

VILLA GARDENS, COWICK LANE, EXETER, DEVON

NGR SX 91304 90614

Results of an Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

Planning Permission Reference 14/1715/03 (condition 6)

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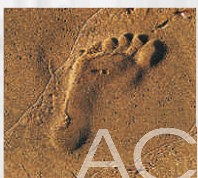
Prepared by:  
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With a contribution from:  
Naomi Payne

On behalf of:  
Mrs Cherry

Document No: ACD1242/2/0

Date: April 2016



archaeology

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# Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

<b>Civil Parish &amp; District:</b> Exeter	<b>National Grid Reference</b> SX 91272 90615	<b>Number:</b>
<b>Subject:</b> Villa Gardens, Cowick Lane, Exeter, Devon: Results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation		<b>Photo attached</b> Plates 1-4
<b>Planning Permission Ref:</b> ECC 14/1715/03	<b>Recipient museum:</b> N/A	
<b>OASIS ID:</b> 247703	<b>Museum Accession no:</b> N/A	
<b>Contractor's reference number/code:</b> ACD1242	<b>Dates fieldwork undertaken:</b> 1st February 2016	

## Introduction

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by AC archaeology in advance of groundworks associated with the construction of a single detached dwelling and associated garage on land at Villa Gardens, Cowick Lane Exeter, Devon.

The site covered an area of c. 0.1 hectare to the north of Balls Farm Road and was located on generally level ground, occupying a low ridge just above the Alphinbrook and Exe floodplains (Fig. 1). It lay at around 17m OD and comprised an established wooded garden (Plate 1). The underlying solid geology comprised Breccia of the Dawlish Sandstone Formation under a superficial river terrace deposit of sand and gravels.

Recent investigations carried out approximately 50m to the west and ahead of development at Cowick Court identified part of a large Bronze Age ring ditch, representing the ploughed-down remains of a former barrow (Fig. 1). No associated burials were present within the excavation area, although two corn-drying ovens of post-Roman date were located just outside the ring ditch.

## Methodology

The trial trench evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of two trenches totalling 26m in length and with each trench 1.25m wide (Fig. 2). These were excavated using a tracked machine fitted with a toothless bucket and working under constant archaeological supervision. These were positioned to provide a sample coverage of the proposed house and garage locations.

## Results

### Trench 1

Trench 1 was excavated onto natural subsoil, which consisted of a light brownish-red silty-clay with abundant gravels and coarse sand. This was exposed at a depth of 0.77m below existing levels. The natural subsoil was overlain by a thin interface layer, which was sealed by a mid reddish-brown silty-loam subsoil and a dark greyish-brown silty-loam garden soil. The trench contained no archaeological features or deposits and no finds were recovered.

### Trench 2 (Fig. 3 and Plates 2-4)

Natural subsoil (context 203) was exposed at a depth of approximately 0.95m below existing levels. It was sealed beneath a 0.29m thick layer of mid reddish-brown clayey-loam buried soil (202). This was in turn overlain by a dark brown silty-loam subsoil (201) and a dark brownish-grey garden soil (100). Two worked flint waste-flakes were recovered from buried soil (202) and three sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered from subsoil 201. A ditch (F210) and a total of eight probable postholes (F204, F206, F208, F212, F215, 214, 217 and 218) were exposed in the trench. These were all sealed by buried soil 202.

Ditch F210 measured 0.46m wide and 0.17m deep with moderately-steep sloping sides and a flattish base. It contained a mid brown silty-loam fill (211) that was undated.

The group of probable postholes measured between 0.18m and 0.28m across in each case and ranged from 0.08m (F215) to 0.37m (F212) in depth. Each of the features contained similar mid brown to mid reddish-brown silty-loam fills. A fragment from a worked flint bladelet was recovered from posthole F212 fill (213).

## The finds by Naomi Payne

The finds included a small quantity of worked flint and some post-medieval pottery, all of which came from Trench 2. They are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of finds by context (weights in grams)

Context	Context Description	Worked flint		Post-medieval pottery	
		No.	Wt	No.	Wt
201	Subsoil			3	209
202	Buried soil	2	15		
213	Fill of post hole F212	1	0.1		
Total		3	15.1	3	209

### Worked flint

Three pieces (15.1g) of worked flint were recovered from two contexts in Trench 2. The buried soil (202) produced two secondary waste flakes, both with pebble cortex. The fragment from context 213, fill of posthole F212, is the proximal end from a bladelet made from good quality semi-transparent mid-brown flint. The flakes are most likely Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age. The bladelet fragment could be Mesolithic.

### Post-medieval pottery

Three sherds (209g) of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the subsoil in Trench 2. The two conjoining sherds are from the rim of a 19th century flower pot. The other sherd, also a rim, is from a South Somerset slip and copper green bowl dating from c. 1650-1750.

### **Comments**

The results from the trial trench evaluation established the presence of a ditch and a series of probable postholes forming a moderate concentration within Trench 2. These were exposed at a depth of around 0.95m below existing levels. Despite the dating limited to a single stratified and possibly residual Mesolithic worked flint, the depth at which the features were located and their position beneath a buried soil (which yielded worked flint finds) suggests that the activity represented is likely to have been of prehistoric origin.

No clear pattern to the postholes could be established from the portion exposed, nor the function of the ditch. However, the presence of these features and particularly the concentration of postholes, which probably continued around the vicinity of the trench, suggest that these represent some form of structural remains, with this perhaps characterising settlement activity. Although the date of the flint assemblage is rather broad, it nevertheless demonstrates evidence for additional prehistoric activity on the ridge above the Alphinbrook and River Exe floodplain to the previously-recorded Bronze Age barrow to the west.

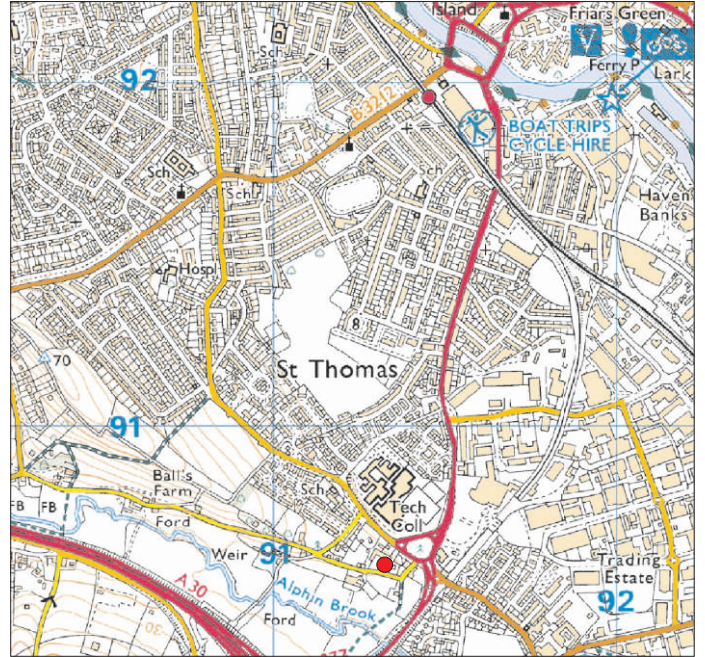
Based on the results of the trial trenching and following consultation with the Exeter City Council Principal Project Manager (Heritage), the foundation design of the proposed development was adapted. This was implemented to ensure that the depth of impact from the development would not be so great as to disturb the archaeological features present. The latter were preserved *in situ* under a raft foundation, and no further archaeological work was undertaken as a result.

### **Recorder:**

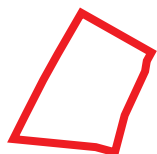
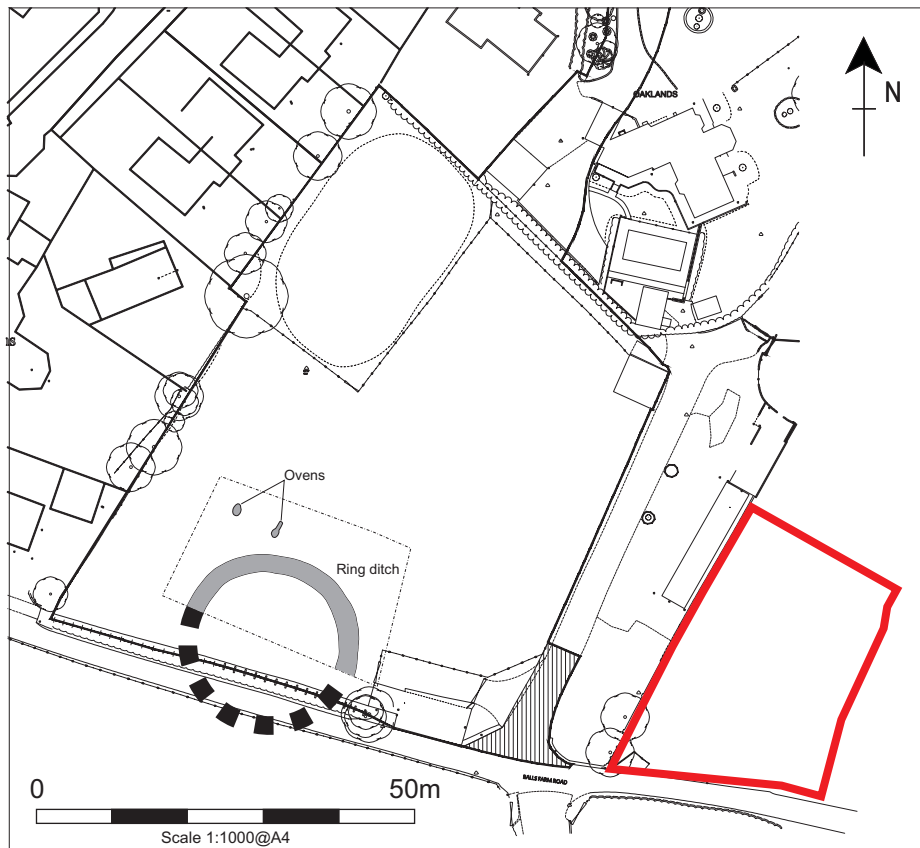
Simon Hughes (AC archaeology)

### **Date sent to HER:**

14 April 2016



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Site boundary

PROJECT

Villa Gardens, Cowick Lane, Exeter, Devon

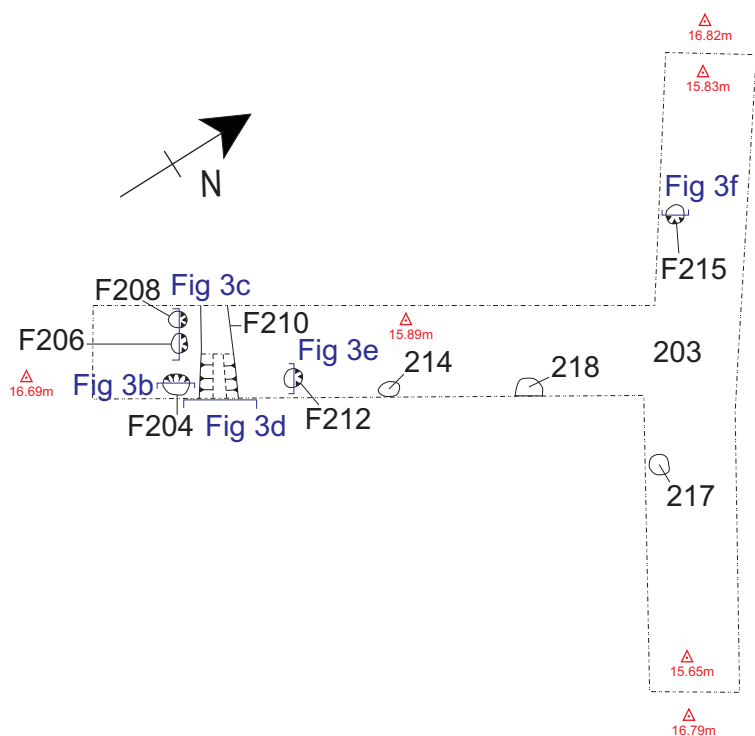
TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location plan, showing previously identified archaeological features

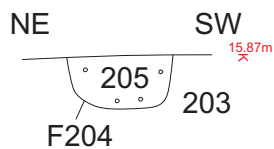




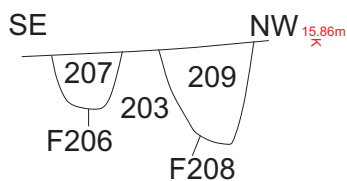
a) Plan of Trench 2



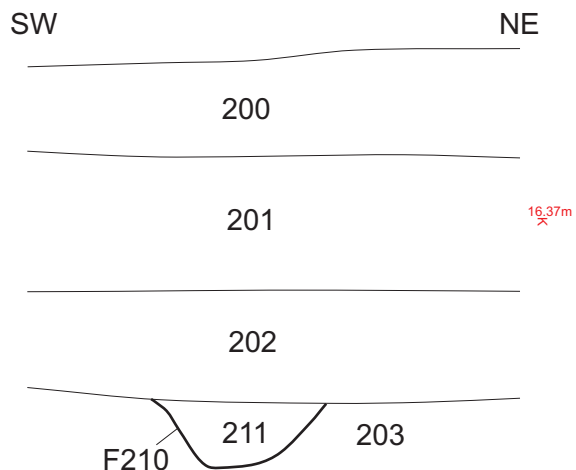
b) Section of F204



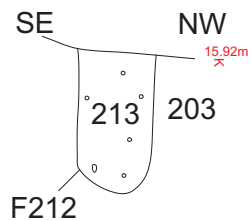
c) Section of F206 and F208



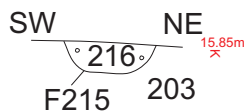
d) Section of F210



e) Section of F212



f) Section of F215



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Villa Gardens, Cowick Lane, Exeter, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 3: Trench 2; Plan and sections





Plate 1: View of site looking northeast with Trench 1 in foreground



Plate 2: Trench 2, working view. Looking east



Plate 3: Showing features in southeast portion of Trench 2, with posthole F212 in foreground. Looking southwest (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Showing northeast portion of Trench 2. View to northwest (scale 1m)

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