SEATON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT AREA - PHASE 7, PLYMOUTH

Centred on SX 4960 5877

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

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On behalf of: Persimmon Homes (Cornwall) Ltd

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during August 2016 on Phase 7 land forming part of the Seaton Neighbourhood development, Plymouth (NGR SX 4960 5877). The development area comprised approximately 4 hectares pasture/meadow fields, which are generally level to the north and then slopes steeply down to the south.

Within the development area earthworks representing Second World War bomb craters had previously been identified. The site is located immediately to the north and east of the ruined Coleridge Farm, which is documented from the late Saxon period.

The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of 13 trenches totalling 400m in length, positioned to provide sample coverage of the site. The trench evaluation exposed a single ditch, probably a boundary removed prior to c. 1800, and a small number of postholes and pits, which may date from the late 19th century onwards.

The steep sloping nature of the land in the southern part of the development area is unfavourable for early settlement, and based on the results of evaluation the archaeological potential is considered to be very low.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1; Plate 1)

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation carried out by AC archaeology in August 2016 on Phase 7 land forming part of the Seaton Neighbourhood development, Plymouth (NGR SX 4960 5877; Fig. 1). The investigation was commissioned by Persimmon Homes (Cornwall) Ltd, and was required under condition 43 of outline planning permission required by Plymouth City Council for the overall scheme area, as advised by their Historic Environment Officer (Hereafter PCC HEO).
- 1.2 The Phase 7 area covers approximately 4 hectares of residential land, which currently comprises pasture/meadow fields that are generally level on the north side at around 104m aOD (Plate 1), with the ground then dropping off steeply down to the south to around 40m aOD. It is formed from parts of two historic fields divided by a hedgebank and former trackway. The underlying solid geology comprises Middle Devonian Slates (British Geological Viewer 2016).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

A desk-based assessment for the overall scheme has been previously undertaken (Exeter Archaeology 2007). This established that within the Phase 7 development area there are the recorded positions of three possible Bronze Age barrows (Exeter Archaeology 2007, Site 1), although these were reinterpreted as upcast from Second World War bomb craters. A single mound and an adjacent depression were identified during the 2007 assessment site visit. No evidence for these was recorded during the current evaluation. In addition, the Phase 7 development area lies immediately to the north and east of the former Coleridge Farm, which may have late Saxon origins (*ibid.*, Site 4). Analysis of 1940s aerial photography indicates that at that date the southern field contained earthwork evidence for part of a wider system of watermeadows on the lower valley sides, as well as other earthworks that probably represent military training activity (Devon County Council Historic Environment Record online viewer 2016). The area was sold to the War Department between 1862 and 1940 (Exeter Archaeology 2007, 4).

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2.2 A recent archaeological trench evaluation of the adjoining Phases 5 and 6 development areas (Smith 2014) established that the northern portion of the site had undergone significant landscaping during the 20th century which would have removed any pre-existing archaeological features or deposits. The southern portion was located on a steep slope unfavourable for early settlement. A natural tree bowl and a modern pit were the only features exposed. No finds pre-dating the late 19th century were recovered.

3. AIMS

3.1 The aims of the evaluation were 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 will be reviewed by the PCC HEO and used to inform any subsequent mitigation as a second stage of archaeological works.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with an approved project design prepared by AC archaeology in 2015 (Valentin 2015). It comprised the machine excavation of 13 trenches totalling 400m in length, with each trench measuring 1.9m wide. Trench locations are shown on Fig.1; the positions of some trenches were moved from the proposed trench plan included within the project design to avoid exclusion zones for recently-identified badger setts, two large spoil heaps for the adjacent Phases 5 and 6 development located along the east side of the area, and an area of established dense shrubs in the southwest corner of the site. All trenches were located using a Leica Netrover GPS, with 100mm accuracy, and the removal of soil overburden within the trenches was carried out under the control and direction of the site archaeologist.
- 4.2 All features and deposits revealed were recorded in line with the project design using the standard pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2* (revised August 2012). All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.
- **5. RESULTS** (Figs 1-2; Plates 2-11; Appendix 1)
- 5.1 Archaeological features were encountered in trenches 4, 8, 11 and 12; all other trenches were archaeologically sterile. The trenches containing archaeological features are described below, and full details of the deposit sequence in all trenches are tabulated in Appendix 1 (Plates 2 and 8).

5.2 Trench 4

Natural (402) was encountered 0.50m below ground surface level at the north end of the trench and 0.60m at the south end, and comprised mid blueish-grey slate bedrock (Plate 3). The overlying soil sequence comprised 0.15-0.20m of subsoil (401), a mid-reddish-brown silty loam, which was sealed by 0.30-0.40m of dark reddish-brown silty loam topsoil (400).

Cutting into the natural 402 was a linear boundary ditch (F403). It had a broad v-shaped profile, measured 1.25m wide by 0.45m deep, and was orientated east-west (Plate 4). The feature contained a single fill (404) of loose mid reddish-brown clayey silt with frequent slate inclusions. No finds were present within 404 or the overlying soils.

5.3 Trench 8

Natural (802) was encountered 0.65m below ground surface level, and comprised mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt. The overlying soil sequence comprised 0.25m of subsoil (401), which was sealed by 0.40m of topsoil (400).

Two postholes (F803 and F805) had been cut into the natural 802. Posthole F803 was circular and measured 0.30m diameter by 0.10m deep and had a broad u-shape profile with a fairly flat base (Plate 5). It contained a single fill (804) of dark greyish-brown clayey silt with moderate slate inclusions and flecks and small lumps of charcoal. Posthole F805 was circular and measured 0.40m diameter by 0.20m deep and had a broad u-shape profile and slight concave base (Plate 6). It contained a single fill (806) of dark greyish-brown clayey silt with moderate slate inclusions and flecks and small lumps of charcoal.

5.4 Trench 11

Natural (1103) was encountered 0.77m below ground surface level, and comprised mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt (Plates 7-8). The overlying soil sequence comprised 0.40m of mid yellowish-brown clayey silt colluvium (1102), 0.19m of subsoil (1101), consisting of mid yellowish-brown clayey loam with moderate slate inclusions, and 0.19m of dark-reddish-brown, silty loam topsoil (1100).

Two features were partially exposed within the trench cutting into natural 1103. Pit F1104 was sub-circular, measured 1.10m long by a minimum of 0.17m wide and 0.25m deep, with gradual sloping sides and a fairly flat base (Plate 9). It contained a single fill (1104) of pale reddish-brown clayey silt with moderate slate inclusions and rare charcoal flecking. Pit F1106 was sub-circular, measured a minimum of 1.10m long by 0.17m wide and 0.26m deep, with moderate sloping sides and a concave base (Plate 10). It contained a single fill (1107) of pale reddish-brown clayey silt with moderate slate inclusions.

5.5 Trench 12

Natural (1102) was encountered 0.60m below ground surface level, and comprised mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt. The overlying soil sequence comprised 0.30m of subsoil (1201), and 0.30m of topsoil (1200).

A single feature was cut into the natural 1202. Pit F1203 was circular, measured 0.60m diameter by 0.27m deep, with steep sides and a concave base (Plate 11). It contained a single fill (1204) of mid reddish-brown clayey silt, with moderate slate inclusions, charcoal flecking and ash inclusions.

6 FINDS, by Charlotte Coles

A single piece of undiagnostic ironworking slag (18g) was recovered from context 804, the fill of posthole F803. The other finds were recovered from the topsoil in trench 3 and comprised six sherds of post-medieval pottery (101g) and two fragments of clay tobacco pipe stem (5g). The pottery was a single sherd of 18th-century glazed red earthenware ware and five sherds of 19th- or 20th-century industrial white ware. One of the clay tobacco pipe stems has two initials 'J' and 'P' either side the spur, which are likely to be the maker's mark.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The evaluation has identified a consistent sequence of deposits, with deeper soils present at the south end of the area located towards the base of the steep valley. The limited finds from the topsoil are all of late post-medieval and modern date, and may indicate that this area was historically used for pasture, a practice that would be suitable on the steep topography of the area, and is consistent with the aerial photographic evidence for watermeadows. The southern, steeper field is recorded in the 1839 tithe apportionment as pasture. This steep topography, as evident on the surface and at the levels of the exposed natural, would be unfavourable for earlier (prehistoric or Romano-British) settlement.
- 7.2 The few archaeological features are scattered across the development area and, other than ditch F403 that probably represents an historic field boundary that had been removed by the early 19th century, all probably relate to late 19th- and 20th-century military activity post-dating the cessation of farming at Coleridge. No finds were recovered to indicate any potentially earlier activity.
- 7.3 In conclusion, no significant archaeological features or deposits have been exposed, and other than field boundary F804, no evidence for land use earlier than the late 19th century has been identified. It is considered that there is very low potential for archaeological features and deposits to be present within the phase 7 development area.

8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- **8.1** An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier 259657 that includes a digital copy of this report.
- 8.2 Since the results were largely negative the results of the fieldwork will be held by the Plymouth City Historic Environment Record in the form of this report and the OASIS entry.

9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

9.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Persimmon Homes (Cornwall Ltd), and managed for them by Robbie Brown and for AC archaeology by John Valentin and Andrew Passmore. The site works were carried out by Elizabeth Govier, Paul Bracken and Jon Hall. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Sarnia Blackmore.

10. SOURCES CONSULTED

Exeter Archaeology, 2007, Archaeological assessment of proposed development at Forder Valley, Derriford, Plymouth, unpublished report for client

Smith, W., 2014, Phases 5 and 6 development areas, Seaton Neighbourhood, Plymouth: Results of an archaeological trench evaluation, AC archaeology document no. **ACD998/2/0**

Valentin, J., 2015, Phase 7 Development Area, Seaton Neighbourhood, Plymouth, Devon: Project Design for an Archaeological Trench Evaluation, AC archaeology document no. ACD1250/1/0

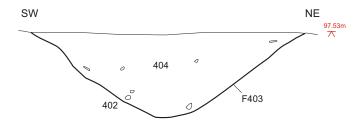
Websites Accessed August 2016

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

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record online viewer, http://map.devon.gov.uk/dccviewer/?bm=OSGreyscale&layers=Historic%20Environment;0;1&activeTab=Historic%20Environment&extent=210064;27188;338387;150088



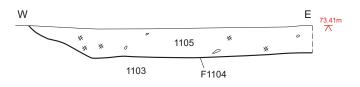
a) Section of ditch F403



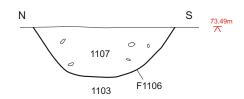
b) Section of posthole F803



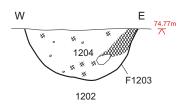
d) Section of pit F1104

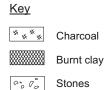


e) Section of pit F1106



f) Section of pit F1203







Seaton Neighbourhood, Plymouth

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c) Section of posthole F805

Fig. 2: Sections





Plate 1: General view of site, view looking southwest



Plate 2: Trench 1, south-facing section showing typical deposit sequence in the northern field. Scale 1m



Plate 3: Trench 4, general view, looking north. Scales 1m



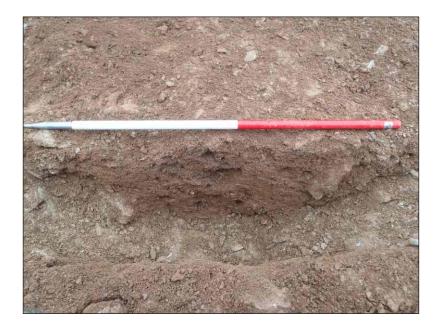


Plate 4: East-facing section of ditch F403. Scale 1m



Plate 5: Southwest-facing section of posthole F803. Scale 0.50m



Plate 6: Southwest-facing section of posthole F805. Scale 0.50m





Plate 7: Trench 11, view looking north. Scales 1m



Plate 8: West-facing section of trench 11 showing typical deposit sequence in the southern field. Scale 1m



Plate 9: South-facing section of pit F1104. Scale 0.50m



Plate 10: West-facing section of pit F1106. Scale 0.50m



Plate 11: Southwest-facing section of pit F1203. Scale 0.50m



Appendix 1 Tabulated trench descriptions

Trench 1		Length	Width	Alignment
		30m	2m E-W	
Context	Description	Depth	Interpret	ation
100	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf and occasional small-medium sub-angular, sub-rounded stones and slate fragments.	0-0.15m	Topsoil	
101	Mid reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.15-0.21m	Subsoil	
102	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.21-0.36m	Natural	

Trench 2		Length	Width Alignment	
		25m	1.9m E-W	
Context	Description	Depth	Interpret	ation
200	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf and occasional small-medium sub-angular, sub-rounded stones and slate fragments.	0-0.30m	Topsoil	
201	Mid reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.30-0.60m	Subsoil	
202	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.60-0.75m	Natural	

Trench 3		Length	Width	Alignment
		25m	1.9m E-W	
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
300	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf and occasional small-medium sub-angular, sub-rounded stones and slate fragments.	0-0.30m	Topsoil	
301	Mid reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.30-0.60m	Subsoil	
302	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.60m	Natural	

Trench 4		Length	Width	Alignment
		50m	1.9m N-S	
Context	Description	Depth	Interpret	ation
400	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf and occasional small-medium sub-angular, sub-rounded stones and slate fragments.	0-0.0.40m	Topsoil	
401	Mid reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.40-0.55m	Subsoil	
402	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.55m	Natural	
F403	Linear E-W boundary ditch with a broad v-shape profile and concave base, with moderate break of slope at base and sharp break of slope at top. Measuring 1.45m wide, and 0.45m deep.	0.55-1m	Linear E ditch	E-W boundary

slate inclusions.	ose clayey silt with frequent 0.55-1m Single fill of F403
State inclusions.	

Trench 5		Length	Width	Alignment
		50m	1.9m E-W	
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
500	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf and occasional small-medium sub-angular, sub-rounded stones and slate fragments.	0-0.20m	Topsoil	
501	Mid reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.20-0.50m	Subsoil	
502	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.50m	Natural	

Trench 6		Length	Width Alignment	
		15m	1.9m E-W	
Context	Description	Depth	Interpret	ation
600	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf and occasional small-medium sub-angular, sub-rounded stones and slate fragments.	0-0.0.20m	Topsoil	
601	Mid reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.20-0.30m	Subsoil	
602	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.30	Natural	

Trench 7		Length	Width	Alignment
		30m	1.9m	E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpret	ation
700	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf and occasional small-medium sub-angular, sub-rounded stones and slate fragments.	0-0.0.20m	Topsoil	
701	Mid reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.20-0.40m	Subsoil	
702	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.40m	Natural	

Trench 8		Length	Width Alignment	
		50m	1.90m	E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpret	ation
800	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf and occasional small-medium sub-angular, sub-rounded stones and slate fragments.	0-0.40m	Topsoil	
801	Mid reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.40-0.65m	Subsoil	
802	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.65m	Natural	

F803	Circular posthole, with a broad u-shape profile and fairly flat base, moderate break of slope at base and sharp break of slope at top, measuring 0.30mx0.10m	0.65-0.75m	Posthole
804	Dark greyish-brown moderately compacted clayey silt with moderate slate inclusions and flecks and small lumps of charcoal.	0.65-0.75m	Fill of F803
F805	Circular posthole, with a broad u-shape profile and slight concave base, moderate break of slope at base and sharp break of slope at top, measuring 0.40mx0.20m	0.65-0.85m	Post hole
806	Dark greyish-brown moderately compacted clayey silt with moderate slate inclusions and flecks and small lumps of charcoal.	0.65-0.85m	Fill of F805

Trench 9		Length	Width	Alignment
		30m	1.9m	E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpret	ation
900	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf and occasional small-medium sub-angular, sub-rounded stones and slate fragments.	0-0.20m	Topsoil	
901	Mid reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.20-0.40m	Subsoil	
902	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.40m	Natural	

Trench 10		Length	Width	Alignment
		25m	1.9m	N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpret	ation
1000	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf cover, occasional small-medium sub-angular and sub-rounded stones and occasional slate fragments.	0-0.30m	Topsoil	
1001	Mid yellowish-brown moderately compacted clayey loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.30-0.65m	Subsoil	
1002	Mid yellowish-brown firm clayey silt, with occasional slate fragments.	0.65-0.75m	Colluviun	า
1003	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.75m	Natural	

Trench 11		Length	Width	Alignment
		26.90m	1.85m	N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpret	ation
1100	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf cover, occasional small-medium sub-angular and sub-rounded stones and occasional slate fragments.	0-0.19m	Topsoil	
1101	Mid yellowish-brown moderately compacted clayey loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.18-0.37m	Subsoil	
1102	Mid yellowish-brown firm clayey silt, with occasional slate fragments.	0.33-0.77m	Colluviun	n

1103	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.77m	Natural
F1104	Shallow oblong feature partially exposed within the trench, with gradual sloping sides, gradual break of slopes with a fairly flat base. Visible measurements 1.50mx0.90m by 0.17m deep.	0.77-0.94m	Pit
1105	Pale reddish-brown moderately compacted clayey silt with moderate slate inclusions with rare charcoal flecking.	0.77-0.94m	Fill of F1104
F1106	Sub-circular feature partially exposed within the trench, with moderate sloping sides and moderate break of slope at base and top with concave base. Visible measurements 1.10mx0.17m by 0.26m deep.	0.77-1.03m	Pit
1107	Pale reddish-brown moderately compacted clayey silt with moderate slate inclusions.	0.77-1.03m	Fill of F1106

Trench 12		Length	Width	Alignment
		30m	1.9m	E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
1200	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf cover, occasional small-medium sub-angular and sub-rounded stones and occasional slate fragments.	0-0.30m	Topsoil	
1201	Mid yellowish-brown moderately compacted clayey loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.30-0.60m	Subsoil	
1202	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.60m	Natural	
F1203	Circular pit with steep sides and concave base. Measuring 0.60m diameter by 0.27m deep	0.60-0.87m	Pit	
1204	Mid reddish-brown clayey silt, with moderate slate inclusions and 20% charcoal flecking and ash inclusions.	0.60-0.87m	Fill of F12	203

Trench 13		Length	Width	Alignment
		26.90m	1.85m	N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
1300	Dark reddish-brown moderately compacted silty loam with turf cover, occasional small-medium sub-angular and sub-rounded stones and occasional slate fragments.	0-0.35m	Topsoil	
1301	Mid yellowish-brown moderately compacted clayey loam with moderate slate inclusions and occasional small-medium subangular stones.	0.35-0.60m	Subsoil	
1302	Mid yellowish-brown firm clayey silt, with occasional slate fragments.	0.60-0.76m	Colluvium	
1303	Mid blueish-grey, mid purplish-red and pale reddish-brown slate bedrock with patches of pale blueish-grey sandy silt.	0.76m	Natural	

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