

LAND AT WOOD CLOSE, EXBOURNE, DEVON

(Centred on NGR SS 6026 0170)

Results of an Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

West Devon Borough Council Planning Reference:
00458/2015 (Condition 11)

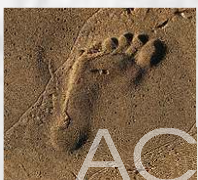
Prepared by:
Chris Caine
and
Paul Rainbird

With a contribution from:
Charlotte Coles

On behalf of:
G & D Jackman

Report No: ACD1535/2/0

Date: March 2017



AC archaeology

LAND AT WOOD CLOSE, EXBOURNE, DEVON

CENTRED ON NGR SS 6026 0170

Results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation

West Devon Borough Council Planning ref. 00458/2015
(Condition 11)

Client	G & D Jackman
Report Number	ACD1535/2/0
Date	9 March 2017
Status	Version 1
Report Author(s)	Chris Caine and Paul Rainbird
Contributions	Charlotte Coles
Checked by	John Valentin
Approved by	John Valentin

Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned by Simon Glanville of TFQ Architects on behalf of G & D Jackman. The site works were carried out by Chris Caine with the assistance of Paul Bracken. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Leon Cauchois. The collaborative role of Stephen Reed of the Devon County Historic Environment Team is duly acknowledged.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of AC archaeology and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

CONTENTS

	<i>Summary</i>	
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Archaeological background	1
3.	Aim	2
4.	Methodology	2
5.	Results	2
6.	The finds	3
7.	Discussion	4
8.	Conclusions	4
9.	Archive and OASIS	4
10.	References	5

List of figures

Fig. 1: Site location

Fig. 2: Location of trenches in relation to the geophysics interpretation

Fig. 3: Trench 3, plan and sections

Fig. 4: Trench 5, plan and sections

List of plates

Plate 1: View of the site, work in progress, view from southwest

Plate 2: Trench 3, pit F304, view from southwest

Plate 3: Trench 3, close up of burnt base of pit F304, view from southwest

Plate 4: Trench 5, ditch F504 (right) and pit F506 (left), view from south-southwest

Plate 5: Trench 5, south-southwest facing section of pit F506

Appendix 1: Tabulated context descriptions by trench

Summary

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out in advance of residential development by AC archaeology in February 2017 on land at Wood Close, Exbourne, Devon. The development area occupies approximately 0.45 hectares of agricultural land on the southern edge of Exbourne. A prehistoric barrow is located in the adjacent field to the east of the site.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of five trenches totaling 65m in length. Four of the trenches were positioned to target anomalies interpreted from a previous geophysical survey and the other to provide sample coverage of the site. Archaeological features were present in two of the trenches, with these consisting of a ditch and two pits. These features are undated but the ditch and one pit are probably related to the historic agricultural use of the site. The other pit showed signs of burning and contained burnt bone of indeterminate type. The general paucity of features and finds indicates that the site has not been the location of settlement or intensive use in the past.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trial trench evaluation carried out in advance of residential development on land at Wood Close, Exbourne, Devon (NGR SS 6026 0170; Fig. 1), was undertaken by AC archaeology during February 2017. The evaluation was commissioned by TFQ Architects on behalf of G & D Jackman and was required as a condition for planning consent granted by West Devon Borough Council following consultation with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCCHET).
- 1.2 The area covers approximately 0.45 hectares of agricultural land located on the southern edge of Exbourne (Plate 1). The ground slopes gently down from west to east between 140m and 130m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying solid geology is comprised of breccia of the Bow Breccia Formation formed approximately 251 to 299 million years ago in the Permian Period (www.bgs.ac.uk).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 An appraisal of all heritage assets in the vicinity was presented in a previous document (Valentin 2017). Six heritage assets are recorded within the immediate environs of the application area in the Devon and Dartmoor Historic Environment Record, the most noteworthy being a prehistoric barrow in the adjacent field to the east of the application area, which was recorded as a cropmark in 1992 (HER ref. MDV55831).
- 2.2 A geophysical survey undertaken on the application area (Dean 2017) mapped six groups potentially representing buried archaeology (Fig. 2). The majority of the anomalies have patterns that may represent former field division and enclosure. As no evidence for former boundaries is depicted on historic maps, there was a potential that these may represent earlier field systems or features. An area of heated material was also highlighted by the survey, but it is unclear whether this represented modern disturbance or is of archaeological origin, perhaps associated with industry or funerary activity.

3. AIM

- 3.1 The main aim of trial trenching was to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site, with particular emphasis on whether there are any remains associated with the nearby barrow. The results of the work as set out in this document will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent archaeological mitigation if required.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2017) and with reference to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014). It comprised the machine-excavation of five trenches totaling 65m in length with each trench 1.90m wide. These were positioned to target anomalies interpreted from the previous geophysical survey (Fig. 2).
- 4.2 All trenches were located with a Leica Net rover GPS accurate to 1cm. The removal of overlying deposits within the trenches was undertaken in 20cm spits under the control and direction of a site archaeologist. Stripping by mechanical excavator ceased at the level at which archaeological deposits or natural geology was exposed.
- 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. Spoil heaps were scanned both manually and by metal detector for displaced artefacts.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Features of archaeological interest were observed in Trenches 3 and 5 only and the results for each of these trenches are described in detail below, with descriptions for all trenches presented in tabulated form in Appendix 1. Natural subsoil was a mid-pinkish red silty sand with abundant sub-angular gravel to cobble inclusions of degraded breccia and was revealed at depths of 0.45m to 0.54m below the current ground surface. It was overlain by a mid-reddish brown sandy loam agricultural subsoil, which in turn was below a mid-brownish red loamy sand redeposited natural, this appears across all the site at varying thicknesses and it is likely to be derived from the construction of a terrace for the Exbourne Cross Garage, located to the southeast of the site. Above this was a topsoil consisting of dark reddish brown loamy sand.

5.2 Trench 3 (Plan Fig. 3a, section Fig. 3b; Plates 2-3)

This trench was located near the western side of the site and was east-west aligned and 10m long. It was positioned to examine two anomalies, one possibly indicating an area of heated material and the other a possible discrete pit-like feature, interpreted from the results of the geophysics survey. Natural subsoil (context 303) was exposed at a depth of between 0.50m and 0.56m below existing ground level and the trench contained one pit-like feature (F103). The trench was widened to the south by 1.90m over a length of 5m in order to fully expose this.

Pit-like feature

Pit F304 was a sub-rectangular discrete feature, it measured 2.57m long by 0.80m wide and 0.32m deep, with steeply sloping to vertical straight sides and a stepped base; the northwestern

half of the base was flat and was 0.15m deep, the base then stepped steeply down to the southeastern half to a depth of 0.32m. The base of the lower half showed signs of being heat affected indicating a high temperature fire had occurred here. It contained three fills (305-7). The primary fill (305) comprised a dark reddish brown sandy silty loam with abundant charcoal flecking. This was located solely in the southeastern lower half of the feature and contained some burnt bone. It likely represented an *in situ* fire, with some sedimentation or collapse from the sides and was 0.14m thick. The secondary fill (306) comprised a mid-brownish red sandy loam consisting of collapsed or redeposited natural. It was also located solely in the southeastern lower half of the feature and was 0.06m thick. Upper fill 307 filled the remainder of the entire length of the feature and comprises a dark brownish red sandy silty loam with commonly occurring charcoal flecks. No dateable artefacts were recovered.

5.3 Trench 5 (Plan Fig. 4a, sections Figs 4b-d; Plates 4-5)

Trench 2 was located in the northern corner of the site and was aligned northwest-southeast and measured 25m long. It was located to test an area of the site where the geophysical survey did not identify any anomalies. Natural subsoil (503) was exposed at a depth of between 0.46m and 0.52m below existing levels and the trench contained one linear feature (F504) and one pit (F506).

Linear feature

Small ditch F504 was northeast-southwest aligned and was exposed in the trench for a distance of over 2m. It measured 0.29m wide by 0.10m deep with gently sloping concave sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill (505) comprised of mid reddish brown sandy loam which contained a single small fragment of brick or tile of post-medieval date.

Pit

Pit F506 was circular in plan with a diameter of 0.65m. It measured 0.12m deep with moderately sloping straight sides and a flat base. It contained two fills (507-8). Primary fill 507 comprised a mid-brownish red silty sandy loam. Upper fill 508 was a dark brownish red sandy clay loam and contained charcoal or preserved wood flecking and with the fill being quite dark, it possibly indicates a post that has rotted *in situ*. No finds were recovered.

6. THE FINDS *by Charlotte Coles*

6.1 The finds recovered on site during the evaluation have been retained and cleaned. They have been quantified according to material type within each context and the assemblage examined to extract information regarding their range, nature and date.

6.2 Ceramic building material (CBM)

A single very small piece of ceramic building material (2g) was recovered from fill 505 of ditch F504. This is post-medieval in date, but it is too small for any further comment.

6.3 Burnt bone

Pieces of burnt bone were recovered from deposit 305, the primary fill of pit F304. Extracted by hand was 71 pieces of burnt bone (17g) with the remainder of the deposit collected to enable processing at a later date if required. It is not possible to ascertain whether this is human or animal bone, as no diagnostic pieces are present. The bone is an off white with no blues or greys noted. Results from modern crematoriums have shown that the bone must be burnt at a temperature over 800°C before the fragments produced are hard, brittle and pure white (Wahl 2008). Therefore, the bone from this feature must have been burnt at a consistently high temperature for a considerable time.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The results from the trial trench evaluation have exposed only a few features of archaeological interest. These comprised a northeast-southwest aligned ditch (F504) and two pits (F304 and F506) which were present at depths of approximately 0.50m below existing ground level.
- 7.2 The interpreted results of the geophysical survey showed that there was the potential for surviving features representing former field division and enclosure. The evaluation has now established that this is unlikely to be the case. No evidence for the interpreted features were found in Trenches 1, 2 and 4 and the anomalies appear to represent variations within the natural geology.
- 7.3 The northeast-southwest alignment of ditch F504 matches that of the current field pattern. The Devon Historic Landscape Characterisation Project lists the current site as within fields that were enclosed from open strip fields in the later medieval period (DCC 2017). The strip fields would have been much smaller than the current fields and it is probable that smaller areas were originally enclosed and subsequently field boundaries have been removed to make larger paddocks. This enlargement pre-dates the earliest detailed historic mapping dating to the mid-19th century. Given its close proximity to ditch F504 it is probable that pit F506 is contemporary with the boundary marked by the ditch, and may mark the base of a post which stood at this spot.
- 7.4 Pit F304 is undated and may be a fire pit where burning took place. This burning appears to include a certain amount of bone of indeterminate type. This feature does match closely a high positive geophysics anomaly indicating that it is unlikely that other features of this type are present within the application area.

8. CONCLUSIONS

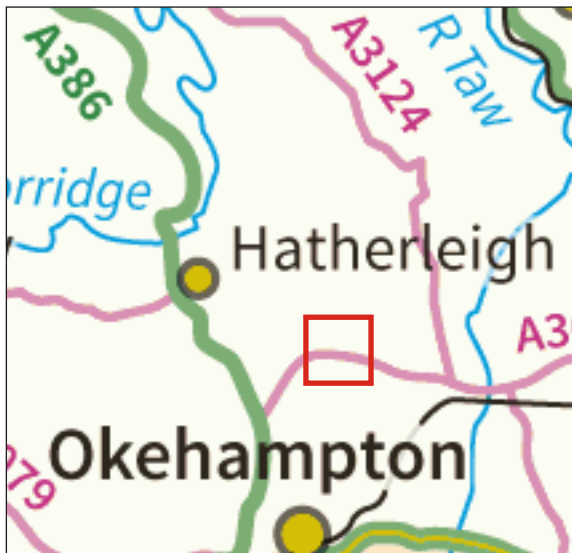
- 8.1 The evaluation has exposed a ditch and pit of probable post-medieval date likely to be related to agricultural activity on the site. One other feature in the west side comprised a pit which had been the site of burning and closely matched a high positive anomaly interpreted from the results of the geophysics survey. The general paucity of features and finds indicates that the site has probably not been the location of settlement or intensive use in the past.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

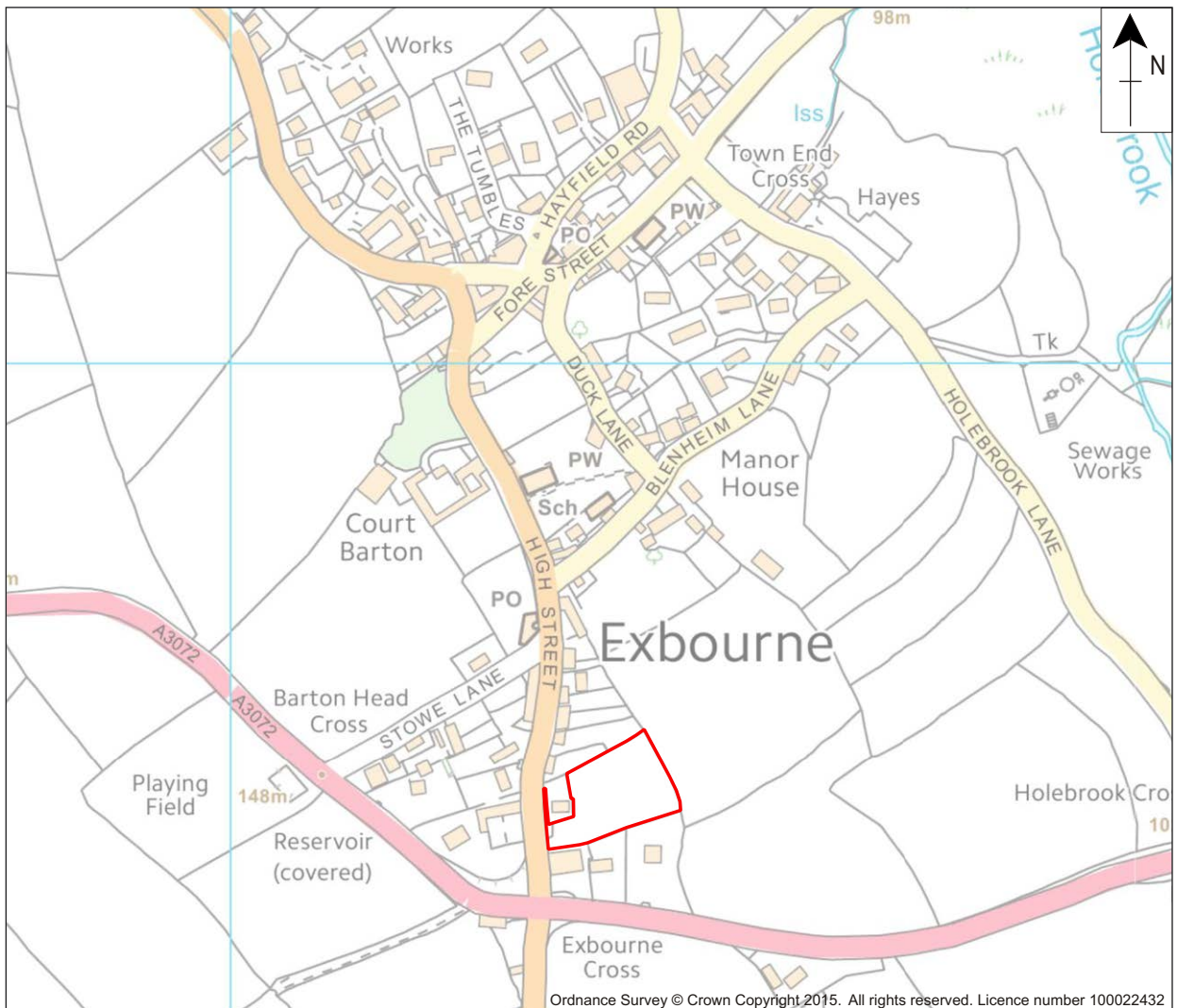
- 9.1 The finds, paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ under the unique project code of **ACD1535**. It will be held until the need for any further archaeological work on the site is established and whether the creation of a digital archive for deposition at the Archaeology Data Service is required.
- 9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier **278754**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. REFERENCES

- BGS, 2017, *British Geological Survey Geology of Britain On-line Viewer* (www.bgs.ac.uk).
- DCC, 2017, *Devon Landscape Characterisation Project*.
(<http://map.devon.gov.uk/DCCviewer/?bm=OSGreyscale&layers=Historic%20Environment;14&activeTab=Historic%20Environment&extent=219402;44202;325104;145934>)
- Dean, R., 2017, *An archaeological magnetometer survey: Wood Close, Exbourne, Devon Centred on NGR (E/N): 260260,101700*. Unpublished Substrata report no. **1612WOO-R-1**.
- Valentin, J., 2017, *Land at Wood Close, Exbourne, Devon: Written Scheme of Investigation and Archaeological Appraisal*. Unpublished AC archaeology report, ref. **ACD1535/1/0**.
- Wahl, J., 2008, 'Investigations on Pre-Roman and Roman Cremation Remains from Southwestern Germany: Results, Potentialities and Limits', In Schmidt and Symes (eds) *The Analysis of Burned Human Remains*. Elsevier, London.



Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright 2015. All rights reserved. Licence number 100022432



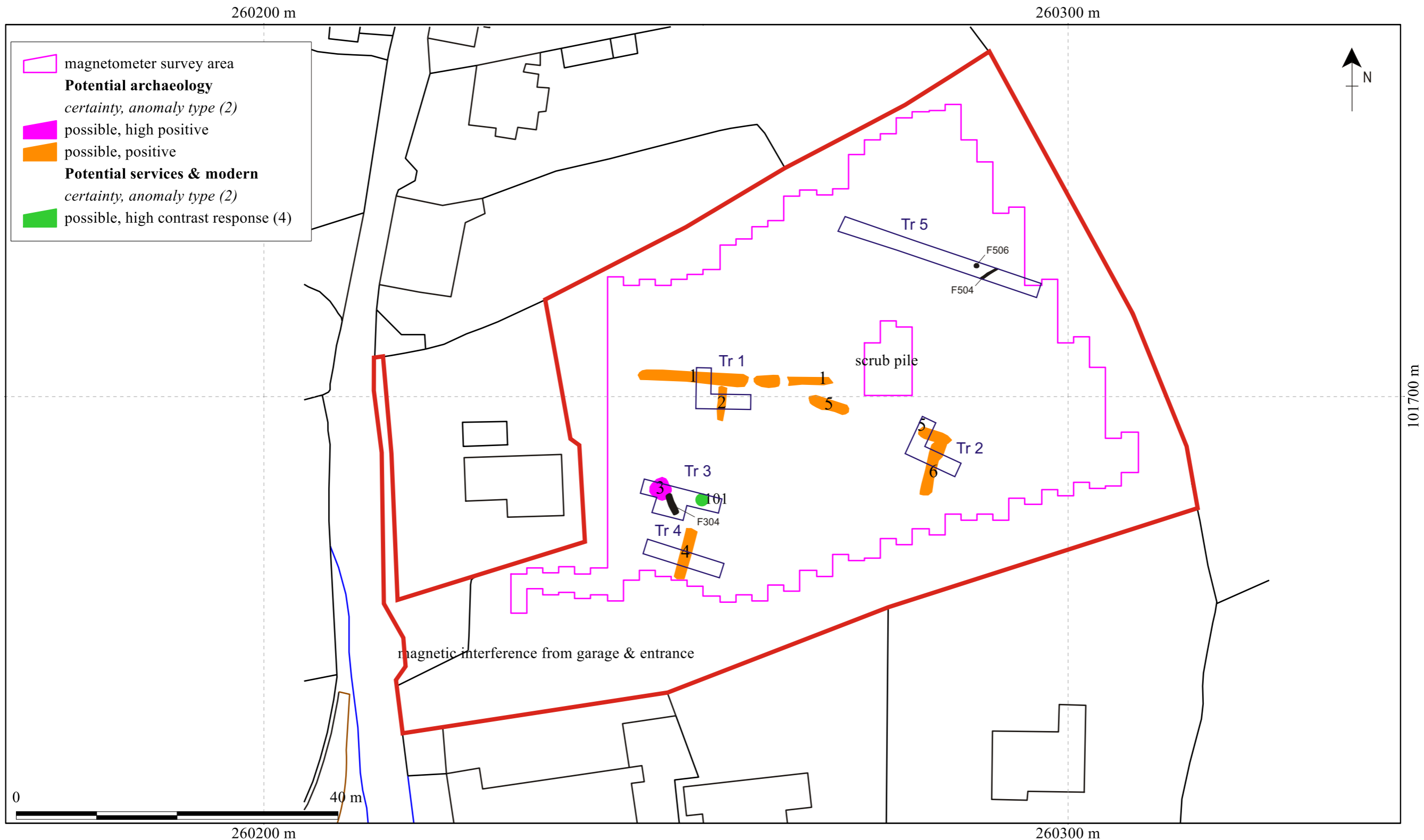
Ordnance Survey © Crown Copyright 2015. All rights reserved. Licence number 100022432

0 250m
Scale 1:5000@A4

PROJECT
Land at Wood Close, Exbourne, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 1: Site location





- magnetometer survey area
- Potential archaeology**
certainty, anomaly type (2)
- possible, high positive
- possible, positive
- Potential services & modern**
certainty, anomaly type (2)
- possible, high contrast response (4)

Key

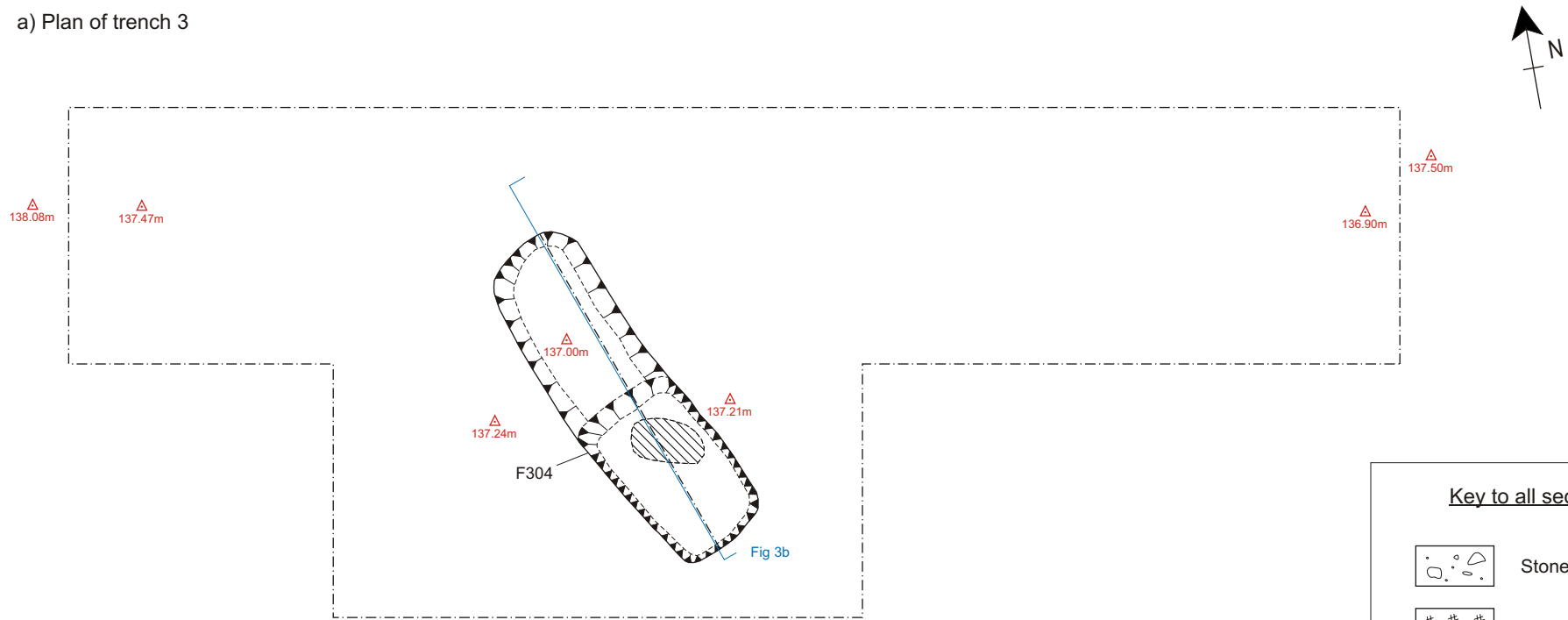
- Tr 3
- Excavated trenches with archaeological features shown
- Site boundary

PROJECT
Land at Wood Close, Exbourne, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 2: Location of trenches in relation to the geophysics interpretation



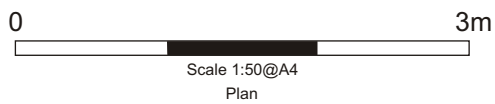
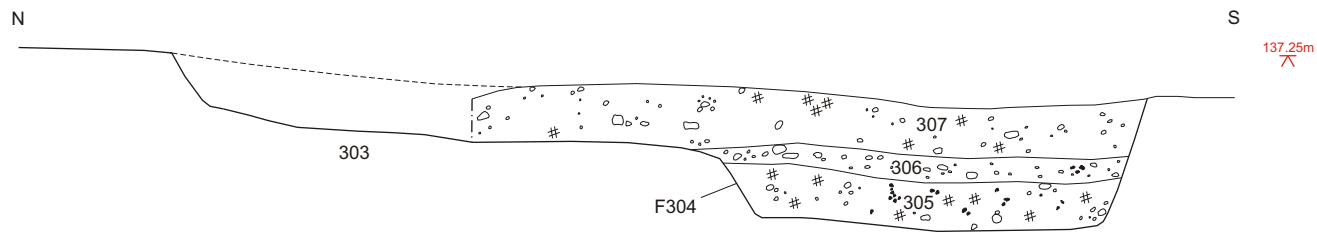
a) Plan of trench 3



Key to all sections

	Stones
	Charcoal
	Burnt bone
	Burnt Natural

b) Section of F305

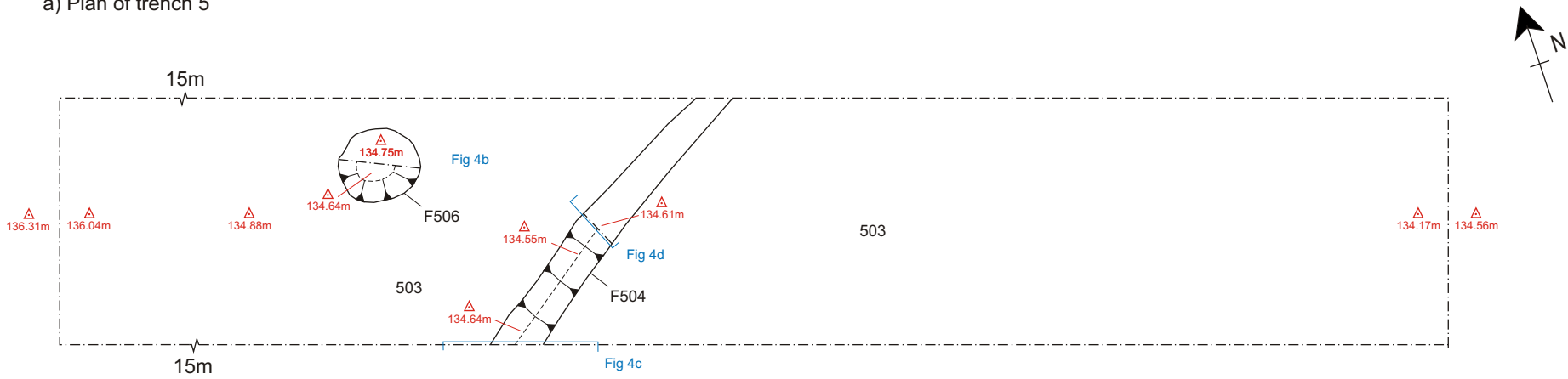


PROJECT
Land at Wood Close,
Exbourne, Devon

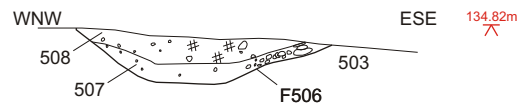
TITLE
Fig. 3: Trench 3, plan and section



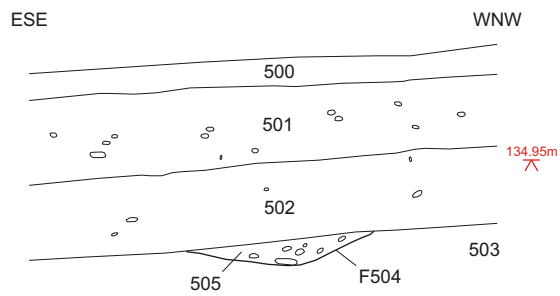
a) Plan of trench 5



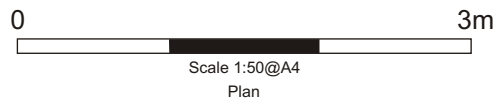
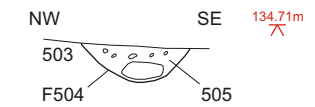
b) Section of F506



c) Section of F505



d) Section of F505



PROJECT

Land at Wood Close,
Exbourne, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 4: Trench 5, plan and sections





Plate 1: View of the site, work in progress, view from southwest



Plate 2: Trench 3, pit F304, view from southwest (1m scale)



Plate 3: Trench 3, close up of burnt base of pit F304, view from southwest (1m scale)



Plate 4: Trench 5, ditch F504 (right) and pit F506 (left), view from south-southwest (1m scale)

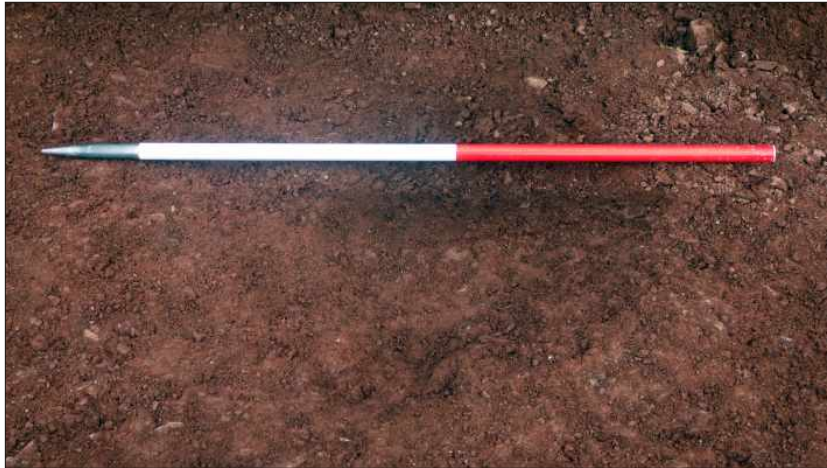


Plate 5: Trench 5, south-southwest facing section of pit F506 (1m scale)

Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trench



Appendix 1: Tabulated context descriptions by trench

Trench 1		Length	Width	Alignment
		5m	1.90m	N-S
		5m		E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
100	Dark reddish brown loamy sand	0-0.08m	Topsoil	
101	Mid-brownish red loamy sand, with common gravel inclusions	0.08-0.31m	Redeposited natural layer	
102	Mid-reddish brown sandy loam	0.31-0.45m	Agricultural subsoil	
103	Mid-pinkish red silty sand with abundant sub-angular gravel to cobble inclusions of degraded breccia	0.45m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 2		Length	Width	Alignment
		5m	1.90m	NE-SW
		5m		NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
200	Dark reddish brown loamy sand	0-0.12m	Topsoil	
201	Mid-brownish red loamy sand, with common gravel inclusions	0.12-0.30m	Redeposited natural layer	
202	Mid-reddish brown sandy loam	0.30-0.48m	Agricultural subsoil	
203	Mid-pinkish red silty sand with abundant sub-angular gravel to cobble inclusions of degraded breccia	0.48m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 3		Length	Width	Alignment
		10m	1.90m	E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
300	Dark reddish brown loamy sand	0-0.10m	Topsoil	
301	Mid-brownish red loamy sand, with common gravel inclusions	0.10-0.28m	Redeposited natural layer	
302	Mid-reddish brown sandy loam	0.28-0.50m	Agricultural subsoil	
303	Mid-pinkish red silty sand with abundant sub-angular gravel to cobble inclusions of degraded breccia	0.50m+	Natural subsoil	
F304	Sub-rectangular discrete feature, it measured 2.57m long by 0.80m wide and 0.32m deep with steeply sloping to vertical straight sides and a stepped base	-	Pit	
305	Dark reddish brown, sandy silty loam with abundant charcoal flecking	-	Primary fill of F304	
306	Mid brownish red sandy loam	-	Secondary fill of F304	
307	Dark brownish red sandy silty loam with commonly occurring charcoal flecks	-	Upper fill of F304	

Trench 4		Length	Width	Alignment
		10m	1.90m	E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
400	Dark reddish brown loamy sand	0-0.10m	Topsoil	
401	Mid-brownish red loamy sand, with common gravel inclusions.	0.10-0.38m	Redeposited natural layer	
402	Mid-reddish brown sandy loam	0.38-0.54m	Agricultural subsoil	
403	Mid-pinkish red silty sand with abundant sub-angular gravel to cobble inclusions of degraded breccia	0.54m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 5		Length 25m	Width 1.90m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
500	Dark reddish brown loamy sand	0-0.10m	Topsoil	
501	Mid-brownish red loamy sand, with common gravel inclusions	0.10-0.32m	Redeposited natural layer	
502	Mid-reddish brown sandy loam	0.32-0.52m	Agricultural subsoil	
503	Mid-pinkish red silty sand with abundant sub-angular gravel to cobble inclusions of degraded breccia	0.52m+	Natural subsoil	
F504	Linear feature northeast-southwest aligned exposed in the trench for a distance of over 2m and measured 0.29m wide by 0.10m deep with gently sloping sides and a rounded base	-	Ditch	
505	Mid reddish brown sandy loam	-	Fill of F504	
F506	Circular pit with a diameter of 0.65m measured 0.12m deep with moderately sloping straight sides and a flat base	-	Pit	
507	Mid brownish red silty sandy loam	-	Primary fill of F506	
508	Dark brownish red sandy clay loam	-	Upper fill of F506	

Devon Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Unit 4, Halthaies Workshops
Bradninch
Nr Exeter
Devon
EX5 4LQ

Telephone/Fax: 01392 882410

Wiltshire Office

AC archaeology Ltd
Manor Farm Stables
Chicklade
Hindon
Nr Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP3 5SU

Telephone: 01747 820581

Fax: 01747 820440

www.acarchaeology.co.uk