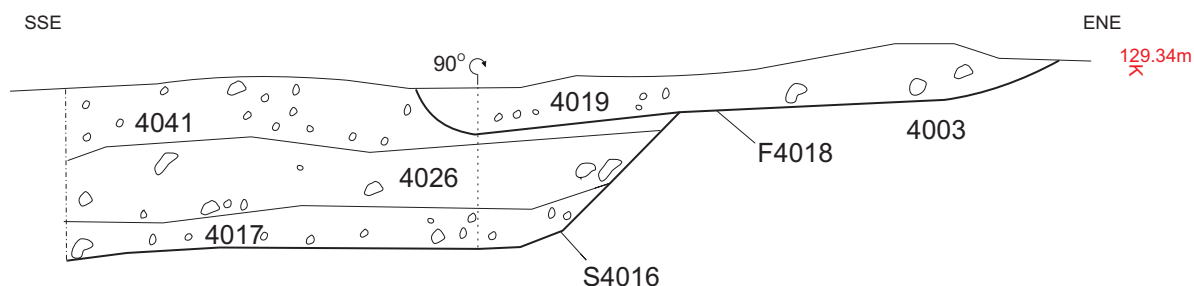
a) section of F4035



b) Section of F4064, segment S4055 and F4055



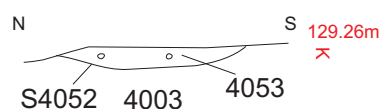
c) Section of F4064, segment S4026 and F4018



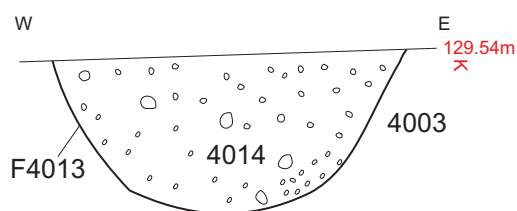
d) Section of F4064, segment S4010



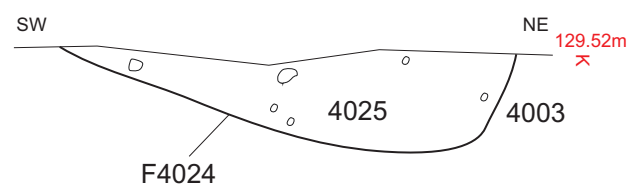
e) Section of F4052, segment S4052



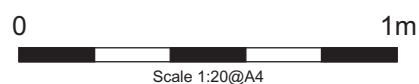
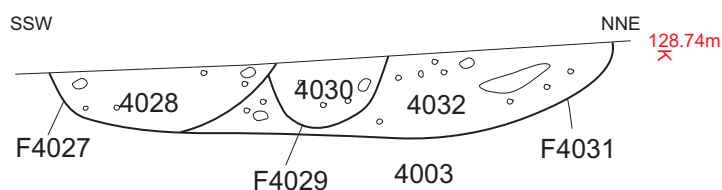
f) section of F4013



g) section of F4024



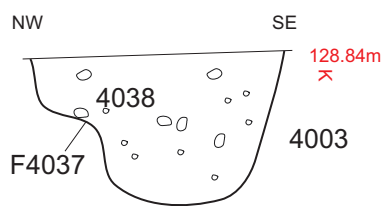
h) section of F4031



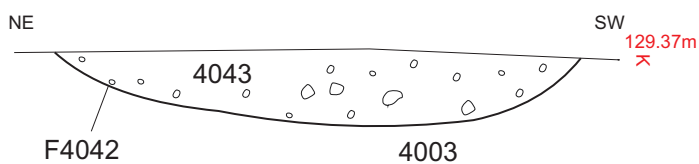
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Moors Yard, South Street, South  
Molton, Devon

TITLE  
Fig. 4: Sections of features

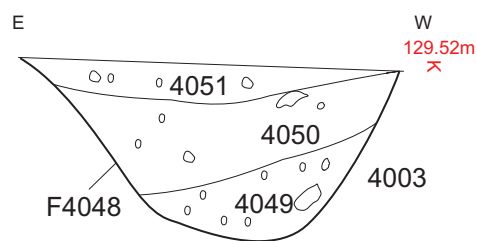
a) section of F4037



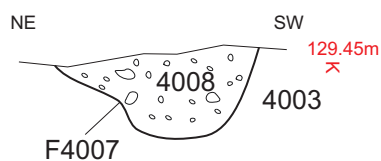
b) section of F4042



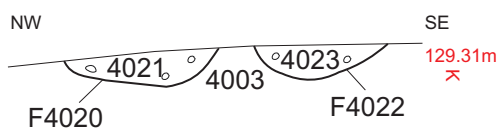
c) section of F4048



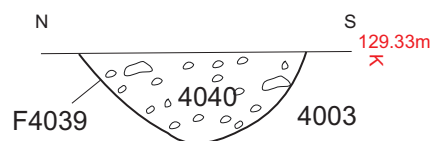
d) section of F4007



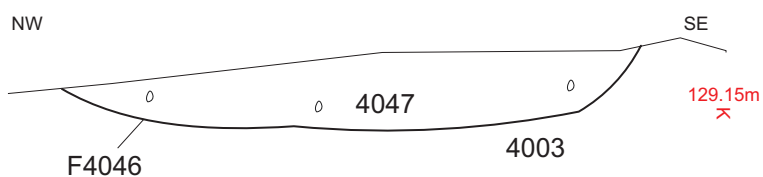
e) section of F4020



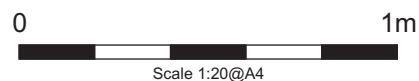
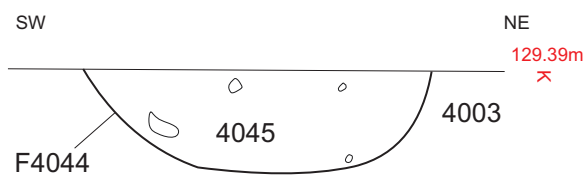
f) section of F4039



g) section of F4046



b) section of F4044



PROJECT

Moors Yard, South Street, South  
Molton, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 5: Sections of features



AC archaeology



Plate 1: General view of excavation area, looking northeast



Plate 2: South-facing section of pit F4013 (scale 1m)



Plate 3: South-facing section of pit F4024 (scale 1m)



Plate 4: North-facing section of pit F4042 (scale 1m)





Plate 5: North-facing section of ditch F4064, segment 4010 (scale 1m)



Plate 6: North-facing section of ditches F4064 and F4055, segment 4058 (scale 1m)



Plate 7: North-facing section of posthole F4007 (scale 1m)



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