

LAND AT GRATTONS, DARTINGTON, DEVON

Centred on NGR SX 7952 6274

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

Planning Reference: South Hams District Council
14/0300/15/F

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On behalf of:
Dartington Hall Trust

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AC archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation was carried out by AC archaeology in April 2015 on land at Grattons, Dartington Hall, Devon (NGR SX 7952 6274). The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of nine trenches (Trenches 1-9) totalling 175m in length, with each trench measuring 1.6m wide. The trenches were positioned to target anomalies identified in a previous geophysical survey.

A ditch relating to possible early livestock enclosure was exposed in two trenches, while a probable medieval to post-medieval field drainage ditch was recorded elsewhere on the site. No other features were exposed, with many of the geophysical anomalies shown to relate to banding in the natural subsoil and modern drainage. There were no finds from the ditches and three prehistoric worked flints were found in overlying deposits.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land at Grattons, Dartington Hall, Devon (NGR SX 7952 6274; Fig. 1), was undertaken by AC archaeology during April 2015. The evaluation was commissioned by the Dartington Hall Trust and was requested by South Hams District Council, as advised by Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (DCCHET) to inform proposals for a proposed solar farm development.
- 1.2 The application site lies within a single agricultural field of c. 4.8 hectares (Plate 1) located to the west of Dartington Hall, and the proposed solar array will cover c. 2 hectares of this area extending up to the ridgeline of the field. The site is located at around 60m aOD, and the underlying solid geology comprises Lower Devonian Slates and Sandstones.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site has been the subject of a previous desk-based assessment (Lutescu-Jones 2014) and geophysical survey (Dean 2015). The assessment found that there are no previously recorded heritage assets on the site itself, although its northern boundary is part of a scheduled medieval deer park complex. In the field immediately to the north of the site a prehistoric flint scatter is recorded, while to the south and east are Dartington Hall and Gardens. A manor is recorded there as early as the 9th century AD, but the main house was originally built in the 14th century.
- 2.2 The geophysical survey has located a series of anomalies which may relate to buried archaeological remains. Many of the anomalies are linear in form, including one crossing through the centre of the site aligned broadly E-W, then an angle in the feature turns it towards the south. Others appeared more ephemeral in form.

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. The results will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation and whether or not the significance and state of survival of any buried archaeological remains is great enough to influence the layout of the proposed development should planning consent be obtained.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2015). It comprised the machine-excavation of nine trenches (Trenches 1-9). Trenching totalled 175m in length, with each trench measuring 1.6m wide. Trenches were positioned using a Leica Net rover GPS accurate to +/- 1cm in order to target anomalies identified by the geophysical survey (Fig. 2). 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 3, 5 and 6 only and these are described below. In a number of trenches, many of the interpreted anomalies were shown on investigation to be variations with the natural subsoil, comprising banding of clay and slates/sandstone, as well as a modern ceramic land drain. Typical deposit sequences across the site comprised natural subsoil below c. 0.45-0.60m of topsoil and agricultural subsoil. Full context descriptions for all of the trenches are included as Appendix 1.

5.2 Trench 3 (Plan Fig. 3a, section Fig. 3b; Plate 2)

This trench was aligned broadly NE-SW and located just southeast of the ridgeline. The natural subsoil varied somewhat due to different patches of stone and clay and was encountered at a depth of 0.58m at the NE end of the trench and 0.67m to the SE. A linear feature (F303) was identified near the NE end of the trench, which corresponded with a linear anomaly identified by the geophysical survey. Other recorded anomalies matched variations in the natural subsoil.

Ditch F303 was NW-SE aligned and measured 1.9m wide by 0.89m deep. Within the excavated section its edges were moderately sloping onto a rounded base. It contained a sequence of three fills, with the lower primary fill (304) a friable, mid-brown yellow silty-clay, containing frequent angular shale up to 0.20m long, this fill covered the whole of the northeast side of the ditch. Overlying this was fill 305, a friable, light brown silty-clay, containing moderate angular shale up to 0.12m long, this fill appears to be a hill wash deposit. The upper fill (306) was a friable mid-red brown silty-clay, containing moderate angular shale up to 0.12m long. No finds were recovered from any fill.

5.3 Trench 5 (Plan Fig. 3c, section Fig. 3d; Plate 2)

This trench was aligned approximately NW-SE. The depth of overburden varied due to the trench being located near the middle of a small combe, with the northwest end being considerably deeper than the southeast. Natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.91m from the surface at the NE end of the trench, dropping to 0.49m at the SW end. Ditch F503 was identified towards the middle of the trench.

Ditch F503 was aligned NE-SW, cut the agricultural subsoil layer and measured 0.76m wide by 0.38m deep. Within the excavated section its edges were steeply

sloping onto a rounded base. It contained a single fill (504) consisting of a friable reddish brown clayey loam. No finds were recovered.

5.4 Trench 6 (Plan Fig. 3e, section Fig. 3f; Plate 3)

This trench was located almost in the centre of the small combe on the east side of the site, and was aligned NE-SW. Natural subsoil was encountered at a depth of 0.60m from the surface at the NE end of the trench, dropping to 0.90m at the SW end. Ditch F603 was identified towards the middle of the trench.

Ditch F603 was broadly N-S aligned and measured 3.4m wide but was not bottomed as it was a deep trench and the feature was fully excavated in Trench 3 (see above). Where excavated, the edges were moderately sloping and it contained a single visible fill (604) of a friable reddish brown silty clay, containing moderate angular shale up to 0.12m long. No finds were recovered.

6. THE FINDS *by Naomi Payne*

6.1 Introduction

All finds recovered on site during the evaluation have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. The assemblage consists of a small collection of prehistoric worked flint. The finds are summarised in Table 1.

Context	Context Description	Worked flint	
		No	Wt
200	Trench 2 topsoil	1	50
500	Trench 5 topsoil	2	35
Total		3	85

Table 1: The finds (weights in grams)

6.2 Worked flint

Three pieces (85g) of worked flint were recovered from two topsoil contexts. Trench 2 produced an unevenly worked core. Trench 5 produced a side scraper and a retouched flake. It is not possible to give a specific date to these pieces as they are not diagnostic of a particular period. However, they are most likely to date from the later Neolithic or Early Bronze Age.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The evaluation has established that the preceding geophysical survey interpreted a number of sub-surface variations, which on investigation were shown to be mainly banding of clay and stone within the natural subsoil. In addition, the strong linear anomaly (1) interpreted as a brick structure or culvert, was established by the excavation of Trench 4 to be a ceramic field drain. However two of the main anomalies identified by the geophysical survey and targeted by Trenches 3, 5 and 6 were former ditches

7.2 A large ditch (F303/F603) was fully excavated in Trench 3 and partly in Trench 6. This ditch was a clear anomaly interpreted from the geophysical survey and can be identified over a distance of approximately 125m and appears to extend up the hill in a NW-SE alignment, then turning to the south close to the southeast boundary of the field. The character of the ditch and its location in the landscape, potentially cutting off the southwest end of the ridge, is typical of field enclosure of later prehistoric or the Romano-British period (Mudd and Joyce 2014). The absence of any associated

settlement and the relatively large size of the ditch, indicates that it may have been used for containing livestock. The ditch identified in Trench 5 was less substantial, and its presence cutting the agricultural subsoil layer suggests a more recent date, while its rounded profile indicates a drainage function.

- 7.3** The small quantity of worked flint picked up from overlying deposits indicates a general background scatter of activity in the area during the later Neolithic or Early Bronze Age. The Devon Historic Environment Record records that a collection of worked flint was recovered from the neighbouring field to the north, giving a further indication of similar dated activity in the area.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1** The evaluation has shown that the majority of the anomalies identified by the geophysical survey relate to banding identified in the natural geology. The archaeological feature of most interest is the ditch (F303/F603) that is most probably a former field boundary relating to the containing of livestock. Although no finds were recovered from its fill, its character and presence below an agricultural subsoil/colluvial layer indicates an early date.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

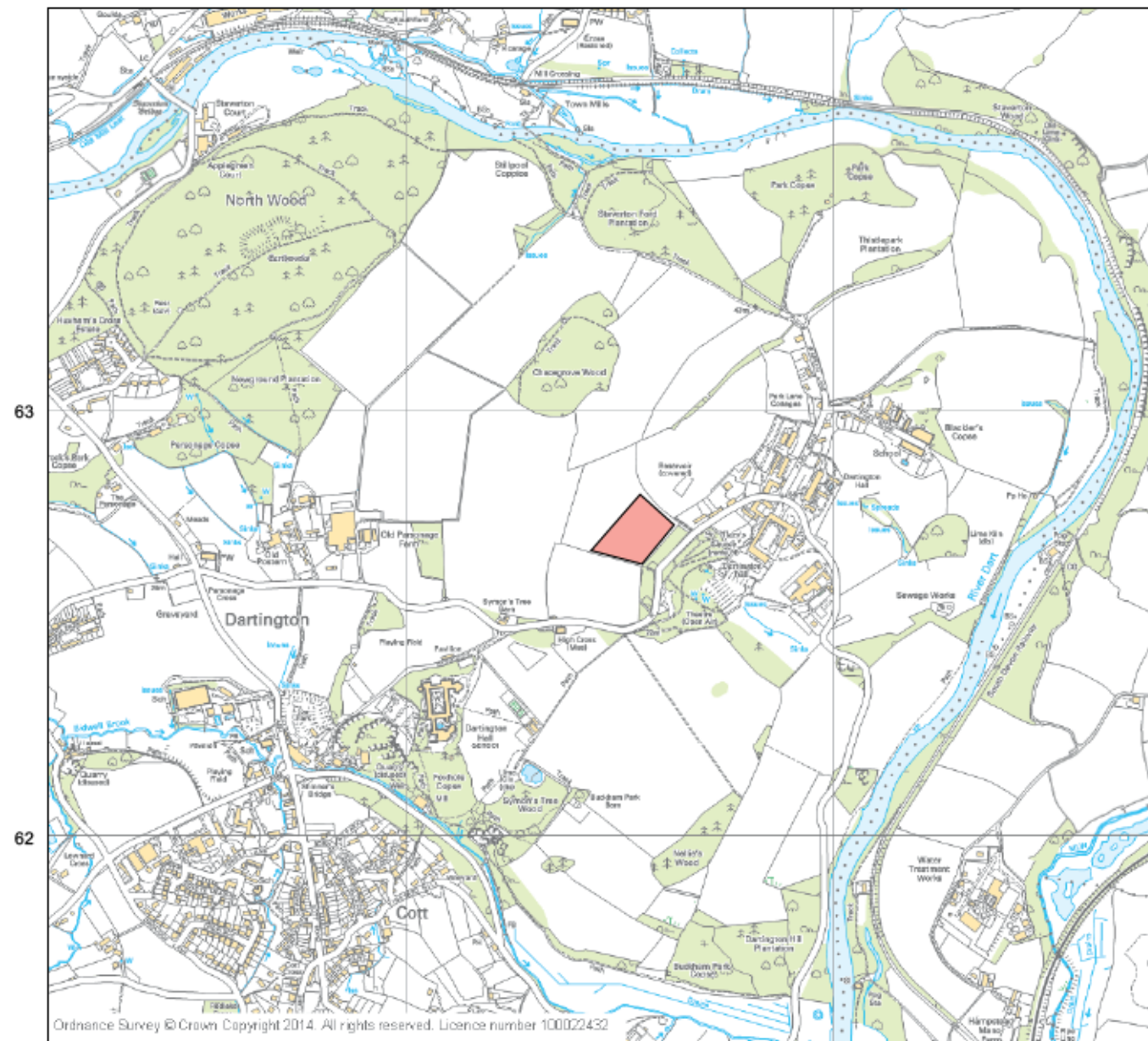
- 9.1** The finds, paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ under the unique project code of ACD1114 and RAM Museum, Exeter reference number RAMM: 15/18. It will be held until all phases of work have been completed 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 **210300**, which will in due course include a digital copy of this report.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 10.1** The evaluation was commissioned by the Dartington Hall Trust. The site works were carried out by Chris Caine, Jon Hall, Laura McArdle and Paul Rainbird. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Sarnia Blackmore. The collaborative role of Graham Tait, Devon Archaeology Officer, is duly acknowledged.

11. REFERENCES

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- Valentin, J. 2015, *Land at Grattons, Dartington, Devon: Method Statement for an Archaeological Trench Evaluation*, AC archaeology document no. ACD1114/1/0.



Development area

PROJECT

Land at Grattons, Dartington Hall, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



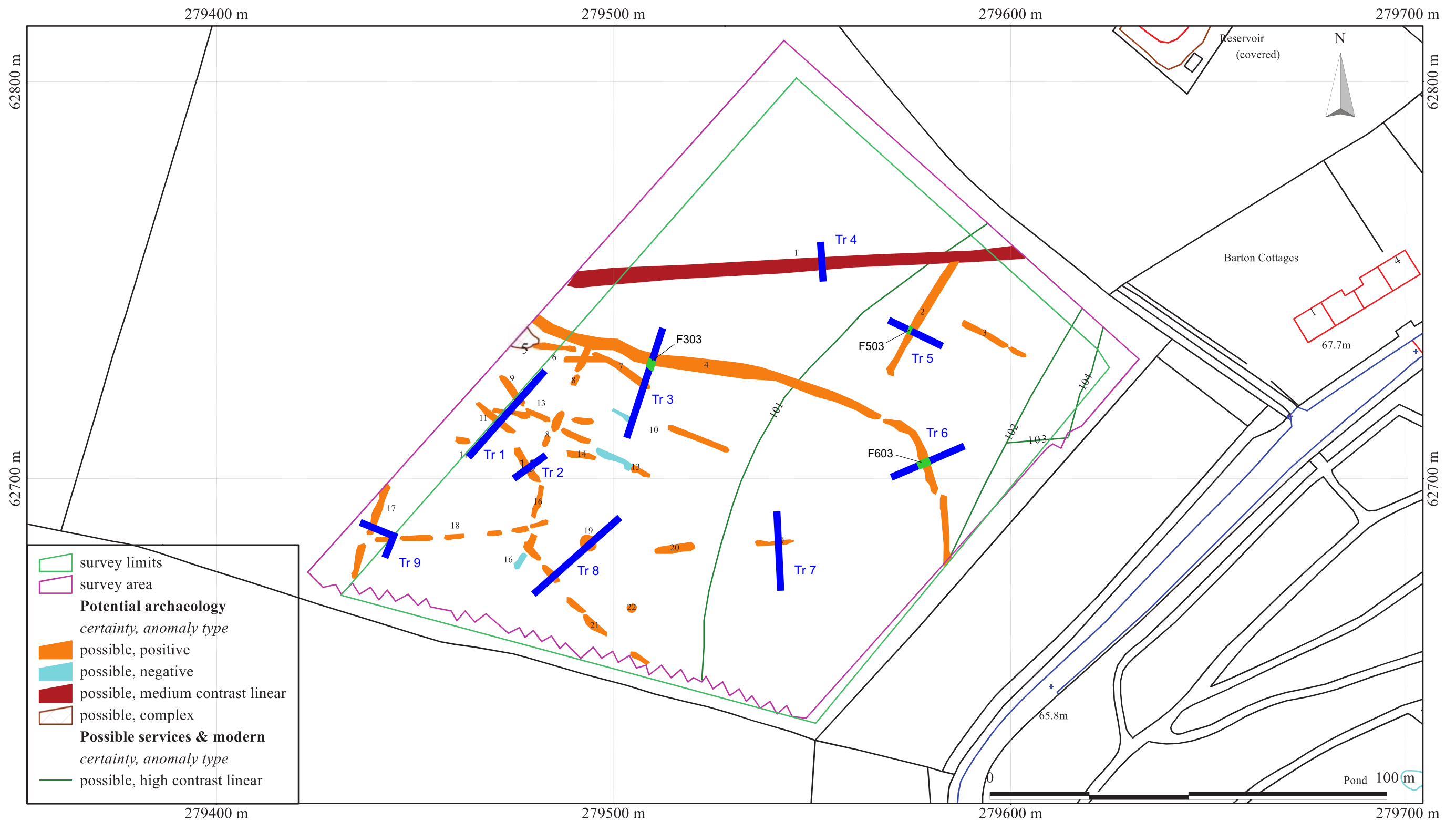
AC archaeology

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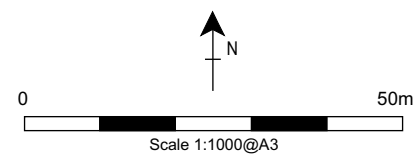
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Scale 1:15,000@A4



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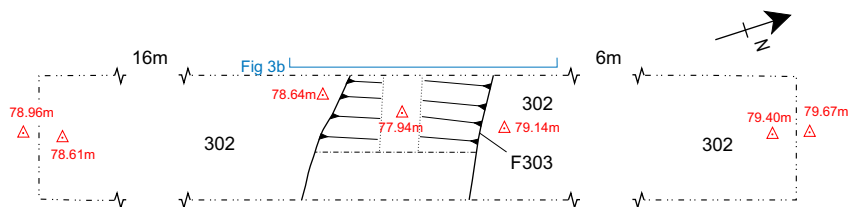
Trenches showing features identified

PROJECT
Land at Grattons, Dartington Hall, Devon

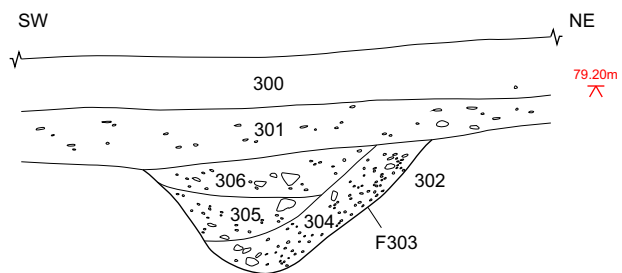
TITLE
Fig. 2: Trench locations in relation to the results of the geophysical survey



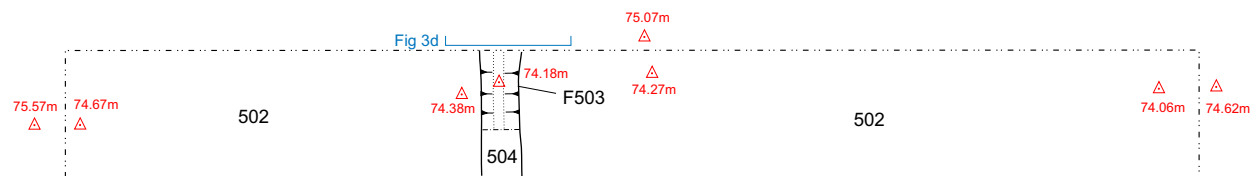
a) Trench 3, plan



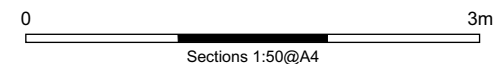
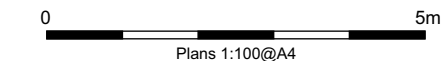
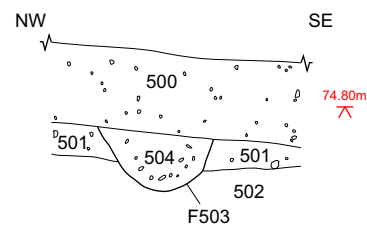
b) Section of F303



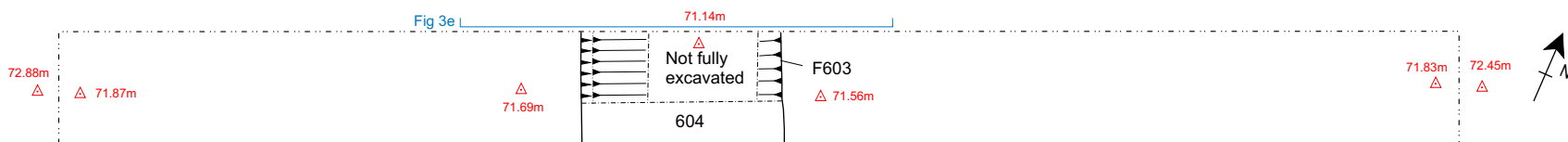
c) Trench 5, plan



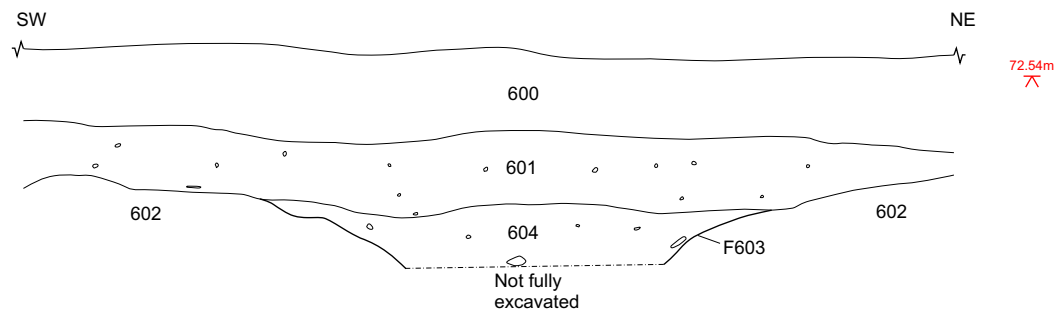
d) Section of F503



e) Trench 6, plan



f) Section of F603



PROJECT

Land at Grattons, Dartington Hall,
Devon

TITLE

Fig. 3: Trenches 3, 5 and 6,
plans and sections





Plate 1: General view of site, looking to west



Plate 2: Trench 3, southeast-facing section of ditch F503 (scale 1m)



Plate 3: Trench 6, south-facing section of ditch F603 (scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trench

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		Length 30m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
100	Dark brown clayey loam, containing occasional sub-angular shale up to 60mm long	0-0.30m	Topsoil	
101	Pale yellow to pale reddish-brown clay separated by bands of stone	0.30m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 2		Length 10m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
200	Dark brown clayey loam, containing occasional sub-angular shale up to 60mm long	0-0.30m	Topsoil	
201	Pale yellow to pale reddish-brown clay separated by bands of stone	0.30m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 3		Length 30m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
300	Dark brown clayey loam, containing occasional sub-angular shale up to 60mm long	0-0.39m	Topsoil	
301	Dark brown silty clay	0.39-0.69m	Subsoil	
302	Reddish brown clay separated by bands of stone	0.69m+	Natural subsoil	
F303	Linear feature, NW-SE aligned, 1.90m wide and 0.89m deep, steeply sloping sides and rounded base	-	Cut of enclosure ditch	
304	Brownish yellow silty clay	-	Primary fill of ditch F303	
305	Light brown silty clay	-	Secondary fill pf ditch F303	
306	Reddish brown silty clay with moderate small to medium sub-angular shale	-	Upper fill of ditch F303	

Trench 4		Length 10m	Width 1.6m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
400	Dark brown clayey loam, containing occasional sub-angular shale up to 60mm long	0-0.35m	Topsoil	
401	Reddish brown clay	0.35m+	Natural Subsoil	
402	Ceramic land drain extending E-W in position of high contrast geophysical anomaly	0.35m+	Modern land drain	

Trench 5		Length 15m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
500	Dark brown clayey loam, containing occasional sub-angular shale up to 60mm long	0-0.60m	Topsoil	
501	Yellowish red clayey silt	0.60-0.85m	Agricultural subsoil	
502	Bedrock and banded reddish brown sandy clay	0.85m+	Natural Subsoil	
F503	Linear feature, NE-SW aligned, 0.76m wide, 0.38m deep with moderately steep sloping sides and shallow concave base	-	Modern ditch	
504	Reddish brown silty clay	-	Fill of ditch F503	

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 6		Length 20m	Width 1.6m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
600	Dark brown clayey loam, containing occasional sub-angular shale up to 60mm long	0-0.45m	Topsoil	
601	Dark brown silty clay	0.45-0.60m	Agricultural subsoil	
602	Bedrock and banded reddish brown sandy clay	0.60m+	Natural subsoil	
F603	Linear feature, N-S aligned, 3.40m wide, 0.40m+ deep with moderately steep sloping sides. Not bottomed	-	Cut of enclosure ditch	
604	Yellowish red clayey silt	-	Upper fill of F603	

Trench 7		Length 20m	Width 1.6m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
700	Dark brown clayey loam, containing occasional sub-angular shale up to 60mm long	0-0.48m	Topsoil	
701	Reddish brown silty clay	0.48-0.66m	Agricultural subsoil	
702	Reddish-brown clay separated by bands of stone	0.66m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 8		Length 30m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
800	Dark brown clayey loam, containing occasional sub-angular shale up to 60mm long	0-0.35m	Topsoil	
801	Pale yellow to pale reddish-brown clay separated by bands of stone	0.35m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 9		Length 10m 6.5m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
900	Dark brown clayey loam, containing occasional sub-angular shale up to 60mm long	0-0.26m	Topsoil	
901	Pale yellow to pale reddish-brown clay separated by bands of stone	0.26m+	Natural subsoil	

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