

LAND SOUTH OF MOONHILL COPSE, WEST CLYST, BROADCLYST, DEVON

Centred on NGR SX 95728 95266

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Planning reference: East Devon District Council
13/0215/MOUT (condition 8)

Prepared by
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On behalf of
WYG

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AC archaeology

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology in June 2016 on land south of Moonhill Copse, West Clyst, Broadclyst, Devon (centred on NGR SX 95728 95266). The site occupies approximately 1.5 hectares of agricultural land. Prehistoric and Romano-British activity has been identified in various locations to the east, south and southwest of the site.

The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of five trenches totalling 101.30m. These were positioned to target the anomalies produced during a previous geophysical survey of the site. All of the targeted anomalies represented changes in the natural geology or the presence of overlying soils. No archaeological finds, features or deposits were exposed, and it is concluded that the archaeological potential of the development site is very low.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1; Plate 1)

- 1.1** An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology on 23 and 24 June 2106 for WYG on behalf of Strongvox in advance of a residential development (East Devon District Council reference 13/0215/MOUT for the erection of 35 dwellings, access and associated infrastructure) on land south of Moonhill Copse, West Clyst, Broadclyst, Devon (SX 95728 95266).
- 1.2** The site covers an area of approximately 1.5ha and is a roughly triangular parcel of land situated between the M5 motorway, dwellings at the northeast end of West Clyst, and the B3181. The plot is roughly flat at the northern end at a height of 32.26m aOD, but gradually slopes at the south to 29m aOD. The underlying geology is mostly Carboniferous mudstone and sandstone of the Crackington formation, with Permian sandstone of the Dawlish sandstone formation present at the southern corner of the field (British Geological Survey Online Viewer).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** A geophysical survey was carried out in support of the planning application (Dean 2013). The survey identified few anomaly groups, with eight being of potential archaeological (or man-made) origin. These include two groups associated with the construction of the M5 motorway with the remainder having no obvious form or function.
- 2.2** To the east of the site, east of the M5 motorway, a number of findspots of prehistoric and Romano-British date are recorded. At Kerswell House, to the northeast, a coin of Eugenius (AD393-394) has been located (Historic Environment Record entry MDV10159). To the east of the site near Mosshayne large collections of flint and chert artefacts dating from the Mesolithic to Bronze Age have been recovered during fieldwalking (MDV58497 and MDV57540), whilst in the same area Roman and medieval pottery has been recovered, and there is an enclosure recorded as a cropmark (MDV52113).
- 2.3** To the south and southwest of the site, geophysical survey and excavations have been undertaken in advance of new residential developments at West Clyst. These have identified a possible prehistoric enclosure (MDV76532), a possible ring ditch or large round house (MDV77277), ditches of various dates (e.g. MDV79373), and a Romano-British field system (MDV76746).

- 2.3** The 1841 Broadclyst tithe map depicts the application area as three fields (Plots 1472, 1473 and 1474) forming a roughly triangular shape with the southern half of the triangle divided into two plots. In the Tithe map apportionment of 1841 Plot 1472 is named Gratton and is arable farmland, so too is 1473, named as Church Park, whilst Plot 1474 is named Ball Close and under pasture. The land was owned by the Right Honourable Lord Poltimore and was occupied by Abraham Gould.
- 2.4** The 1889 Ordnance Survey 25-inch map of the area depicts the same triangular shape however the southern north-south field boundary has gone and the area now forms two fields within the triangular parcel of land. This layout remains unaltered until the construction of the houses along the west side of the area fronting Exeter Road (B3181) in 1960s. The size of the field was reduced again during the construction of the M5 to the east of the site as well as a re-alignment of the B3181 to the north to accommodate a new fly-over bridge. The field boundary dividing the northern and southern part of the parcel of land appears to have remained in position until recently according to the maps, however this had been removed prior to the geophysical survey in 2013.

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1** The main aims of the evaluation were to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds that may be impacted by the proposed development. This was with particular reference for the potential for prehistoric or Romano-British remains to be present on the site. The results of the work, as set out in this report, will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of five trial trenches totalling 101.30m in length, with each trench 2m wide. The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation produced by AC Archaeology (Passmore 2015) that had been approved by the Devon County Historic Environment Team (DCHET), archaeology advisors to East Devon District Council. The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' 2014 document *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation*. All trenches were located with a Leica Net rover GPS accurate to 1cm. The removal of topsoil and soil overburden within the trenches was undertaken under the control and direction of a site archaeologist using a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket. Spoil heaps were scanned for displaced artefacts.
- 4.2** All 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*.

5. RESULTS (Fig. 2; Plates 2-9)

5.1 Trench 1 (Fig. 2; Plates 2 and 3)

Trench 1 measured 9.30m long, was aligned NW-SE, and was positioned to target geophysical survey anomaly 2. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth below current levels of 1.12m at the NW end and 0.41m at the SE end onto the natural (101), which consisted of moderately compacted mid reddish-brown silty clay with abundant mudstone and gravel inclusions.

At the NW end of the trench anomaly 2 was encountered. It comprised linear bands of light reddish-brown stiff clayey silt with occasional angular stones and gravels (103) and dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty clay with moderate angular stones (104) measuring up to 0.74m deep that overlaid the natural. Sealing (104) and (101) was a 0.30m deep layer of topsoil comprising dark reddish-brown moderately compacted clayey loam with occasional angular stones and gravels and very rare charcoal flecking (101).

No archaeological finds, features or deposits were exposed within the trench.

5.2 Trench 2 (Fig. 2; Plates 4 and 5)

Trench 2 measured 18.9m long and was L-shaped with arms aligned NW-SE and NE-SW; it was positioned to target geophysical anomaly group 5. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth below current levels of 0.39m at the SW end and 0.45m at the SE end onto the natural (201), which consisted of light reddish-brown clayey silt with rare fine gravels and larger patches of compact gravel.

The geophysical anomalies were encountered at the SW and SE ends of the trench (203 and 205). Both consisted of dark reddish-brown moderately compacted clayey silts with occasional small to medium angular stones set within the natural (201). Sealing (203), (205) and (201) was a 0.32m deep layer of topsoil (200).

Anomalies 5 are interpreted as natural ice wedges. No archaeological finds, features or deposits were exposed within the trench.

5.3 Trench 3 (Fig. 2; Plates 6 and 7)

Trench 3 measured 35m long, was aligned NNE-SSW, and was positioned to target geophysical anomalies 3 and 4. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.57m below current levels onto the natural (301), which consisted of pale yellowish-light brown clay with veins of blueish-purple clay containing rare small to medium angular stones and gravels. At the SSW end of trench, this was overlaid by a 1m deep sediment deposit (307) of dark reddish-brown clayey silt with very rare size sorted gravels and small to medium angular stones.

The two anomalies (3 and 4) were identified as geological features within 301 and 307. Anomaly 3 was located 4.00m from the NNE end of the trench and measured 10.60m wide by 1.10m deep and comprised deposits of dark reddish-brown clayey silt with very rare gravels and small to medium angular stones (304) and dark reddish-brown clayey silt with frequent small to medium angular stones and gravels throughout (303). The anomaly continued further to the south than recorded in the geophysical survey since this only detected the upper stony deposit 303. Anomaly 4 was located 8.60m from the SSW end of the trench and measured 6.70m long by 1.40m deep. It comprised dark reddish-brown clayey silt with frequent small to medium angular stones and gravels throughout (306).

Cutting deposits (303) and (301) were two ceramic land drains, orientated roughly E-W. Sealing (301), (303), (304), (306) and (307) was a 0.30m deep layer of topsoil.

Anomalies 3 and 4 are interpreted as ice wedges. No archaeological finds, features or deposits were exposed within the trench.

5.4 Trench 4 (Fig. 2)

Trench 4 measured 26.90m long, was aligned ESE-WNW, and was positioned to target geophysical anomaly group 6. The trench was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.32m at the ESE end and 1.20m at the WNW end below current levels onto a glacial wash deposit (402). Due to the depth of deposits it was necessary to excavate a sondage along the length of the trench to establish full sequence of deposits depth. The natural (404)

comprised a moderately compacted patchy mid yellowish-brown and mid reddish-brown sandy silt with very rare gravels.

This was overlain by a series of glacial sediments: the lower deposit (402) measured 0.42m deep and comprised pale reddish-brown clayey silt with very rare size sorted gravels and small to medium angular stones. The upper glacial deposit (401) measured 0.80m deep and comprised dark-reddish-brown clayey silt with very rare gravels and small to medium angular stones. Sealing 401 was 0.40m of agricultural topsoil (400). The targeted anomalies were identified as indistinct dark reddish-brown clay deposits (403), with very rare fine gravel inclusions. These deposits had no clear form and were clay lenses within 402.

No archaeological finds, features or deposits were exposed within the trench.

5.5 Trench 5 (Fig. 2; Plates 8 and 9)

Trench 5 measured 11.20m long, was aligned ESE-WNW, and was positioned to target geophysical anomaly group 7. The trench was excavated below current levels to a maximum depth of 1.25m at the ESE end and 0.95m at the WNW end. Due to the depth of deposits it was necessary to excavate a sondage along the length of the trench to establish the deposit sequence. The natural (503) consisted of a patchy mid yellowish-brown and mid reddish-brown sandy silt with very rare gravels.

This was overlain by a series of sediments: the lower deposit (502) measured 0.48m deep and comprised pale reddish-brown clayey silt with very rare size sorted gravels and small to medium angular stones. The upper deposit (501) measured 0.83m deep and comprised dark reddish-brown clayey silt with very rare size sorted gravels and small to medium angular stones. Sealing (501) was 0.32m of agricultural topsoil. The targeted anomalies were indistinct mid-reddish-brown clay deposits within (501).

No archaeological finds, features or deposits were exposed within the trench.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 The evaluation confirmed that all the targeted geophysical anomalies were of geological origin, representing either natural water-derived sediments overlying the solid geology or ice wedges within the geology. The latter are not unknown in the wider Pinhoe area, and have for example been recorded at St Lukes Science and Sports College (Andrew Passmore *pers. comm.*)

6.2 No archaeological features or deposits were present, and no finds recovered. The geophysical survey produced no features of archaeological origin, and no previously unrecorded features were identified during the evaluation. It is therefore concluded that the development site has very low archaeological potential.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

7.1 This report and the associated OASIS entry represent the archive for the project.

7.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 256764, which includes a digital copy of this report.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was commissioned by WYG on behalf of Strongvox, and managed for them by Alex Bullock and for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The site works were carried out by Elizabeth Govier and Paul Bracken. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Stella De-Villers.

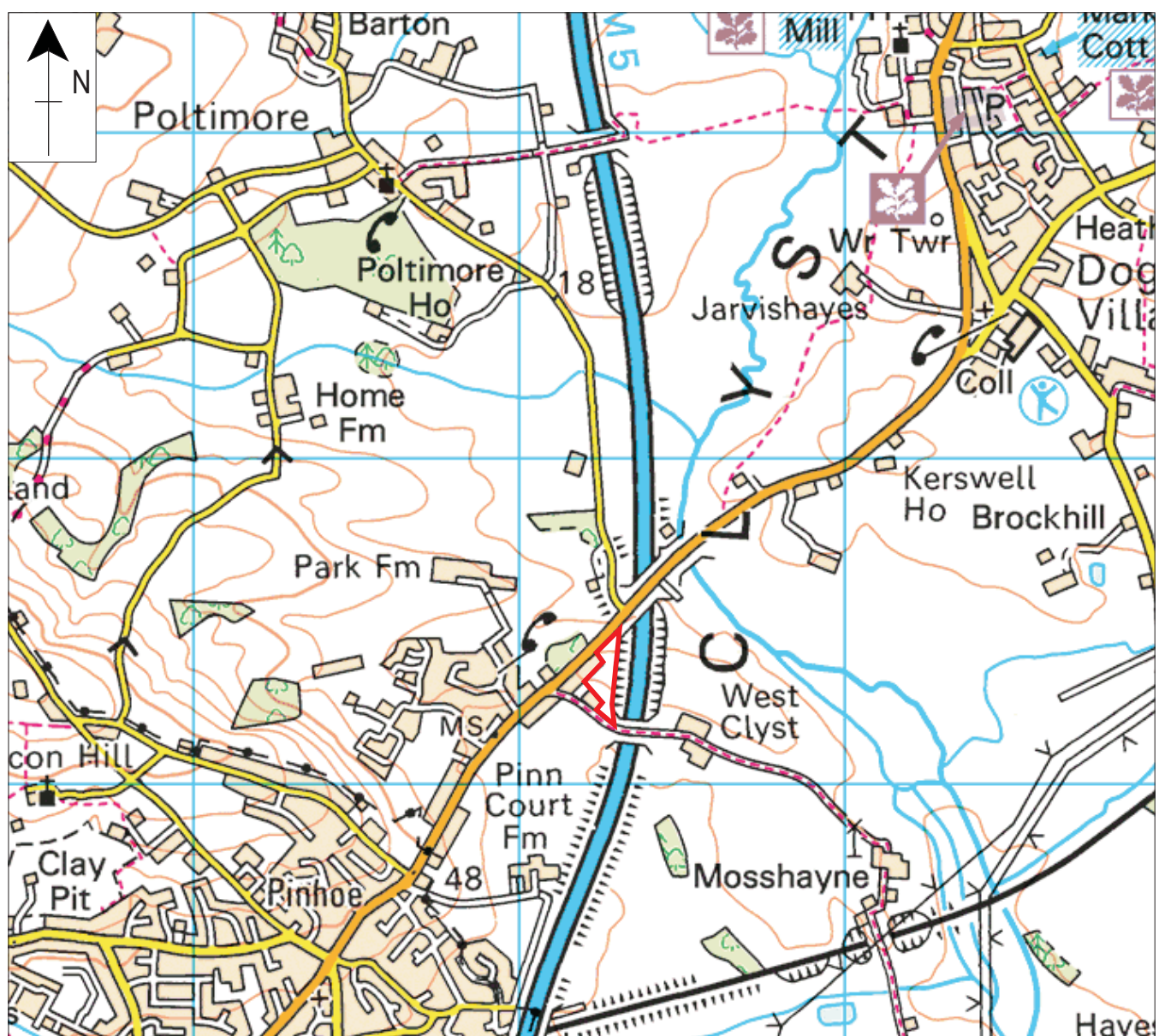
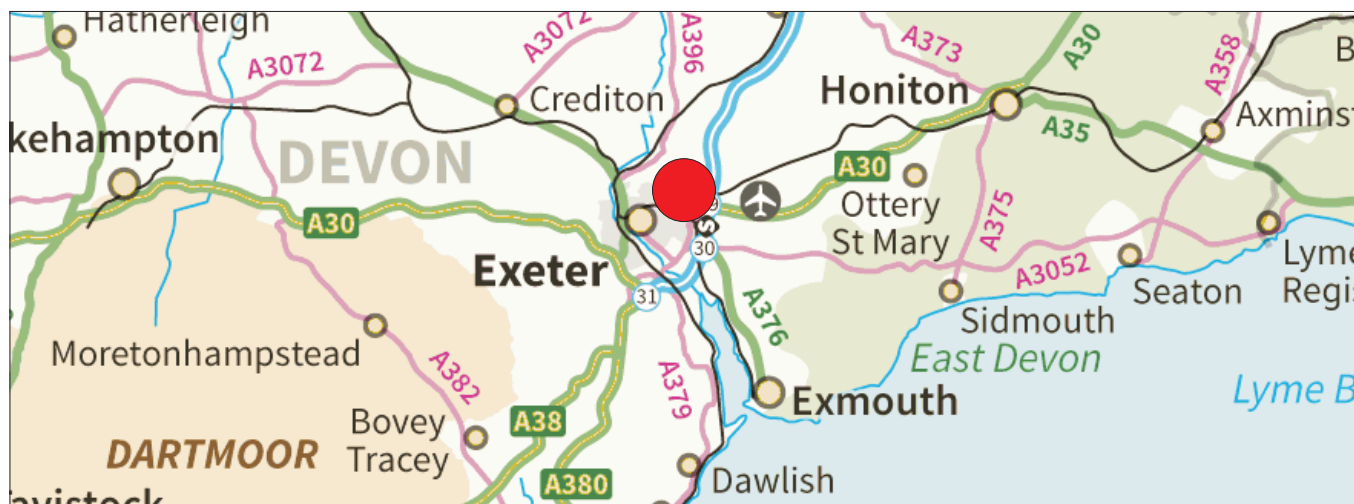
9. SOURCES CONSULTED

Dean, R., 2013, *An Archaeological Gradiometer Survey, Land at West Clyst, Broadclyst, Devon, National Grid coordinates: 29756 95313*, Substrata report no. **130314**

Passmore, A., 2015, *Land south of Moonhill Copse, West Clyst, Broadclyst, Devon, (NGR SX 95728 95266), Written Scheme of Investigation for a programme of archaeological investigations, Planning reference: East Devon District Council 13/0215/MOUT (condition 8)*, AC archaeology document no. **ACD1068/1/0**

Website accessed June 2016

British Geological Survey online Viewer, <http://www.bgs.ac.uk>



0 1km



Scale 1:20,000@A4

PROJECT

Land south of Moonhill Copse, West Clyst,
Broadclyst, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



AC archaeology

Base map: Ordnance Survey (c) Crown Copyright 2011. All rights reserved. Licence number 100020449

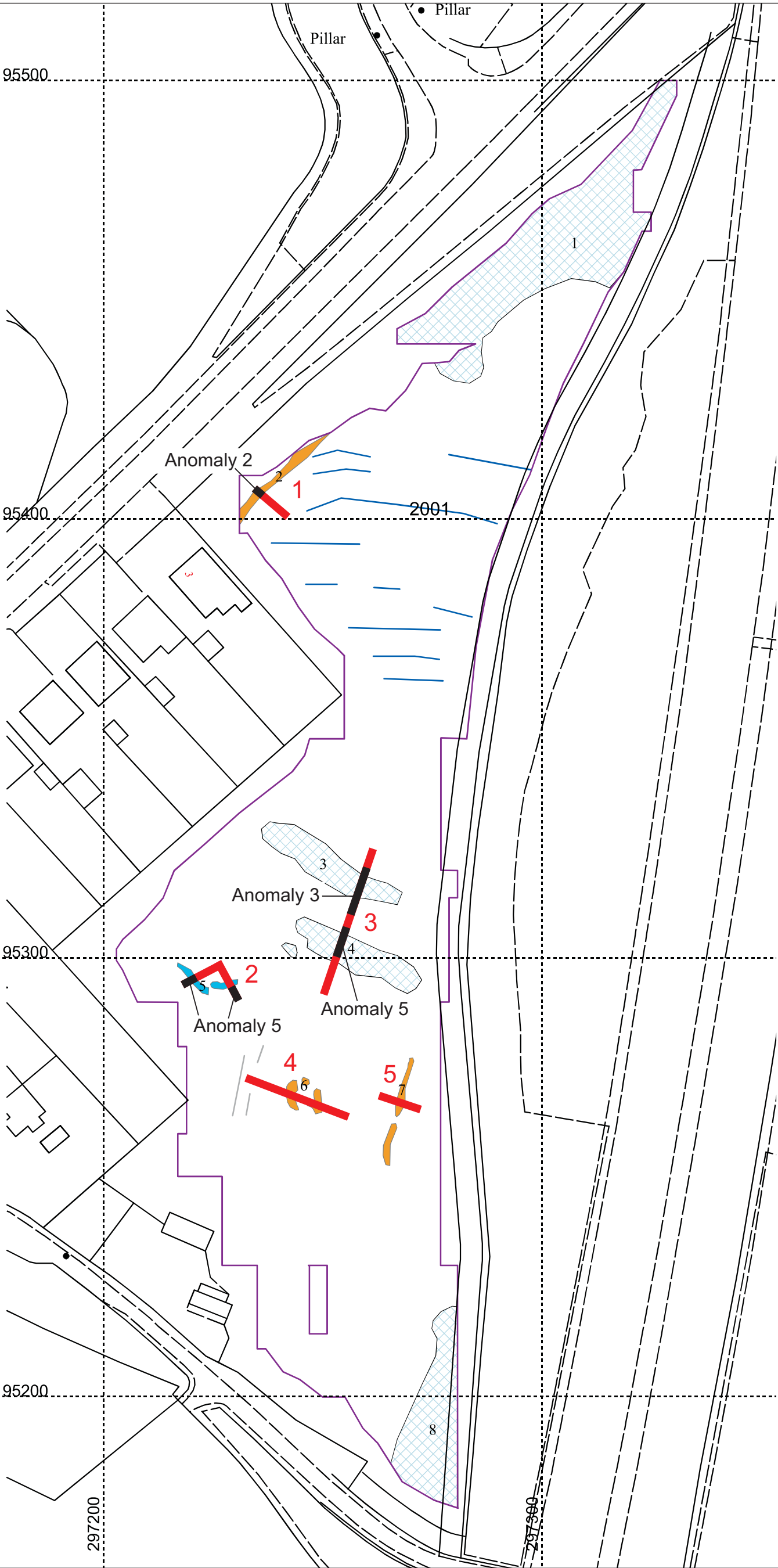
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- Legend
- gradiometer survey area
 - gradiometer potential archaeology
 - possible archaeology, positive
 - possible archaeology, negative anomaly
 - possible archaeology, mixed spread
 - possible services or drains (2)
 - gradiometer potential natural trends
 - possible natural, broad parallels (2)



Trenches 1 - 5



PROJECT
Land south of Moonhill Copse, West Clyst, Broadclyst, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 2: Trench location plan in relation to geophysical results showing anomalies observed



Plate 1: General view of southern end of development area, showing location of trenches 2-5. View looking south



Plate 2: Trench 1, post excavation. View looking northwest (2 x 1m scales)



Plate 3: Trench 1, southwest facing section of anomaly 2. View looking northeast (2m scale)



Plate 4: Trench 2, southwest end post excavation. View looking southwest (2 x 1m scales)



Plate 5: Trench 2, southeast end post excavation. View looking southeast (2 x 1m scales)



Plate 6: Trench 3, post excavation. View looking north-northeast (2 x 1m scales)



Plate 7: Trench 3, anomaly 4 at south-southwest end of trench.
View looking south-southwest (1m scale)



Plate 8: Trench 5, post excavation.
View looking east-northeast (2 x 1m scales)



Plate 9: Trench 5, south-southwest facing section.
View looking north-northeast (2 x 1m scales)

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