

MORWENSTOW TO ALDERCOMBE BARTON 11KV CABLE, CORNWALL

(Centred on SS 25457 14245)

Results of an archaeological watching brief

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On behalf of:
Western Power Distribution

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AC archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out by AC archaeology in May 2015 during the excavation of a trench for part of the Morwenstow to Aldercombe Barton 11kv electricity cable, Cornwall (centred on NGR SS 25457 14245). The area observed passed in close proximity to a known prehistoric barrow cemetery at Bottaborough. No features related to the barrow cemetery were observed. Several ditches related to former field boundaries recorded on historic maps along with a modern pit were recorded. No pre-modern finds were observed or collected.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig.1)

- 1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by AC archaeology in May 2015 between Morwenstow and Aldercombe Barton, Cornwall (centred on SS 25457 14245; Fig. 1) during the excavation of a trench for a 11kv electricity cable. The investigation was requested by the Cornwall Council Senior Development Officer (Historic Environment), and following consultation between Western Power Distribution, the Cornwall Council Historic Environment Service and English Heritage. The archaeological interest in the scheme is a barrow cemetery; some of the barrows are designated as Scheduled Ancient Monuments.
- 1.2 The Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Heritage List no. 1004402) comprises four barrows designated under the name 'Group of four round barrows E of Bottaborough'. Two of the barrows are located in the fields immediately west of Highborough Farm, with the other two located in the fields south of the farm, and east of Bottaborough.
- 1.3 In the same area the Cornwall Council Historic Environment Record has entries for a further seven barrows (MCO2231, MCO2230, MCO40124, MCO2229, MCO40125, MCO2237 and MCO2224), within the overall cemetery (which has the additional entry MCO1889). Some of the barrows have been identified as bowl barrows.
- 1.4 To the east of the A39 is a further group of bowl barrows (MCO2030). One of the barrows is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (National Heritage List no. 1004451; MCO4007), whilst the other three are not (MCO4004, MCO4005, and MCO4006).

2. THE SITE (Fig. 2; Plate 1)

- 2.1 The site is located 5km to the east of Morwenstow on the west side of the A39. The site is former moorland – Wresford Moor and Bottaborough Moor – and is currently agricultural land (Plate 1). It is situated at around 185m aOD. The underlying solid geology comprises Carboniferous sandstone of the Bude Formation.
- 2.2 The works involved the erection of an overhead cable between a green energy project at Aldercombe Barton and the existing Morwenstow local substation. Where the cable passed through the barrow cemetery it was buried underground, both in the verge of the A39 and along the inside edge of two fields (Fields 1 and 2) containing the barrows and a further field (Field 3) adjacent and to the north of Highborough Farm.

3. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The aim of the watching brief was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during groundworks associated with the project, in particular those associated with the barrow cemetery. The investigations were carried out in accordance with a written scheme of investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Passmore 2014), and comprised a watching brief during groundworks associated with the excavation of the underground cable trench in the vicinity of the identified barrows.
- 3.2 All groundworks were monitored by the attending site archaeologist. Records were kept 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).

4. RESULTS (Figs 2-3; Plates 2-6)

- 4.1 The cable trench measured 0.50m wide, and was dug using a mechanical excavator using a toothless bucket. In the fields the trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.10m, whilst in the verge of the A39, the trench was excavated down to a depth of 0.75m.
- 4.2 The following soil sequence was recorded: topsoil (001), which measured up to 0.50m thick, and comprised dark brown clayey silt with very rare small to medium angular stones, which overlaid the natural (003) consisting of orangey yellow clayey silt and solid sandstone. A natural subsoil (002) was identified in Field 2, but it was not consistently present across the field. This comprised a orangey brown clayey silt.
- 4.3 Archaeological features were identified in fields 1 and 2 and are described below, but not in Field 3 or in the trench of the verge adjacent to the A39 where deposits had been much disturbed by modern services. No finds of pre-modern date were observed anywhere during the watching brief and no finds were retained or are described.
- 4.4 **Field 1** (Sections Figs 3b-c and 4; Plates 2-6)
In Field 1 four linear features (F007, F012, F014 and F016) and one pit feature (F009) were observed and are described in detail below. It was also noted that at the point the trench exited Field 1 through a gateway in the northeast corner of the field it cut a buried hedge boundary ditch on the inside of the current hedge, perhaps indicating that the gate at this point is a later insertion. This ditch was not recorded in detail.

Linear features

Gully F007 was aligned approximately east-west and measured 0.62m wide by 0.22m deep with a bowl-shaped profile. It contained a single fill (006) a dark brown clayey silt.

Ditch F012 was aligned east-west and measured 3.20m wide by 0.70m deep. It had an asymmetrical profile with the north side having a gradual and concave slope while the south side was stepped and steep with an uneven base. It contained two fills (010-1). Primary fill (011) consisted of dark brownish grey clayey silt and upper fill (010) consisted of grey silty clay.

Gully F014 was aligned E-W and measured 0.54m wide by 0.16m deep with steep sides and a flat base. It contained a single fill (013) of dark greyish brown clayey silt.

Ditch F016 was aligned E-W and measured 1.60m wide by 0.42m deep with steep sides and an uneven base.

Pit feature

Pit F009 was probably oval in plan and measured 0.64m long, 0.20m+ wide by 0.12m deep with shallow sloping sides and a concave base. It had a single fill (008) consisting of a dark grey clayey silt.

4.5 Field 2 (Section Fig. 3a)

A single linear feature (F005) was observed in Field 2 and is described in detail below.

Linear feature

Ditch F005 was aligned ENE-WSW and measured 2.20m wide by 0.80m+ deep but was not fully revealed in section. The profile as observed was asymmetrical with the north side being a gradual slope and the south side being steep. A single fill (004) consisted of a greyish brown clayey silt.

5. COMMENTS

- 5.1 The group of linear features F012, F014, and F016 are associated with a known historic field boundary that is depicted on Historic Ordnance Survey maps. Linear feature F007 which is a modern drainage gully.
- 5.2 Pit F009 is of unknown function and is undated. It was shallow and had a charcoal-rich fill. The lack of evidence for leaching present in this fill argues against an ancient date for the feature.
- 5.3 No evidence relating to the prehistoric barrow cemetery was observed. None of the barrows have been subject to known archaeological excavation and the presence of sub-surface deposits related to these is not known. Locally in North Cornwall round barrows are regarded typically as not having an associated ring ditch (Christie 1985).

6. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY

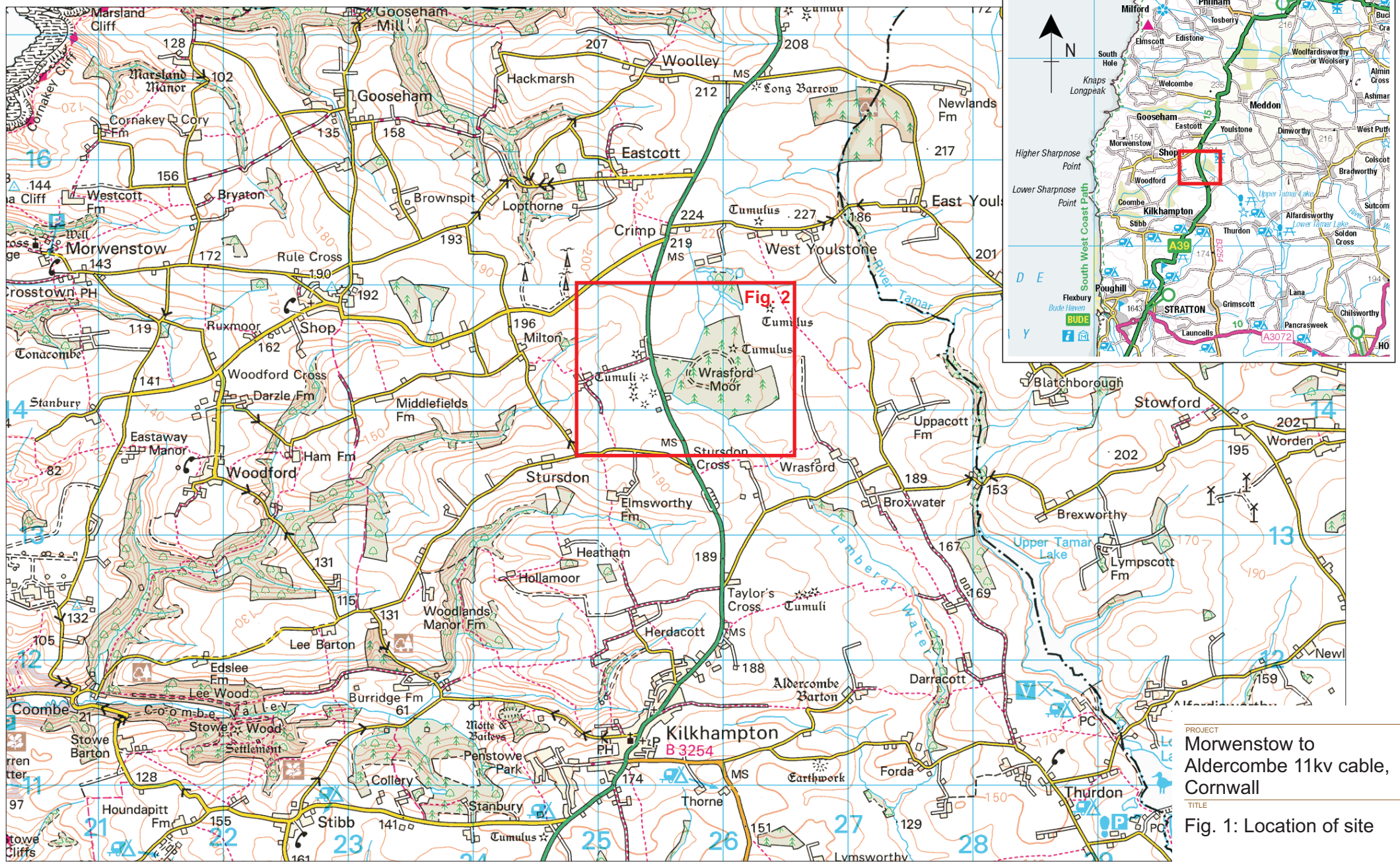
- 6.1 The archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology in Bradninch, and will be deposited to the Cornwall Record Office, Truro, once they have decided on the future acceptance of archives.
- 6.2 An entry to the OASIS database, including a digital copy of this report, has been created using the unique identifier 217752.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 This project was commissioned by Western Power Distribution and managed for them by Geoff May and for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The watching brief was carried out by Abigail Brown. The illustrations for the report were prepared by Stella De-Villiers.

8. SOURCES CONSULTED

- Christie, P.M. 1985. "Barrows on the north Cornish coast: wartime excavations by C.K. Croft Andrew, 1939-1944". *Cornish Archaeology* **24**: 23-121.
- Passmore, A., 2014, *Morwenstow to Aldercombe Barton 11kv Cable, Cornwall*, (centred on SS 25457 14245), *Written Scheme of Investigation for an archaeological watching brief*, AC archaeology Document No. **ACD1021/1/0**



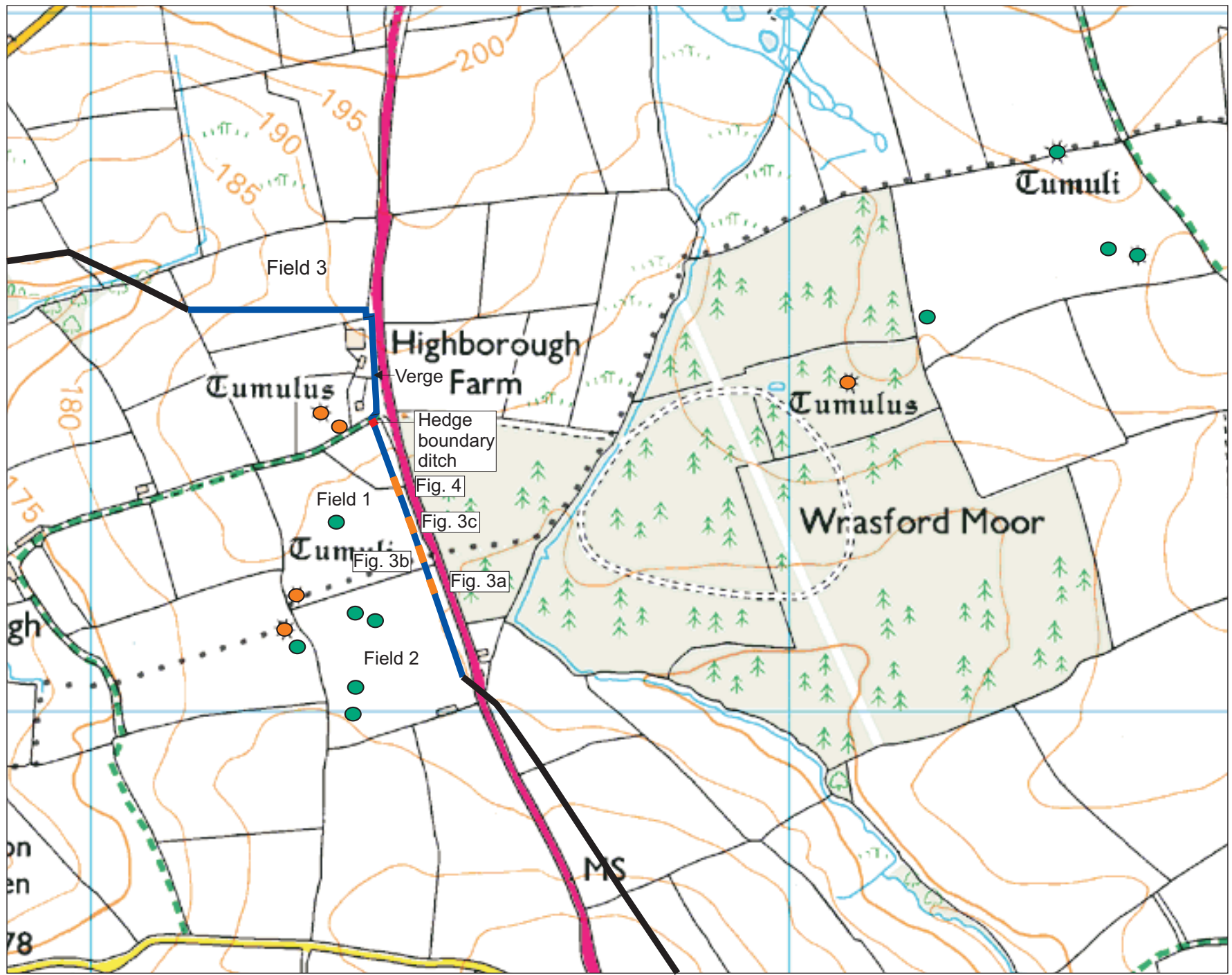
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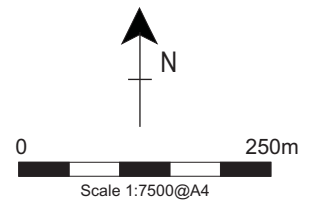
PROJECT
Morwenstow to
Aldercombe 11kv cable,
Cornwall

TITLE
Fig. 1: Location of site





-  Overhead cable
-  Underground cable (Area monitored)
-  Scheduled barrow
-  Other barrow
-  Fig. 3a Sections

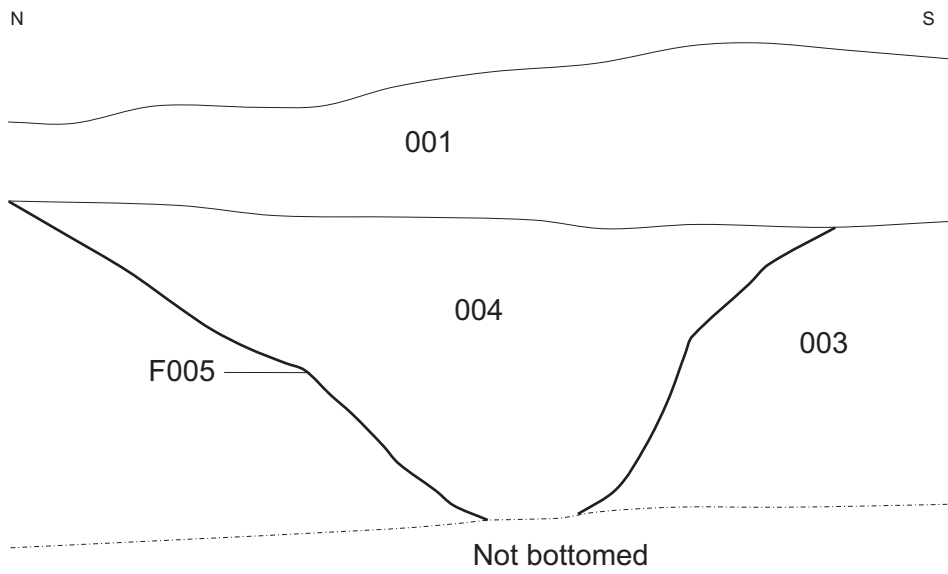


PROJECT
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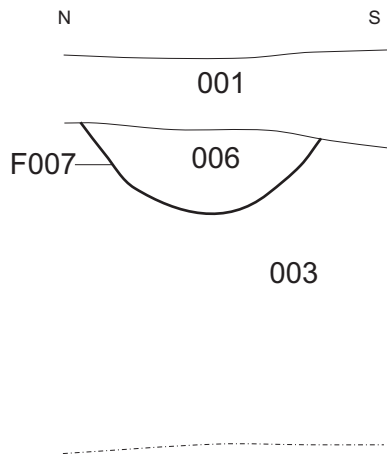
TITLE
 Fig. 2: Location of archaeological observations



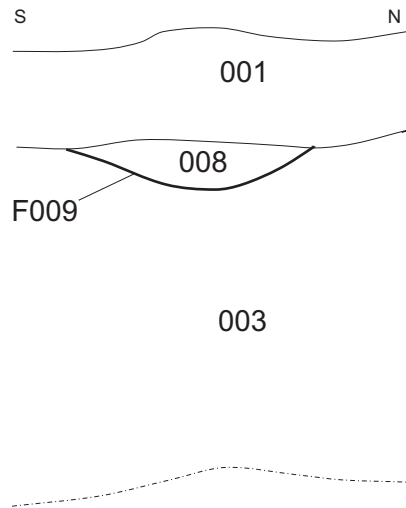
a) Section of F005



b) Section of F007



c) Section of F009



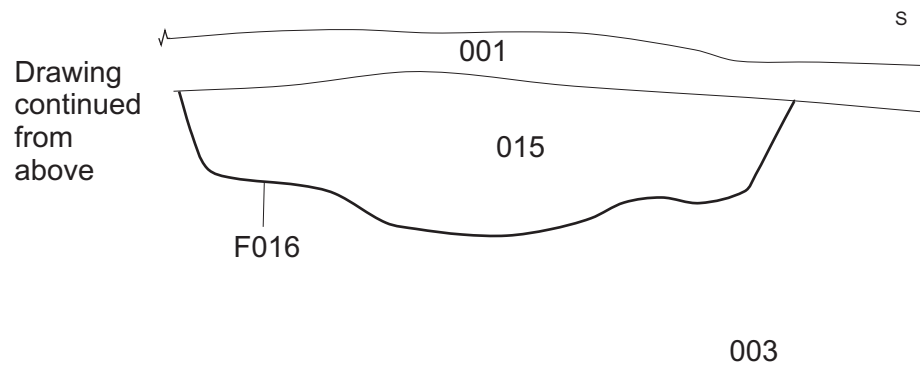
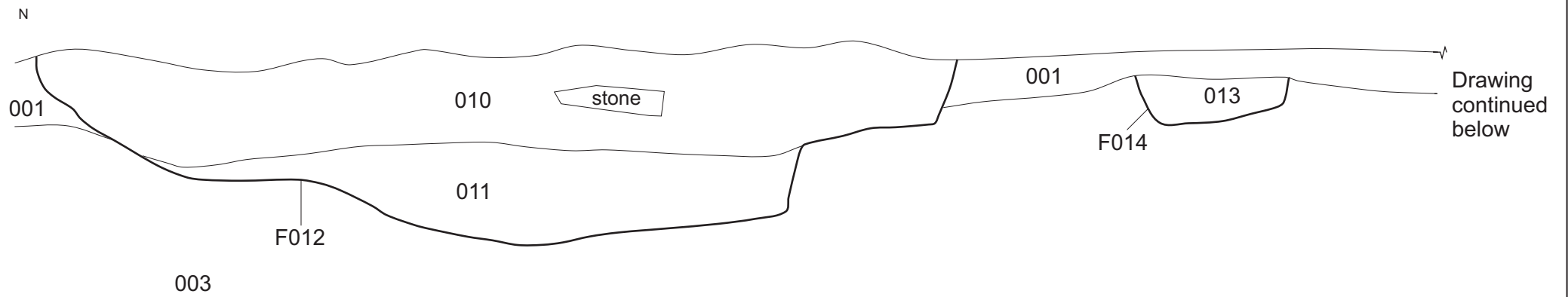
PROJECT

Morwenstow to Aldercombe 11kv cable, Cornwall

TITLE

Fig. 3: Sections of F005, F007 and F009





PROJECT
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 Cornwall

TITLE
 Fig. 4: Section of F012,
 F014 and F016





Plate 1: Field 1, work in progress, looking north



Plate 2: Field 1, east-facing section of gully F007 (scale 1m)



Plate 3: Field 1, west-facing section of ditch F012 (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Field 1, west-facing section of gully F014 (scale 1m)



Plate 5: Field 1, west-facing section of ditch F016 (scale 1m)



Plate 6: Field 1, east-facing section of pit F009, with extant barrow behind (scale 1m)

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