

# Drumbridge Roundabout, Newton Road, Bovey Tracey, Devon

(NGR SX 82774 75527)

## Results of an Archaeological Watching Brief

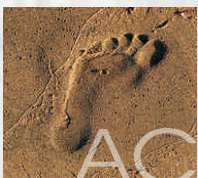
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Prepared by:  
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On behalf of:  
Devon County Council

Report No. ACD1088/1/0

Date: May 2016



archaeology

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## Results of an archaeological watching brief

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## Summary

*An archaeological watching brief was carried out by AC archaeology in March 2015 at Drumbridge Roundabout, Newton Road, Bovey Tracey, Devon (NGR SX 82774 75527). The work was undertaken during the construction of a new drainage channel prior to road widening.*

*The groundworks provided an informal section through pit or channel features cutting the natural clay geology. These features are interpreted as former tin workings which form part of an extensive area of tin works known to have operated in the Bovey Heathfield area in the late medieval and post-medieval periods. These workings are thought to have been largely abandoned in the 17th century.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report sets out the results of an archaeological watching brief which was undertaken by AC archaeology between 9th-30th March 2015 at Drumbridge Roundabout, Newton Road, Bovey Tracey, Devon (NGR SX 82774 75527; Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Devon County Council as advised by the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (DCCHET).
- 1.2 The work was carried out during the construction of a new drainage trench to the northeast of an earlier drainage ditch, which was infilled ahead of road widening on the A382. The watching brief was carried out external to the drainage channel as access to the channel was not safe.
- 1.3 The site was located on the northeast side of Newton Road between Battle Road and the Drumbridge roundabout. The work comprised a single trench (the drainage trench) measuring approximately 380m in length, parallel to Newton Road. The trench was located in an area of flat ground adjacent to the existing drainage channel at c. 21m aOD (above Ordnance Datum). The underlying solid geology comprises sand, silt and clay of the Bovey Formation (BGS 2016).

### 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Bovey Heathfield contains Bronze Age barrows (Devon Historic Environment Record nos MDV13779; MDV13780) and is the site of a battle in 1646 during the English Civil War (MDV13778).
- 2.2 The site lies in an area of extensive late medieval and post-medieval alluvial tin workings on Bovey Heathfield (MDV8946; MDV61846; MDV69787; MDV115206; and Greeves 2008; Newman 2015). These remains comprise a series of gullies on varying alignments, as well as clusters of pits. In addition, locally, clay has been extracted for pottery, tile and brick making (MDV8965; MDV52045; MDV52047).
- 2.3 Historic mapping shows that during the 19th century the area in proximity to Newton Road was planted as woodland. In the late 20th century the area to the north of Newton Road and west of the A38 has been developed as the mixed Heathfield trading estate and residential area.

- 2.4** The construction of the A38 dual carriageway in the 1970s dramatically changed the local landscape with the Drumbridge junction transformed from a cross roads to a roundabout, with a pair of flyovers over a cutting for the A38 and slip roads allowing access and exit from the A38 in both directions. The recent works at the junction associated with the upgrading of the A382 have included the installation of traffic signals, the widening of approach roads to the roundabout and the construction of a pedestrian/cycle bridge across the A38 cutting.

### **3. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1** The aim of the investigations was to record any surviving below-ground archaeological artefacts and deposits exposed by the work, in particular those associated with the remains of historic mineral extraction.
- 3.2** The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (revised 2014).
- 3.3** All archaeological features and deposits exposed 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).

### **4. RESULTS (Fig. 2; Plates 1-3)**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The investigations consisted of a watching brief that recorded the features and deposits revealed in an informal battered section created for the construction of a new drainage trench. The trench had been excavated prior to commencement of the watching brief and approximately 300m of the channel had already been lined, meaning that a c. 80m length of section located immediately to the southeast of Battle Road was available for recording. A section drawing showing the location of all features and deposits exposed is included as Fig. 2.

#### **4.2 Linear features**

These comprised a series of probable gullies which cut the natural clay (104). The continuation of these gullies as seen in the opposite section showed that they were aligned approximately east to west and that the new drainage trench cut them obliquely. The gullies were of variable width, with some very narrow (F110 and F113, both less than 0.7m) but up to 7m wide and were 1.2m+ deep; the base of the majority was not visible in the observable section. A number of the gullies recorded at the northwest end of the trench appeared to intercut, although it was not possible to establish stratigraphic relationships between them. None of the gullies were visible as surface features so it was also not possible to estimate how far they extended.

#### **4.3 Fills**

All of the gullies were filled with material characteristic of 'tailings' deposits associated with alluvial tin streaming (102/103) and composed of light bluish grey clay mixed with pale brown coarse sand, abundant quantities (c. 90%) of well sorted, small (>5mm), angular quartz gravels and poorly sorted, waterworn quartz, sandstone and 'killas' inclusions (c. 75-200mm). The deposits contained within the gullies were reasonably

homogeneous along the length of the exposed workings, although the intercut features at the northwest end (F106-F117) lacked the larger coarse components recorded in the features to the southeast (F118-F121); in particular deposit 105 in gully F120 which had still larger coarse components.

#### **4.4 Overlying deposits**

The upper levels of the 'tailings' deposits were sealed by a layer of redeposited natural subsoil composed of bluish grey clay (101) which was overlain by a dark greyish brown silty clay loam (100) associated with recently cleared scrub vegetation to the northeast of the existing drainage channel. The upper levels of the tailings deposits and layers (101 and 100) had been heavily bioturbated. A large section in the centre of the recorded section had also been removed during construction of a drainage system associated with modern housing to the northeast. A number of other modern services were also recorded cut into the upper deposits.

### **5. COMMENTS**

- 5.1** The watching brief recorded a number of features that are likely to be gullies associated with tin workings previously recorded on Bovey Heathfield. No other features of archaeological interest were observed.
- 5.2** The archaeological features recorded during this watching brief fit in with existing knowledge of late medieval and post-medieval tin working in the Bovey Heathfield. Here, it is known that shallow deposits of low grade tin ore were being exploited from the 14th to the 17th centuries and was one of the major locations for tin working in Devon (Greeves 2008). The tin ore was found at a depth of less than 4m and the largest of the open gullies that have been surveyed to the east of the A38 measured over 65m long by 12m wide and up to 2.2m deep (Newman 2015).
- 5.3** The fact that these tin working features were buried can only be in part blamed on their proximity to a main thoroughfare. The fills of the gullies appear to be tailings which indicates that they were backfilled during the lifetime of the tinworks as new gullies were opened up. This evidence is different from that of the open workings to the east of the A38 where Newman (2015) has concluded that, on the basis of surface evidence, there was little in the way of a systematic approach to exploiting the tin ore resource, with the lack of a decent water supply necessitating small scale operations at localised points.

### **6. ARCHIVE AND OASIS**

- 6.1** The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd in Bradninch under the project number **ACD1088**. It will be held until it is established whether the creation of a digital archive for deposition at the Archaeology Data Service is required.
- 6.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier **252979**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

## 7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 7.1 The work was commissioned by Devon County Council and managed for AC archaeology by John Valentin. The site work was undertaken by Will Smith, Paul Cooke and Alex Farnell, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Elisabeth Patkai. The collaborative role of Stephen Reed of DCCHET is duly acknowledged.

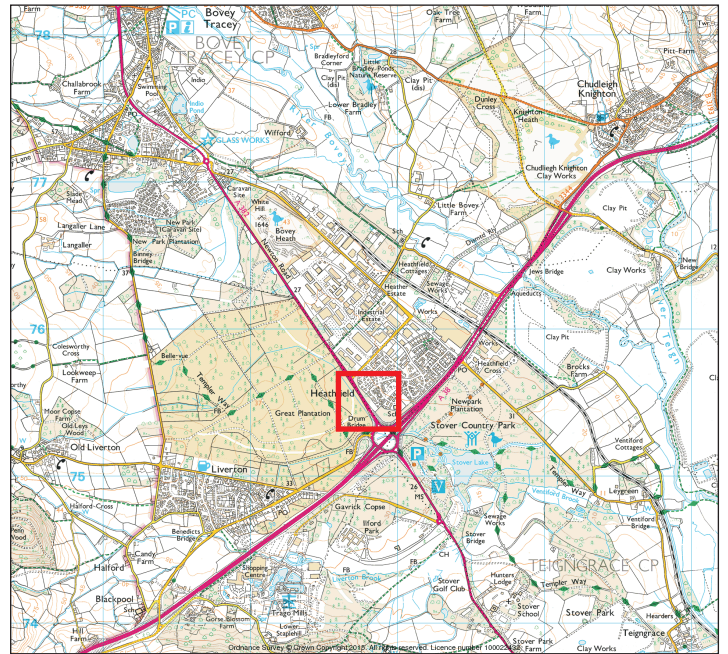
## 8. SOURCES CONSULTED

BGS 2016, *British Geological Survey On-line Viewer* ([www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)).

Greeves, T. 2008, Tanners and tinworks of the Bovey Tracey area, *Transactions of the Devonshire Association* 140, 15-43.

Newman, P. 2015, *A382 from Drum Bridge to Whitehill Cross and Jetty Marsh Link: Earthwork survey of archaeological features within Pitt's Plantation, Blacksticks Plantation and Gavrick Copse*. Unpublished Southwest Landscape Investigations Report.





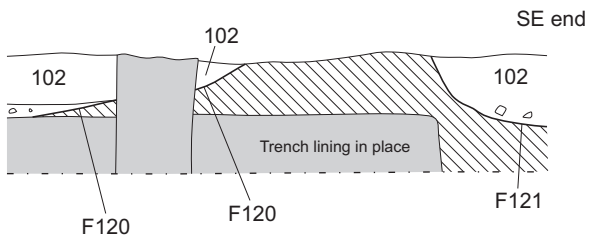
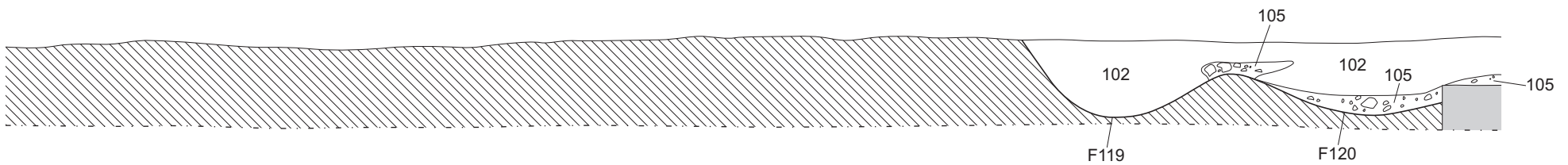
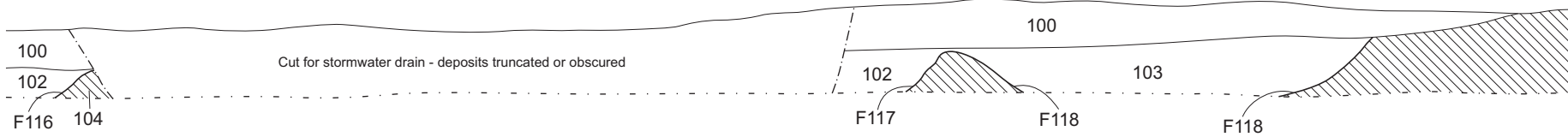
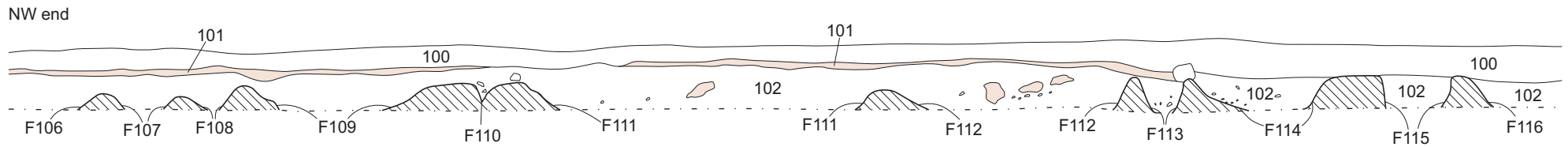
 New drainage trench





PROJECT

Drumbridge Roundabout, Newton Road,  
Bovey Tracey, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of site and  
position of watching brief  
observations



-  Natural clay (104)
-  Redeposited natural clay
-  Drainage trench lining
-  Stones



PROJECT  
**Drumbridge Roundabout,  
 Newton Road, Bovey Tracey,  
 Devon**

TITLE  
**Fig. 2: Section showing  
 watching brief observations**







Plate 1: General view of new drainage channel, looking to northwest



Plate 2: General view of new drainage trench, looking to east. Scales 2m and 1m



Plate 3: Archaeological features F110 and F111 observed in trench section, looking to northeast. Scale 2m

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