

OLDAPORT CAMP, MODBURY, DEVON

(NGR SX 63515 49445)

Report on Conservation Works and Additional Archaeological Survey

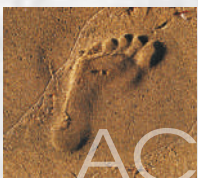
Scheduled Monument: Iron Age promontory fort known as Oldaport Camp (National Heritage List No. 1020234)

Prepared by:
Paul Rainbird

On behalf of:
Westcountry Stonemasons

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AC archaeology

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Summary

Conservation works and an archaeological survey was carried out by Westcountry Stonemasons and AC archaeology at Oldaport Camp, Modbury, Devon (SX 63515 49445) in June 2015. The site of Oldaport Camp covers approximately 13ha, is a Scheduled Monument, and sits within an area held in a Higher Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme. The conservation works actioned recommendations from a previous management plan and the survey was carried out to enhance a previous survey and will be used to further inform future management of the site.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report has been commissioned by Westcountry Stonemasons and presents the results of conservation works and an archaeological survey at Oldaport Camp, near Modbury, Devon. The site covers an area of approximately 13ha centred on SX 63515 49445 (Fig. 1). The site is held within a Higher Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme (HLES) with Natural England. The works reported here were undertaken by Westcountry Stonemasons and AC archaeology during June 2015, and was requested by Historic England as cultural heritage advisors to Natural England. The requested work followed a management survey of the HLES holding prepared by AC archaeology (Rainbird 2014, and revision of 2015) to inform current and future agricultural management, and to produce strategies to remove Oldaport from Historic England's *Monuments at Risk Register*.
- 1.2 Oldaport Camp is a Scheduled Monument (National Heritage List no. 10202340) located near Modbury in the South Hams district of Devon (SX 63515 49445). The site is described as 'enigmatic' and its origins and development are not fully understood. Whilst Scheduled as an Iron Age promontory fort, it may have originated as a Romano-British enclosure, with later earthworks, including a bank, wall and ditch being of later Saxon date. A radiocarbon determination provides a date for this later phase.
- 1.3 Oldaport is the name of the farm positioned on the neck of the spur adjacent to the site. The site of Oldaport Camp is defined by sections of large wall and ditches, situated on a spur some 900m long by 215m wide at its broadest point. At present the majority of the 13ha enclosed is given over to stock grazing. The spur has a stream (Ayleston Brook) and marsh to the north, and a stream in the valley to the south. At the southwest end of the spur is Oldaport Woods and tidal Orcheton Creek, close to the head of the Erme estuary. For purposes of discussion in the management report the SM within the Oldaport Farm holding was divided into five zones shown on Fig. 2, and these will also be referred to here.
- 1.4 The underlying geology comprises Devonian period slate, siltstone and mudstone and decomposed 'shillet' of the Dartmouth Group. The highest point of the site, adjacent to the public road, lies at around 50m aOD. The central ridge of the spur drops gently to near sea level in Oldaport Woods, and the central level area of the spur drops very steeply on the northern side and still steeply, but less so, on the southern side.
- 1.5 The works reported here were allowed through Scheduled Monument consent (ref. no. S00095736) granted to Andrew Passmore, Project Manager, AC archaeology (on behalf of the landowner Mr David Evans) on 8 December 2014 by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.

2. AIMS

- 2.1** The aims of the conservation works were to consolidate the northeast wall (in Zone 1) in its current state. In addition archaeological recording, to further inform future management, was conducted on the external face of the northwest wall (northern boundary of Zone 2) and the northern boundary of Zone 1. These latter works were only possible thanks to access permitted by Mr Watson of Orcheton Quay upon whose land part of the bounds of the Scheduled Monument fall. (Access to this area had not been facilitated when the management survey was prepared in 2014.)

3. METHODOLOGY

- 3.1** The conservation and archaeological works were carried out in accordance with an approved specification for conservation works (Passmore 2014). Repairs to the northeast wall were supervised by the site archaeologist and in reference to measured drawings specifying the location of conservation works outlined in the specification.
- 3.2** A written record and measured drawings of the northwest wall, accompanied by sketches where necessary, were prepared. A measured survey was prepared of the earthworks of the northern boundary of Zone 1. A photographic record was prepared using a high quality digital camera, with details recorded on *pro forma* index sheets. Where appropriate a photographic scale was used. All recording was undertaken in line with the *AC archaeology Site Recording Manual, Version 2* (2012), and prepared in accordance with the guidance set out in *Understanding the Archaeology of Landscapes: A guide to good recording practice*.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1** A detailed account of the archaeological and historical background and archaeological investigations at the site to date is provided in the management report (Rainbird 2014, revised in 2015 to include the results of initial conservation work and archaeological investigations). The current document reports on the first new work on the site since the production of the management report under the current HLES scheme.

5. CONSERVATION WORKS – ZONE 1 (Figs 2-3; Plates 1-2)

5.1 The northeast wall

The conservation works relate to recommendations R1 and R7 set out in the management report (Rainbird 2015):

R1: Plant growth should be regularly monitored and the growth of large shrubs and trees suppressed – this includes the wall, ditch and other associated earthworks and archaeologically sensitive areas. More immediately the ivy growing on the extant parts of the northeast wall should be killed off using weed killer. The northern hedgebank extension of the northeast wall should have the hedge managed through laying. This work has been undertaken and was completed in January 2015), with the trees on the southern hedgebank extension managed through coppicing.

R7: The northeast wall should be sensitively consolidated, by repointing where necessary and the top capped to prevent water ingress and inhibit plant growth. This work, although somewhat preserving the aesthetic, should not use materials that may in future be confused with the original surviving fabric, which at present contains the only securely datable material on the site.

5.2 Conservation works

As noted in the revised recommendation R7 trees and vegetation had been removed from the northeast wall, along with hedge laying and capping of the adjacent hedgebank sections. By spring 2015 a low vegetation sward had developed, and following discussion with Historic England it was considered that capping (either solid or through the introduction of new soil layer) would not be required. The current vegetation should be maintained through strimming with potentially damaging species (such as ivy) removed as necessary.

The conservation works comprised the re-setting of 16 stones on the northeast wall and their repointing. The positions of the works is presented in Fig. 3. The hydraulic lime mortar used for these works was St Astier NHL 3.5. The inclusions to the mortar were chosen to be distinct from the historic mortar, but also not to undermine the aesthetics of the ancient wall. The re-set stones were bedded in a mortar coloured a distinct pink by the inclusion of 2 parts Sowton Red sand and 1 part Yellow Heathfield 50/50 sand. The pointing was a white matching the historic mortar, but with smaller inclusions making it distinct and made with 2 parts Lee Moor silver sand and 1 part Yellow Heathfield 50/50 added to the lime mortar. Some of the finished work is illustrated in Plates 1 and 2.

6. SURVEY RESULTS – ZONE 2 (Figs 2 and 4; Plates 3-9)

6.1 The northwest angle wall

The northwestern boundary of the site within the SM had previously been recorded only from the internal side (reported in Rainbird 2014; 2015). The external side faces on to a field belonging to a neighbouring property (Orcheton Quay). It was previously noted that 'it was clear that the external face of the northwest wall is under significant threat from unchecked vegetation growth. This appears to have caused collapse and undermining. The hedgebank is in poor condition with evidence of animal burrowing, root disturbance and stock erosion' and that the 'external face has not been subject to detailed recording and this, along with a plan for consolidation [should be prepared] as a matter of urgency' (Rainbird 2014; 2015).

6.2 *Description of works:* Access to the external (north) side of the NW angle wall was agreed with the landowner. It was found to be difficult of access due to a combination of nettles and brambles, although the vegetation was less dense in front of the upper (eastern) end of the wall, an area defined as up-slope from a post-and-wire fence which delimits an area of orchard abutting the lower (western) half of the wall. It was decided to clear the upper (eastern) half to allow for the elevation to be recorded by a measured drawing (at 1:50) and detailed photography with the purpose of noting features and issues to inform the future management of this part of the monument. A further detailed drawing (at 1:10) was made of a short section where a change in the nature of the wall structure was observed.

- 6.3** *Archaeological description:* The wall is constructed of local stone with some quartz (Plate 3). It appears to have been built in the form of a revetment with a flat face one stone wide in front of a rubble core with earth behind. The stonework is bonded by a hard off-white mortar with rare inclusions. Evidence of an off-white lime render survives in small patches. The stone work, where revealed by erosion, is approximately 1m thick. The front of the wall is irregularly coursed with an upper (eastern) stretch of large squared blocks (Plate 4), with a distinct break to a small stone rubble coursing (Plate 5), beyond which (lower down the slope) the course becomes more mixed with some squared blocks and patches of rubble work. In general the coursing is angled downslope, but is occasionally horizontal. The exposed height of the standing front of the wall ranges from 0.3m and three courses to 1.55m with approximately 12 courses. In places the lowest courses of the wall are obscured by dumps of soil and stone eroded from the earth bank above. Elsewhere, at the upper (eastern) end the lowest course appears to have been exposed as this course appears to sit on soil. In this area the lowest course is stepped out by approximately 0.1m to 0.2m (Plate 6). Where render is visible in the area of the step, it is always above the height of the step and this may indicate that the stepped course was originally footings, forming a plinth course, and possibly positioned in a foundation trench. The revetted bank is considerably higher than the standing front of the wall in all places, and erosion has exposed the rubble core within this bank indicating that the wall face probably stood to an original height of at least 2m (Plates 7 and 8). The original size of the structure is also indicated at the top end of the wall at the point where it joins the northern boundary of Zone 1 where there is an erosion cone beneath a large ash tree. The erosion cone was not drawn but is an estimated 2.5m high, and approximately half way up the slope is three courses of stone, matching the line and type of the wall further downslope, and in addition above the coursed stones and angled away towards the top of the bank an area of rubble and mortar core is exposed (Plate 8). Beyond the erosion cone the northern boundary of Zone 1 is of a different character and appears to abut the earlier northwest angle wall. A single heavily corroded iron nail, possibly square, was recorded on the face of the wall. The Scheduled Monument description details the remnants of a ditch fronting the wall 15m wide and 0.3m deep, but no evidence of this was observed.
- 6.4** *Condition:* Of the upper end of the NW wall exposed the standing wall is generally in good condition. One section of approximately 4m length is heavily bowed due to pressure from tree growth and is in imminent danger of collapse. Elsewhere a previous fallen tree, although sawn to reduce further problems, has deformed the wall beneath it, although this appears to be stable. Towards the upper (eastern) end of the wall a small area, measuring approximately 0.35m by 0.35m, is missing its facing stones. In the bank above the standing wall wild animal burrowing and tracks causing erosion was noted in three places (Plate 9) and at the bottom (western) end of the exposed structure (approximately central to the length of the entire wall), an area eroded by stock animals gaining access to the top of the bank is present. It is apparent that the major threat to the standing wall in the area exposed is through damage to the bank above by tree growth and animal erosion. As part of the current HLES scheme the hedgebank has already been heavily reduced, but several large mature oak trees remain, and those that are on the outer edge of the hedgebank, closest to the wall face, remain a threat to the stability of the structure.
- 6.5** *Management recommendations:* The circuit of the fort on this northwest side is still poorly understood. The process of revetment leading to a major drop from the inside of the fort to the outside and down a steep slope is difficult to envision, but this clearly represents a major piece of work, notwithstanding whether it was also fronted by a ditch. Further vegetation reduction and management to inhibit future large tree

growth is recommended alongside previous recommendations to reduce the potential for stock animal access to the wall and bank by fencing. The remainder, lower half, of the wall also needs to be cleared and recorded and its condition assessed.

7. SURVEY RESULTS – ZONE 1 (Fig. 2; Plate 10)

7.1 The northern boundary

The opportunity afforded by access to the land of Orcheton Quay was taken to assess the northern boundary of Zone 1, which from the inside of the fort appears to comprise only a steep break of slope topped by a row of mature ash and sycamore trees.

7.2 *Description of works:* Following a visual inspection an off-set survey was made of the features identified. It was found that below the tree-formed boundary line the bank slopes steeply to a narrow berm, up to 1.5m wide, below which a scarp averaging approximately 0.5m deep that forms the southeast side of a terrace measuring approximately 5m wide. The terrace sits above the natural slope of the steep hill on this side. The terrace and scarp appear to run for a length of approximately 100m in front of the boundary; although it should be noted that detailed observations were made difficult by a thick covering of nettles present during the survey work. The nature of these features does not appear to be agricultural or for a track and could be the surface remains of a ditch in front of the boundary on this side. The position of the berm may mark that of any formal structure, matching the walls found elsewhere, as the hedgebank appears to be heavily eroded. An indication of this can be seen at the southwest end where a fragment of drystone wall foundation, measuring approximately 3.2m long by 0.9m wide, follows a line at the level of the top of the hedgebank which when projected follows the line of the berm, perhaps indicating that the land at this level has been removed by erosion or quarried away since a wall was built here.

7.3 *Condition:* As part of the current HLES scheme the mature trees on the hedgebank have already been heavily cut back to reduce windage, and reduce shade which attracts livestock. No further work to the hedgebank other than continued management of the vegetation is recommended.

7.4 *Management recommendations:* The nature of the circuit of the fort on this northern side of Zone 1 side is not well understood and could contain evidence of both Phases I and II in the construction of the site (see Rainbird 2014). It appears that the majority of the evidence that might relate to a revetting of the bank (as found in the northwest wall) has already been lost, but there is potential for buried evidence to survive and potential for standing remains at the southwest end where it meets the northwest wall. The potential field evidence for an infilled ditch, which matches the width of the outer ditch identified in geophysical survey and as a cropmark on the northeast side of the earthworks between Zones 1 and 5, is a major addition to the archaeological potential of the site and any future programme of archaeological works should include a means to characterise the terrace feature as one of its aims.

8. RESULTS OF MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

For the context and detail of management recommendations refer to Rainbird (2014; 2015). The following provides an update specific to the work reported here.

8.1 Zone 1

R1: *Plant growth should be regularly monitored and the growth of large shrubs and trees suppressed – this includes the wall, ditch and other associated earthworks and archaeologically sensitive areas. More immediately the ivy growing on the extant parts of the northeast wall should be killed off using weed killer.* Vegetation management of the wall and adjacent hedgebanks had taken place (see 5.2 above). As part of the conservation works in June 2015 further control of the vegetation was completed.

R3: *Fencing should be removed from the temporary compound directly abutting the rear of the wall. This will require SMC. The area should be cleaned up and the introduced material removed from the SM area. All works relating to the removal of the fencing should be monitored by an archaeologist.* Between January and June 2015 the area within the compound was cleared and in June 2015 a photographic record was made.

R7: *The northeast wall should be sensitively consolidated, by repointing where necessary and the top capped to prevent water ingress and inhibit plant growth. This work, although somewhat preserving the aesthetic, should not use materials that may in future be confused with the original surviving fabric, which at present contains the only securely datable material on the site.* June 2015 – consolidation work has been completed (outlined in section 5.2 above).

R8: *The short slope on the north side of the Phase 1 enclosure which drops down to the hedgebank on this side is suffering from erosion by stock. Judicious use of temporary electric fencing and reduction in the overhanging limbs of trees in this area should allow for the regrowth of grass in these patches.* January 2015 - The overhanging limbs were removed. June 2015 – this boundary has now been recorded and its condition assessed (see section 7 above). Its previously unrecognised archaeological potential has been described and mapped.

8.2 Zone 2

The northwest angle wall faces on to a neighbouring property.... The external face has not been subject to detailed recording and this, along with a plan for consolidation is a matter of urgency.... Between January and June 2015 – the hedgerow vegetation was heavily cut back. June 2015 – access to the external side allowed the preparation of a condition report and further management recommendations (see section 6 above).

9. ARCHIVE

9.1 An integrated site archive has been compiled and is currently stored at the Devon office of AC archaeology, 4 Halthaies workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon EX5 4LQ. The digital archive (to include digitised site records) will be deposited with the ADS within three months of the distribution of the final report.

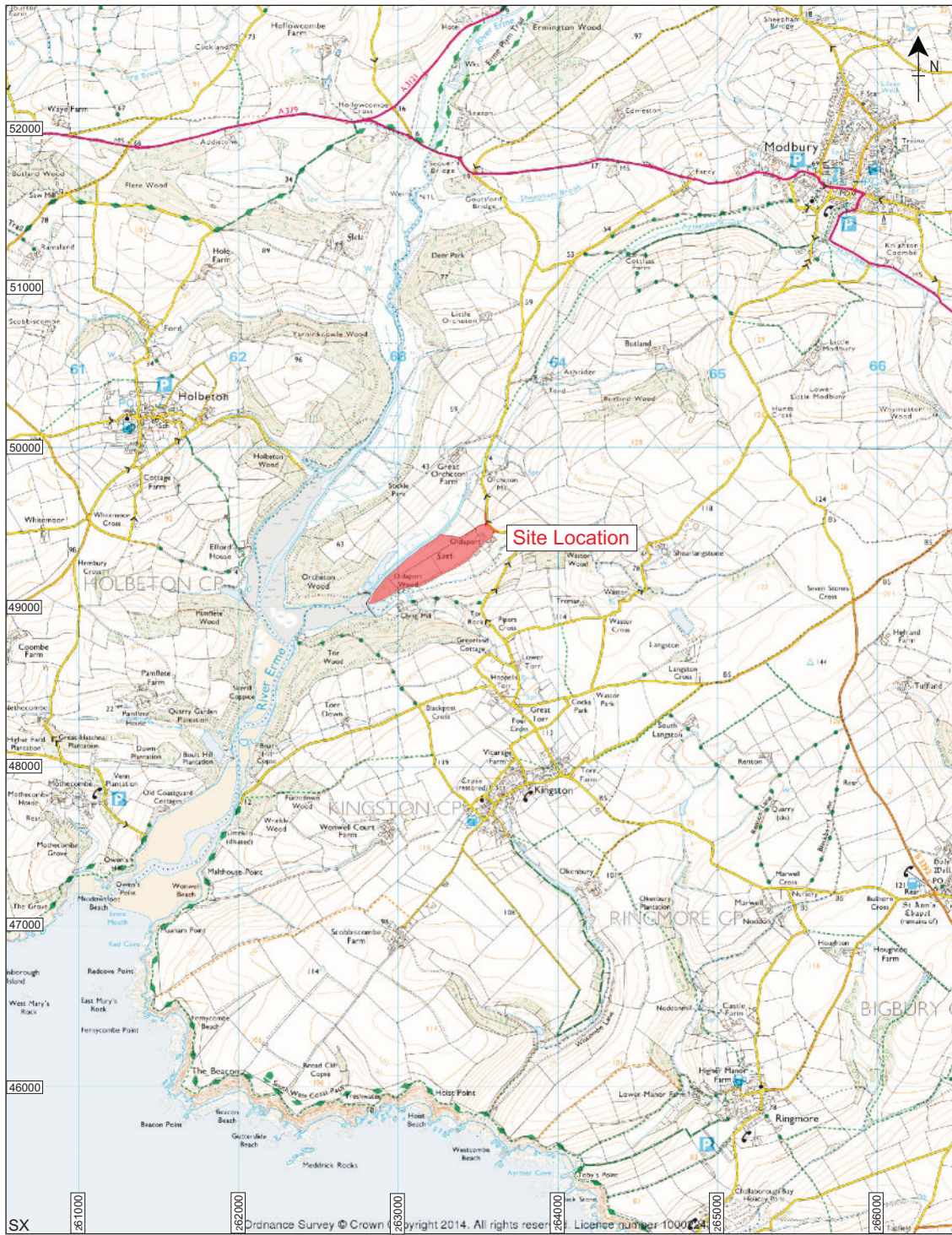
9.2 An OASIS entry, including a copy of the report, has been completed under the unique identifier code 215082.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The works were commissioned by Westcountry Stonemasons on behalf of Mr Evans of Oldaport Farm and Mr Watson of Orcheton Quay. The survey was managed by Marcus Johnson (Westcountry Stonemasons) and Andrew Passmore (AC archaeology) with advice from Caroline Vulliamy and Nick Russell (both of Historic England) and carried out by Stella De-Villiers and Paul Rainbird. The report illustrations were prepared by Sarnia Blackmore and Stella De-Villiers.

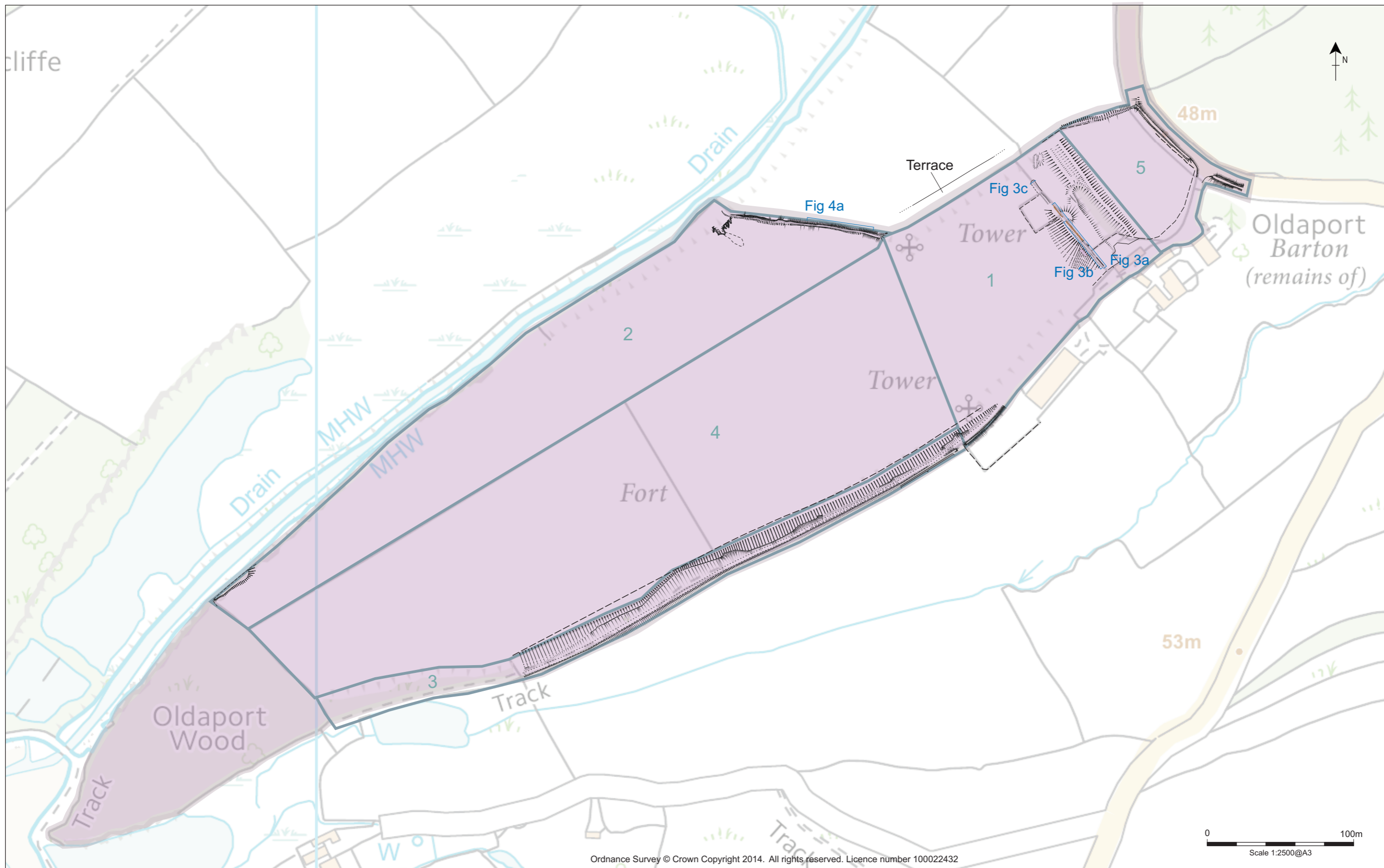
11. SOURCES CONSULTED

- Passmore, A. 2014, *Oldaport Camp, Modbury, Devon, (NGR SX 63515 49445), Draft Specification for Conservation Works to the Defensive Northeast Wall, Scheduled Monument: Iron Age promontory fort known as Oldaport Camp (National Heritage list no. 1020234)*, AC archaeology document no. **ACD879/4/0**.
- Rainbird, P. 2014, *Oldaport Camp, Modbury, Devon, (NGR SX 63515 49445), Higher Level Stewardship Scheme Archaeological Survey, Scheduled Monument: Iron Age promontory fort known as Oldaport Camp (National Heritage list no. 1020234)*, AC archaeology document no. **ACD879/1/1**.
- Rainbird, P. 2015, *Oldaport Camp, Modbury, Devon, (NGR SX 63515 49445), Higher Level Stewardship Scheme Archaeological Survey and Results of Archaeological Excavation, Scheduled Monument: Iron Age promontory fort known as Oldaport Camp (National Heritage list no. 1020234)*, AC archaeology document no. **ACD879/1/2**.



PROJECT
Oldaport Camp, Modbury, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 1: Location of site

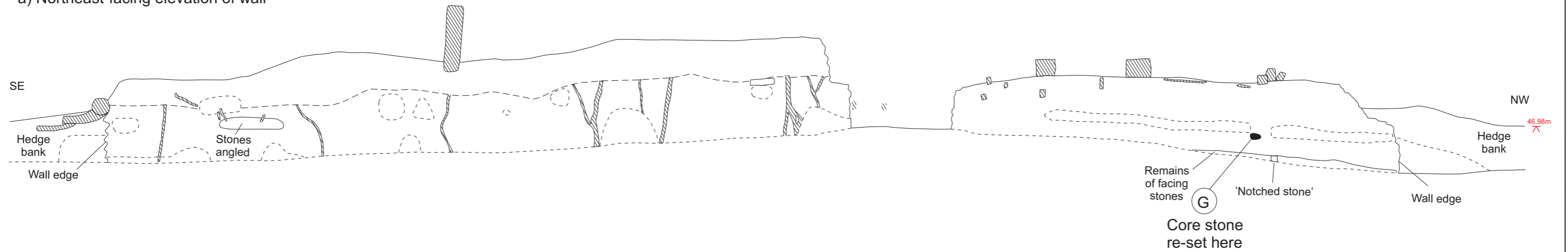


- Legend**
- Scheduled Monument
 - Management Zones

PROJECT
 Oldaport Camp, Modbury, Devon

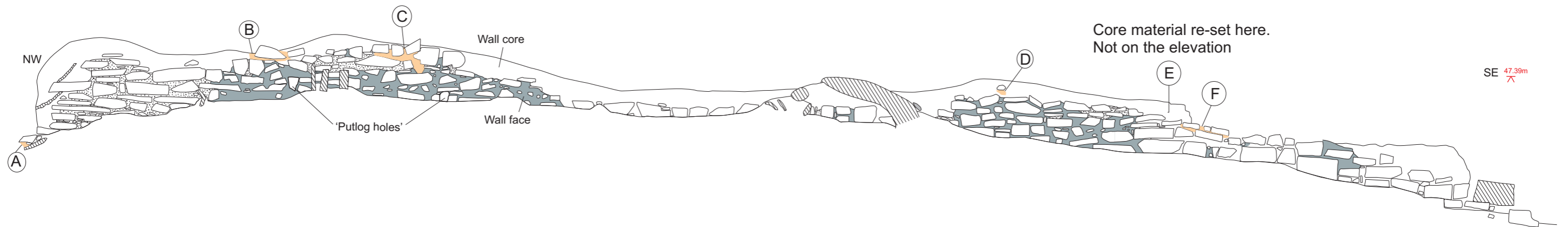
TITLE
 Fig. 2: Area of the scheduled Monument and management zones within the HLS holding, showing position of elevations and terrace

a) Northeast-facing elevation of wall

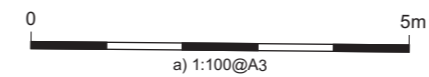
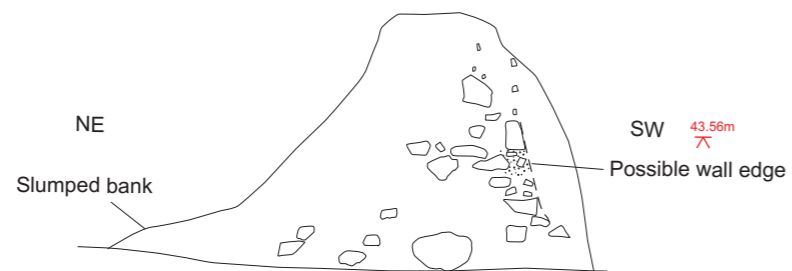


- Key**
- Stones
 - Mortared wall face
 - Recessed mortar
 - Tree stumps/roots
 - Areas of undercutting
 - Areas of new pointing

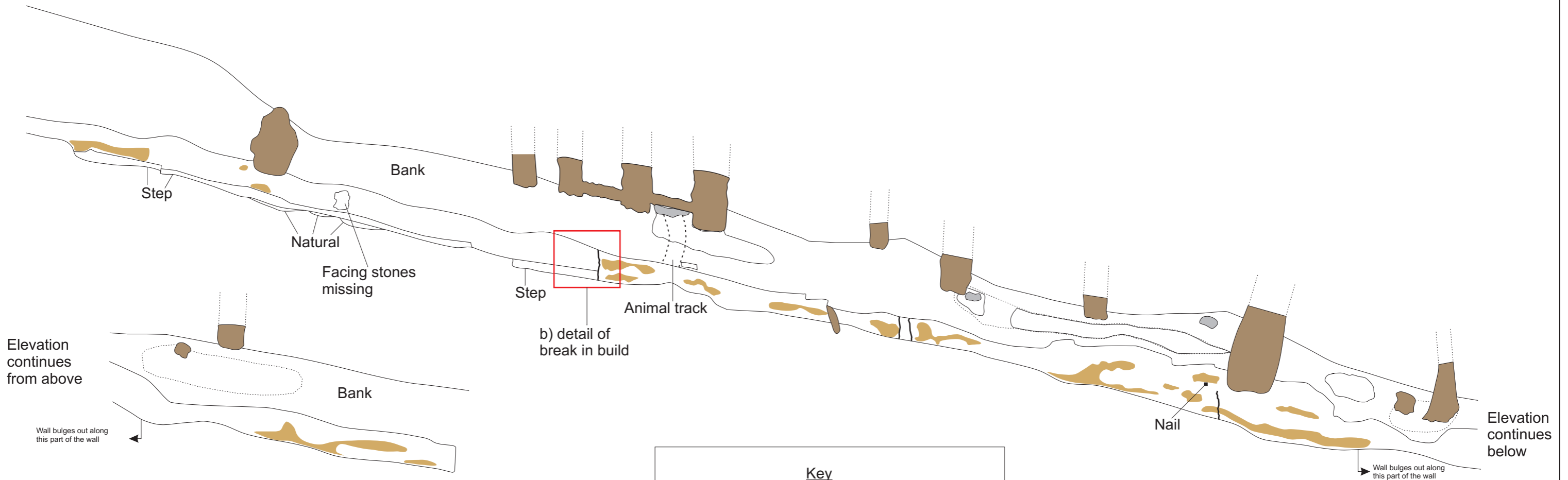
b) Southwest-facing elevation of wall



c) Section of hedge bank (west end)

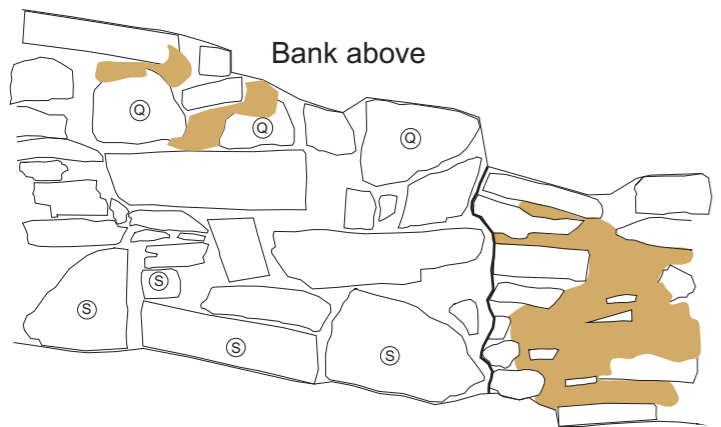


a) North-facing elevation of northwest wall



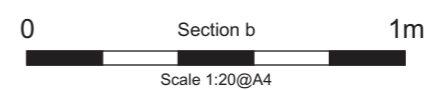
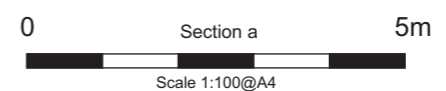
b) detail of break in build

b) Detail of break in build



Key

- Tree stumps/trunks/roots
- Areas of exposed core material
- Areas of render
- Animal burrows
- Areas of erosion
- Breaks in build
- Stones that form a step
- Quartz stone



PROJECT
Oldaport Camp, Modbury, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 4: Zone 2, elevation of the northwest wall



Plate 1: Zone 1, northeast wall interior, reset stones (C), viewed from the southwest.
1m scale



Plate 2: Zone 1, northeast wall interior, reset stones (E and F), viewed from the southwest.
1m scale



Plate 3: Zone 2, northwest wall, viewed from the east. 1m and 1m scale



Plate 4: Zone 2, northwest wall, squared block coursing and base step, viewed from the north. 1m scale



Plate 5: Zone 2, northwest wall, break between block and rubble coursing, viewed from the north. 1m scale



Plate 6: Zone 2, northwest wall, showing stepped coursing at base, viewed from the northwest. 1m scale



Plate 7: Zone 2, northwest wall, showing exposed core, viewed from the northwest. 2m scale



Plate 8: Zone 2, eastern corner of northwest wall, showing erosion cone, viewed from the north. 2m scale



Plate 9: Zone 2, northwest wall, wild animal burrowing, viewed from the northeast. 1m scale



Plate 10: Zone 1, northern boundary terrace, viewed from the southwest. 1m scale

Devon Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Unit 4, Halthaies Workshops
Bradninch
Nr Exeter
Devon
EX5 4LQ

Telephone/Fax: 01392 882410

Wiltshire Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Manor Farm Stables
Chicklade
Hindon
Nr Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP3 5SU

Telephone: 01747 820581
Fax: 01747 820440

www.acarchaeology.co.uk