LAND OFF THE A361 AND BLUNDELL'S ROAD, TIVERTON, DEVON

Centred on NGR SS 9826 1361

Results of an Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

Mid Devon District Council Planning Reference: 14/01168/MFUL (Condition 11)

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On behalf of: Devon County Council

Report No: ACD1175/2/0

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SUMMARY

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out by AC archaeology during January and April 2016 on land off the A361 and Blundell's Road, Tiverton, Devon. The development area occupied approximately 6 hectares of agricultural land and was located on the eastern outskirts of Tiverton. It lay in an area of known prehistoric activity, with this consisting of a Neolithic long barrow located to the east, while a number of settlement type enclosures and artefact scatters have also been recorded.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of 20 trenches totaling 590m in length, with each trench 1.8m wide. These were mainly positioned to target anomalies interpreted from a previous geophysical survey. Archaeological features were present in thirteen of the trenches, with these consisting of a small number of undated probable ditches and a few pits. The ditches are likely to represent evidence for early land division, as they were on different alignments to the existing field arrangement. This undated but potentially earlier activity also included a small number of pits/postholes. A small assemblage of worked flint and two pieces of iron slag were collected.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land off the A361 and Blundell's Road, Tiverton, Devon (centred on SS 9826 1361), was undertaken by AC archaeology between 18-29 January and 11-13 April 2016. It was carried out in advance of construction of a new road junction on land to the north and south of the A361 Dual Carriageway. The work was commissioned by Devon County Council as the first stage in a programme archaeological investigations required as a condition (No. 11) of planning consent granted by Mid Devon District Council, following consultation with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCCHET).
- 1.2 The site is located 0.9 km to the east of Tiverton, with a small housing estate on its southeastern boundary (Fig. 1). It covered approximately 6 hectares of agricultural land (Plate 1). The site lay on broadly level ground at around 89m aOD (above Ordnance Datum). The underlying geology is sandstone of the Tidcombe Sand Member. The superficial deposits recorded for the site are river terrace deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel (BGS 2016).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site has been covered within a wider historic environment assessment (Jordan 2014) and geophysical survey (Richardson 2014). The assessment established that the site is situated within a general area of prehistoric activity, with this consisting of a Neolithic Long Barrow (National Heritage List for England no. 1019058; Smith 1990) to the east, while a settlement type enclosure (Devon HER no. MDV112083) and artefact scatters (e.g. MDVs 7705, 30279, 59812 and 79072) have also been recorded.
- 2.2 The geophysical survey identified a small number of anomalies that were interpreted as representing possible agricultural boundaries, as well as areas of 'magnetic variance' (Devon HER no. MDV113659).

3. AIM

3.1 The main aim of the trial trenching was to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site. The results of the work as

set out in this document will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent archaeological mitigation as a second stage.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a brief prepared by DCCHET (Reed 2015) and subsequent project design, prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2015). It comprised the machine-excavation of twenty trenches totaling 590m in length and with each trench 1.80m wide. These were positioned to target anomalies interpreted from the previous geophysical survey (Fig. 2).
- 4.2 All trenches were located with a Leica Netrover GPS accurate to 1cm. The removal of ploughsoil within the trenches was undertaken in 20cm spits under the control and direction of a site archaeologist.
- 4.3 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 and spoilheaps were scanned both manually and by metal detector for displaced artefacts.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Trenches 3, 9 and 15-20 were negative, while archaeological features were present in the remaining trenches. The archaeological features are described in detail below. Natural subsoil varied from mid yellowish red to mid brownish red silty clay with abundant flint gravel inclusions. It was overlain by a mid greyish brown silty clay ploughsoil, with a mid reddish brown silty loam found in the part of the site located to the north of the A361. This generally overlay a subsoil of mid brownish red silty sand, with further localised buried subsoil deposits in trenches 2, 7, 10 and 13 on the south side of the A361.

5.2 Trench 1 (Detailed plan Fig 3a and section Fig 3b; Plate 2)

This trench was aligned north to south and was 35m long. It was positioned to investigate a northeast to southwest aligned linear anomaly identified from the previous geophysical survey. Natural subsoil (context 102) was exposed at a depth of 0.52m below ploughsoil (100). The trench contained a linear feature (F103) that corresponded with the position of the targeted anomaly.

Ditch F103

Ditch F103 measured 1.1m wide and 0.23m deep with shallowly sloping sides and a flattish base. It contained a single fill (104), comprising a dark red silty clay. No finds were recovered.

5.3 Trench 2 (Detailed plan Fig. 3c and sections Figs 3d-f; Plate 3)

This trench was approximately northwest to southeast aligned and was 25m long. It was positioned to target a linear anomaly interpreted from the geophysics results. It was excavated onto natural subsoil (203) that was present at a depth of 0.53m below existing ground level. The trench contained a single northeast to southwest aligned probable ditch (F204), two possible postholes (F205 and F206) and a single irregular deposit (207).

Ditch F204

Ditch F204, was located near the middle of the trench. It measured 1.10m wide and 0.53m deep with moderately-steep sloping sides and flattish base. It cut a buried subsoil deposit (202). The ditch

contained three fills (208-10). The basal fill (208) consisted of a mid brownish yellow silty clayey loam. This was overlain by an accumulation of mid reddish grey silty clayey loam (209), which was in turn was below a mid reddish grey silty clayey loam (210). No finds were recovered from these fills.

Pit F205

Circular pit F205 measured 0.40m in diameter by 0.07m deep with steep sides and a flattish base. It contained a single fill (211) consisting of a mid reddish brown silty clayey loam. No finds were recovered.

Pit F206

Oval posthole or pit F206 measured 0.58m long, 0.35m wide by 0.12m deep. It had a steeply-sloping concave northeast side and a shallowly sloping concave southwest side and contained a single fill (212) consisting of mid brownish grey silty clayey loam. No finds were recovered.

Natural feature

Irregular feature 207 measured 1.75m long by 0.75m wide and was composed of a dark grey silty loam. No finds were recovered from the surface of this unexcavated feature, which is interpreted as a probable tree-throw.

5.4 Trench 3

Trench 3 was northeast to southwest aligned and was 25m long. It was positioned to investigate a blank area interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. No archaeological features were present, with the recorded layer sequence as follows:

Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
300	Mid greyish brown, silty clayey loam	0 – 0.18m	Topsoil	
301	Mid reddish brown, silty clayey loam	0.18m – 0.51m	Subsoil	
302	Mid brownish yellow, silty clay	0.51m +	Natural	

Table 1: Trench 3, layer sequence

Trench 4 (Detailed plan Fig. 4a and section Fig. 4b)

Trench 4 was approximately northeast to southwest aligned and was 25m long. It was positioned to investigate a northwest to southeast aligned linear anomaly interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. Natural subsoil (402) was exposed at a depth of 0.35m below existing ground level. The trench contained a probable ditch (F403) that corresponded with the position of the targeted anomaly.

Ditch F403

Ditch F403 measured 1.25m wide by 0.21m deep, with shallowly sloping concave sides and a concave base. It contained one fill (404) comprising a mid reddish brown silty clayey loam fill. No finds were recovered.

5.6 Trench 5 (Detailed plan Fig. 4c and section Fig. 4d; Plate 4)

This trench was approximately east to west aligned and 25m long. It was positioned to investigate a northwest to southeast aligned linear anomaly interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. The trench was excavated onto natural subsoil (502) which was present at a depth of 0.38m below existing levels. The trench contained a single linear feature (F503) that corresponded to the geophysical survey.

Ditch F503

Ditch F503 measured 1.10m wide and 0.35m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. It contained two fills (504-5). The primary fill (504) comprised a mid reddish brown

silty loam. This was overlain by a mid brownish red silty loam (505). No finds were recovered from either fill.

5.7 Trench 6 (Detailed plan Fig. 5a and sections Figs 5b-c)

Trench 6 was approximately northeast to southwest aligned and was 50m long. It was positioned to investigate a series of northwest to southeast aligned linear anomalies interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. Natural subsoil (602) was exposed at a depth of 0.60m below existing levels. The trench contained two probable ditches (F603 and F605) that did not correspond well with any of the linear anomalies on the geophysical survey.

Ditch F603

Ditch F603 measured 0.40m wide by 0.17m deep, with steeply sloping concave sides onto a concave base. It contained one fill (604) comprising a mid reddish brown silty clay. No finds were recovered.

Ditch F605

Ditch F605 measured 0.86m wide by 0.17m deep, with moderately sloping concave sides onto a concave base. The ditch contained one fill (606) comprising a mid reddish brown silty clay. No finds were recovered.

Trench 7 (Detailed plan Fig. 5d and section Fig. 5e; Plate 5)

This trench was approximately northwest to southeast aligned and was 25m long. It was positioned to investigate a cluster of small anomalies identified from the previous geophysical survey. The trench was excavated onto natural subsoil (703) which was present at a depth of 0.52m below existing levels. It contained a single pit (F704) that corresponded to the geophysical survey.

Pit F704

Pit F704 measured 2.30m in diameter by 0.31m deep, with shallowly sloping sides and a flat base. It cut a buried subsoil deposit (702). The pit contained two fills (705-6). The primary fill (705) comprised a mid reddish brown silty clay and contained three small pieces of worked flint. This was overlain by a mid greyish red silty clay (706) with no finds.

5.9 Trench 8 (Detailed plan Fig. 6a and section Fig. 6b; Plate 6)

This trench was approximately northeast to southwest aligned and was 25m long. It was positioned to investigate a northwest to southeast aligned linear anomaly interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. The trench was excavated onto natural subsoil (802) which was present at a depth of 0.41m below existing levels. It contained a single linear anomaly (F803) that corresponded to the geophysical survey.

Ditch F803

Ditch F803 measured 1.21m wide by 0.45m deep and was V-shaped with moderately steep sloping sides. It contained one fill (804) comprising a mid greyish brown silty clayey loam. No finds were recovered.

5.10 Trench 9

Trench 9 was northeast to southwest aligned and was 25m long. It was positioned to investigate a blank area from the previous geophysical survey. No archaeological features were present, with the recorded layer sequence as follows:

Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
900	Mid greyish brown, silty clayey loam	0 – 0.30m	Topsoil
901	Mid reddish brown, clayey loam	0.30m - 0.50m	Subsoil
902	Mid brownish yellow, silty sand	0.50m +	Natural

Table 2: Trench 9, layer sequence

5.11 Trench 10 (Detailed plan Fig. 6c and section Fig. 6d)

This trench was approximately north to south aligned and was 20m long. It was positioned to investigate a northwest to southeast aligned linear anomaly interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. It was excavated onto natural subsoil (1003) which was present at a depth of 0.61m below existing levels. The trench contained a single linear feature (F1004) that corresponded to the geophysical survey anomaly.

Ditch F1004

Ditch F1004 measured 1.12m wide and 0.65m deep, with a moderately steeply sloping concave southwest side and a steep sloping convex northeast side onto a concave base. It cut a buried subsoil deposit (1002). The ditch contained three fills (1005-7). The primary fill (1005) comprised a mid reddish brown sandy clayey loam. This was overlain by a light grey silty clayey loam (1006) which was in turn below a mid reddish grey silty clayey loam (1007). No finds were recovered from these fills.

5.12 Trench 11 (Detailed plan Fig. 7a and sections Figs 7b-c)

This trench was approximately northwest to southeast aligned and was 25m long. It was positioned to investigate an east to west aligned linear anomaly identified from the previous geophysical survey. The trench was excavated onto natural subsoil (1102) which was present at a depth of 0.45m below existing levels. It contained a single linear feature (F1103) that corresponded to the geophysical survey anomaly.

Ditch F1103

Ditch F1103 measured 1.22m wide by 0.29m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and an irregular flattish base. It contained two fills (1104-5). The primary fill (1104) comprised a mid reddish brown silty loam. This was overlain by a mid reddish brown silty loam (1105). No finds were recovered from either fill.

5.13 Trench 12

This trench was a 'cross' shape and measured 30m north to south and 30m east to west. It was positioned to investigate a segmented possibly sub-square linear anomaly interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. The trench was excavated onto natural subsoil (1202) which was present at a depth of 0.52m below existing levels. It contained a single short linear feature (F1203) that may represent a terminus of the segmented linear anomaly interpreted from the geophysical survey.

Ditch F1203

Ditch F1203 measured 1.52m wide by 0.36m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. It had a single fill (1204) comprising a mid greyish brown silty clayey loam which contained a small piece of worked flint.

5.14 Trench 13 (Detailed plan Fig. 8a and sections Figs 8b-c; Plate 8)

This trench was approximately northeast to southwest aligned and was 50m long. It was positioned to investigate a supposedly blank area interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. The trench was excavated onto natural subsoil (1308) which was present at a depth of 0.30m below existing levels. It contained a single short linear feature (F1304) partly located beneath a buried subsoil deposit (1303/1307). The feature did not appear on the geophysical survey.

Ditch F1304

Ditch F1304 terminated within the trench and measured 1.10m wide by 0.28m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. It contained two fills (1305-6). The primary fill (1305) comprised a mid greyish brown silty loam. This was overlain by a mid greyish brown silty clayey loam (1306). No finds were recovered from either fill.

5.15 Trench 14 (Detailed plan Fig. 8d and section Fig. 8e)

This trench was approximately northeast to southwest aligned and was 25m long. It was positioned to investigate a northwest to southeast aligned linear anomaly interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. The trench was excavated onto natural subsoil (1402) which was present at a depth of 0.40m below existing levels. The trench contained a single linear feature (F1403) that corresponded to the geophysical survey anomaly.

Ditch F1403

Ditch (F1403) measured 0.74m wide and 0.34m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a concave base. The ditch contained one fill (1404) comprising a mid greyish brown sandy clayey loam. No finds were recovered.

5.16 Trench 15

Trench 15 was approximately northeast to southwest aligned and was 35m long. It was positioned to investigate an area outside of the previous geophysical survey. No archaeological features were present, with the recorded layer sequence as follows:

Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
1500	Mid reddish brown, silty loam	0 – 0.17m	Topsoil
1501	Mid reddish brown, silty loam	0.17m - 0.23m	Subsoil
1502	Dark brown, clayey silt	0.23m +	Natural

Table 3: Trench 15, layer sequence

5.17 Trench 16

Trench 16 was northeast to southwest aligned and was 20m long. It was positioned to investigate an amorphous magnetic anomaly interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. No archaeological features were present, with the recorded layer sequence as follows:

Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
1600	Mid reddish brown, silty clay	0 – 0.27m	Topsoil
1601	Mid reddish brown, silty loam	027.m - 0.39m	Subsoil
1602	Dark brown, clayey silt	0.39m +	Natural

Table 4: Trench 16, layer sequence

5.18 Trench 17

Trench 17 was approximately north to south aligned and was 20m long. It was positioned to investigate an east to west aligned linear anomaly interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. No archaeological features were present, with the recorded layer sequence as follows:

Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
1700	Mid reddish brown, silty loam	0 – 0.34m	Topsoil	
1701	Mid reddish brown, silty loam	0.34m - 0.55m	Subsoil	
1702	Dark brown, clayey silt	0.55m +	Natural	

Table 5: Trench 17, layer sequence

5.19 Trench 18

Trench 18 was approximately northeast to southwest aligned and was 20m long. It was positioned to investigate a northwest to southeast aligned linear anomaly interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. No archaeological features were present, with the recorded layer sequence as follows:

Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
1800	Mid reddish brown, silty loam	0 – 0.29m	Topsoil
1801	Mid reddish brown, silty loam	0.29m - 0.40m	Subsoil
1802	Dark brown, clayey silt	0.40m +	Natural

Table 6: Trench 18, layer sequence

5.20 Trench 19

Trench 19 was approximately east to west aligned and measured 30m long. It was positioned to investigate a blank area interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. No archaeological features were observed with the recorded layer sequence as follows:

Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
1900	Mid reddish brown, silty loam	0 – 0.31m	Topsoil
1901	Mid reddish brown, silty loam	0.31m - 0.52m	Subsoil
1902	Dark brown, clayey silt	0.52m +	Natural

Table 7: Trench 19, layer sequence

5.21 Trench 20

Trench 20 was northwest to southeast aligned and was 25m long. It was positioned to investigate an amorphous magnetic anomaly interpreted from the previous geophysical survey. No archaeological features were present, with the recorded layer sequence as follows:

Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
2000	Mid reddish brown, silty loam	0 – 0.23m	Topsoil
2001	Mid reddish brown, silty loam	0.23m - 0.33m	Subsoil
2002	Dark brown, clayey silt	0.33m +	Natural

Table 8: Trench 20, layer sequence

6. THE FINDS by Naomi Payne

All finds recovered on site during the evaluation have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. They have been quantified according to material type within each context and the assemblage scanned to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. The finds comprise a small assemblage of prehistoric worked flint and some slag. They are summarised in Table 9 below.

Context	Context description	Slag	Slag		Worked flint/chert	
Context		No.	Weight	No.	Weight	
705	Trench 7, primary fill of pit F704			3	15	
1201	Trench 12 subsoil	1	14	4	14	
1204	Trench 12, fill of ditch F1203			1	3	
1300	Trench 13 topsoil			1	5	
1301	Trench 13 subsoil			1	25	
1401	Trench 14 subsoil	1	16	1	13	
2000	Trench 20 topsoil			1	4	
Total		2	30	12	79	

Table 9: Summary of finds by context (weights in grams)

6.2 Slag

Two pieces (30g) of slag were recovered from subsoil contexts in Trench 12 and Trench 14. The piece from context 1201 is fuel ash slag. This is an undiagnostic slag which results from high

temperature reactions between alkaline fuel ashes and silicates from soil, sand or clay. The other piece appears to be a small, wedge-shaped piece of stone which is coated in a fuel ash glaze. Accidental alkali glazes can form when fuel ashes come into contact with silicates at high temperatures.

6.3 Worked flint and chert

A total of 12 pieces (79g) of worked flint and chert was recovered from seven contexts in trenches 7, 12, 13, 14 and 20. The assemblage consists of flakes, retouched flakes and one or two reasonably crude scrapers. There is also a single blade tip, which does not appear as fresh as the other pieces. The flint is summarised in Table 10.

Context	Context description	Comment on flint
705	Trench 7, primary fill of pit F704	2 x flakes (1 with hinged termination) and 1 x retouched flake
1201	Trench 12 subsoil	1 x broken flake, 1 x bladelet fragment, 2 x retouched flakes
1204	Trench 12, fill of ditch F1203	Broken flake
1300	Trench 13 topsoil	Broken flake
1301	Trench 13 subsoil	Broken chert flake
1401	Trench 14 subsoil	Side and end scraper
2000	Trench 20 topsoil	Thick retouched flake or crude scraper

Table 10: Summary of worked flint and chert by context

Most of the flint is from topsoil or subsoil contexts. The small size of the assemblage reflects general background activity in the landscape in the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, rather than any concentrated occupation. The bladelet fragment could be as early in date as the Mesolithic.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The trial trench evaluation has exposed a small number of undated archaeological features comprising ditches and pits, which were all present at depths of between approximately 0.3m and 0.6m below existing ground levels. It has largely shown that the geophysical survey is a good indicator of the location of features of archaeological interest with few features found in the 'blank' areas of the site.
- 7.2 Possibly the earliest feature exposed is the pit in Trench 7 (F704) which contained three worked flint flakes in the basal fill, which may suggest that it dates to the prehistoric period. Although the function of this feature was not clear, the absence of evidence for charcoal within the lowest deposit, suggests that this activity represented some form of low-level occupation; this corresponds with the small assemblage of worked flint recovered from overlying deposits across the site.
- 7.3 Interpretation of the date and function of the two small pits or postholes (F205 and F206) identified in Trench 2 is inconclusive, but they may represent some form of low-level occupation. The lack of finds from these features makes this activity difficult to assign to a period.
- 7.4 The position of ditches exposed in trenches 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14 mostly relate to the interpretation of the previous geophysical survey, and were all fairly similar in character. The arrangement of these ditches is indicative of boundaries enclosing small irregular fields. According to the Devon Historic Landscape Characterisation Project (DCC 2016) the current pattern of fields (mapped in the 19th century) are relatively large, regular enclosures and seem likely to have been laid out between the 15th-18th centuries, with some boundaries possibly following earlier divisions in the pre-existing medieval fields. The difference in alignment between the excavated ditches and the existing boundaries, indicate that the ditches belong to an earlier phase of enclosure.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The evaluation has exposed a small number of mainly undated ditches and discrete features. The features have the potential to relate to earlier activity on the site, with this based on relative alignments to the existing field arrangement. Possible settlement evidence comprises an area of low-level activity represented by discrete features that were exposed in the southern portion of the site. However, the lack of datable material, barring a few small worked flint fragments, recovered from these and their unclear function, makes any further interpretation difficult. The worked flint recovered from overlying layers, albeit in small numbers, corresponds well with previous findings in the general area.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

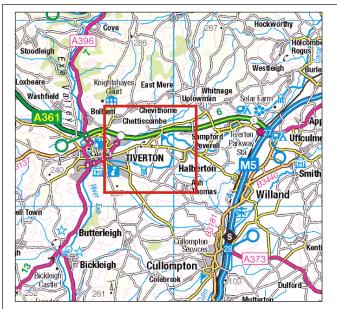
- 9.1 The finds, paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ under the unique project code of ACD1175. It will be held until the need for any further archaeological work on the site is established and ultimately will be offered to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter under temporary access number RAMM 15/29, but if they are unable to accept this, then it will be dealt with under their current accession policy.
- **9.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier **252566**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

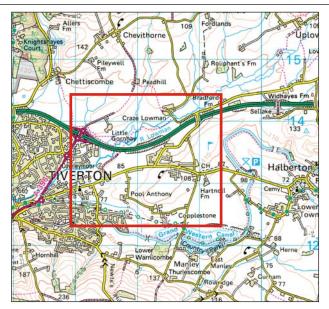
10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

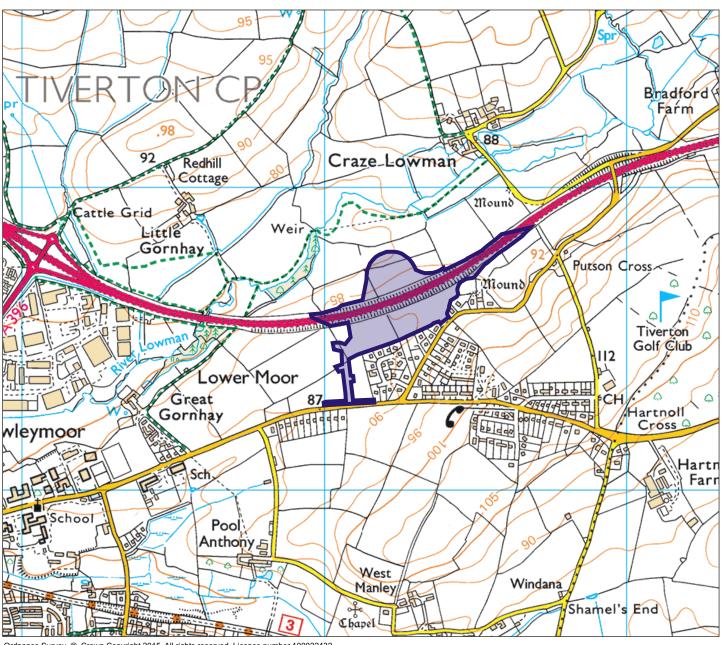
10.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Anette Smith of Devon County Council and managed for AC archaeology by John Valentin. The site works were carried out by Chris Caine, Paul Cooke, Stella De-Villiers, James Fish, Jon Hall, Kay Hamilton and Simon Hughes. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Elisabeth Patkai. The collaborative role of Stephen Reed of the Devon County Historic Environment Team is duly acknowledged.

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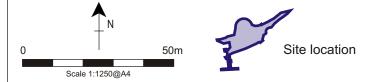
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Land off the A361 and Blundell's Road, Tiverton, Devon

Fig. 1: Site location



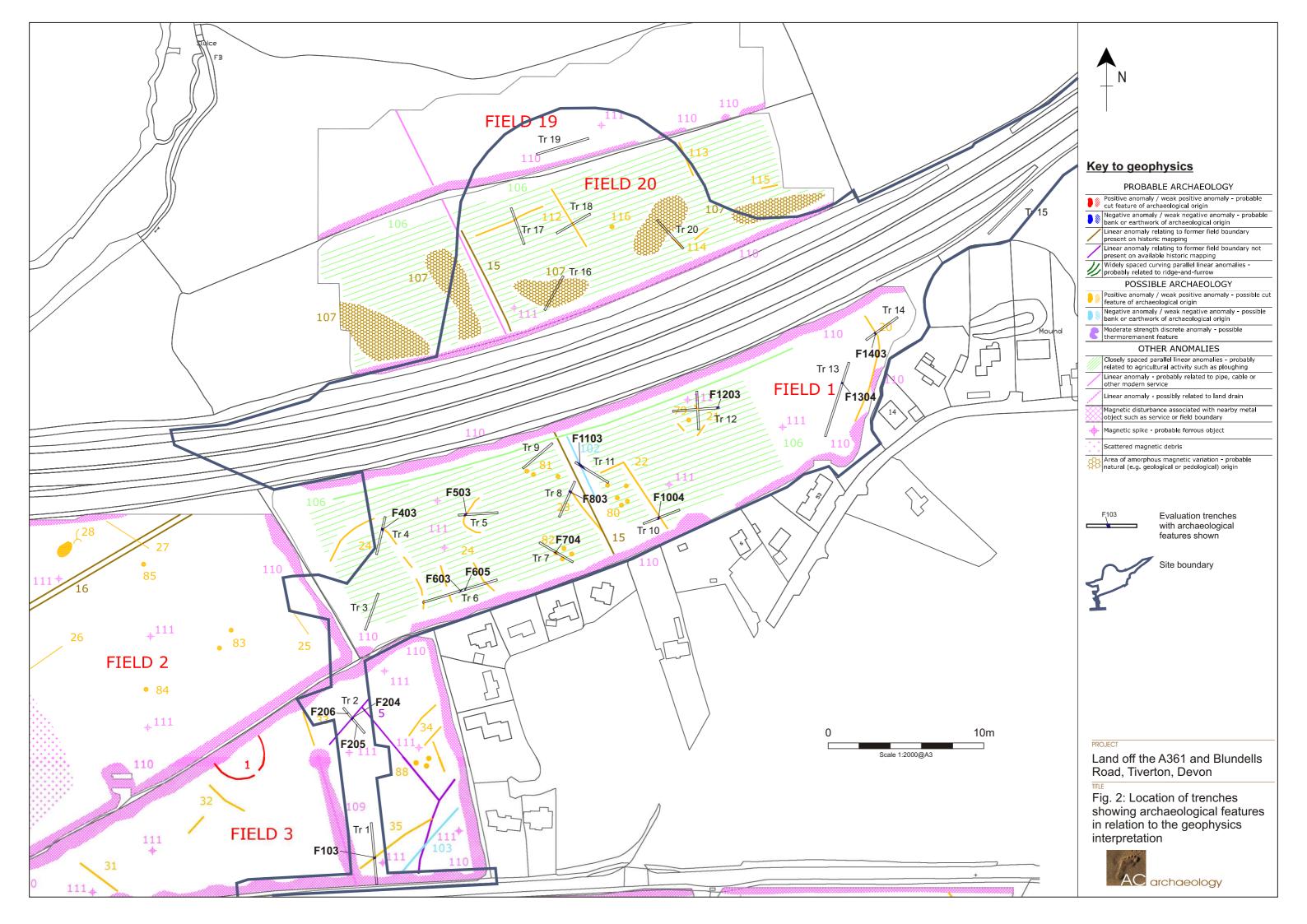




Plate 1: General view of work in progress at Trench 20, looking northeast



Plate 3: Trench 2, showing ditch F204, view to northeast (scale 1m)



Plate 2: Trench 1, showing ditch F103, view to northeast (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Trench 5, view to east (scale 1m)





Plate 5: Trench 7, showing Pit F704, view to southwest (scale 1m)



Plate 7: Trench 12, view to east (scale 1m)



Plate 6: Trench 8, showing ditch F803, view to southeast (scale 1m)

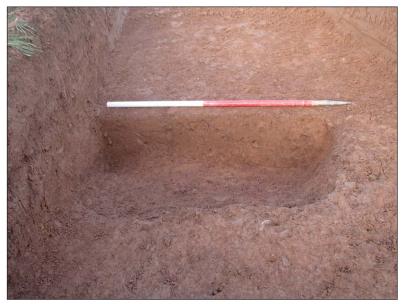


Plate 8: Trench 13, showing ditch F1304, view to northeast (scale 1m)



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