LAND OFF BICKLAND WATER ROAD, FALMOUTH, CORNWALL

(Centred on NGR SW 7886 3236)

Results of an Archaeological Trial Trench Evaluation

Outline Planning Reference: Cornwall Council PA15/07631 (Condition 7)

> Prepared by: Paul Rainbird

With a contribution from: Naomi Payne

> On behalf of: Taylor Wimpey

> > Report No: ACD1616/2/0

Date: June 2017



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| Client | Taylor Wimpey |
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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.

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Summary

An archaeological trial trench evaluation was carried out in advance of residential development by AC archaeology in May and June 2017 on land off Bickland Water Road, Falmouth, Cornwall (centred on NGR SW 7886 3236). The development area occupies approximately 2.8 hectares of agricultural land forming a single field on the western edge of Falmouth.

The trial trench evaluation comprised the machine excavation of nine trenches totaling 264m in length, with each trench 1.9m wide. The trenches were positioned to target anomalies interpreted from a geophysical survey and to provide sample coverage of the area. The evaluation has exposed the gravel surface and fill of a former post-medieval pond adjacent to a church path. The remaining features are undated ditches and a pit. The ditches probably mark the position of field boundaries that are an extension of a probable late prehistoric field system and settlement identified in previous archaeological evaluation over 350m to the south of the site. No finds of prehistoric date were recovered indicating that the present site was probably very much on the periphery of settlement.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trial trench evaluation on land off Bickland Water Road, Falmouth, Cornwall (NGR SW 7886 3236; Fig. 1) was undertaken by AC archaeology during May and June 2017. It was carried out in advance of residential development. The evaluation was commissioned by Taylor Wimpey and was required by Cornwall Council, following consultation with the Cornwall Council Historic Environment Planning Advice Officer (hereafter HEPAO).
- **1.2** The site covers an area of approximately 2.8 hectares and is located on the western edge of Falmouth (Plate 1). It comprises a single agricultural field on generally level land, but with a gradual slope down to the east between approximately 77m and 65m aOD (above Ordnance Datum). It is located on a solid geology of hornfelsed slate and siltstones of the Mylor Slate Formation (www.bgs.ac.uk).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The area is characterised by the Cornwall Council Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) as Anciently Enclosed Land (AEL). This formed the ancient heartland of rural Cornwall with settlements and field systems having clear medieval antecedents. AEL has also been strongly demonstrated to indicate areas first settled, enclosed and farmed during the later prehistoric period and into the early medieval period. It was considered possible that buried archaeology dating to the prehistoric and Roman-British periods survives within AEL.
- **2.2** The development area has already been subject to an archaeological desk-based assessment (Kirkham 2011) and impact assessment and geophysical survey (Walls 2013). It is the latter where the potential below-ground impacts have been recognised, comprising the identification of a Second World War 'secret' pipeline, but also a series of other anomalies: relict field boundaries, possible pits and traces of a field system of probable late prehistoric or Romano-British date.
- **2.3** An archaeological trench evaluation on land immediately to the south confirmed the presence of a largely undated field system of probable prehistoric date, two areas of Middle Bronze Age settlement, as well as three Neolithic pits (Bampton 2016).

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. 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). It comprised the machine-excavation of nine trenches totalling 264m in length, with each trench 1.9m wide. These were positioned in areas to be affected by development as well as targeting geophysical survey anomalies and 'blank' areas to test the survey efficacy (Fig. 1). The area for investigation was restricted by pipelines passing through the centre and the east side of the site.
- **4.2** All trenches were located with a Leica Netrover GPS accurate to 1cm. The removal of overlying deposits within the trenches was undertaken in 20cm spits under the control and direction of the site archaeologist. Stripping by mechanical excavator ceased at the level at which archaeological deposits or natural geology was exposed.
- **4.3** The archaeological works were conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014) and 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 all trenches except 3 and 9 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 comprised a light yellowish-brown sandy clay and was revealed at depths of 0.50m to 0.56m below the current ground surface. It was overlain by a dark reddish-brown silty clay agricultural subsoil then a dark brown silty clay topsoil.

5.2 Trench 1 (Plan Fig. 2a, section Fig. 2b; Plates 2-3)

This trench was located near the northeast corner of the site and measured 41m long northwest – southeast. It was positioned to examine a linear anomaly interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. Natural subsoil (context 102) was exposed at a depth of 0.50m below existing levels. The trench contained one linear feature (F104) in the position of the geophysics anomaly and is described below.

Linear feature

Ditch F104 was aligned northeast-southwest and measured 0.87m wide by 0.21m deep, with moderately sloping straight sides and flat base. It had a single fill (103) consisting of dark yellowish-brown sandy clay. There were no finds.

5.3 Trench 2 (Plan Fig. 2c, section Fig. 2d; Plate 4)

This trench was located centrally on the east side of the site and measured 40m long northnorthwest – south-southeast. It was positioned to examine a blank area interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. Natural subsoil (202) was exposed at a depth of 0.50m below existing levels. The trench contained a single discrete feature (F205) and is described below.

Discrete feature

Pit F205 was circular in plan and measured 0.9m in diameter and 0.18m deep, with gently sloping sides and concave base. It had two fills (203-4). Primary fill 204 consisted of dark brownish-black sandy clay and was charcoal rich. Upper fill 203 consisted of light greyish-yellow sandy clay. There were no finds.

5.4 Trench 4 (Plan Fig. 2e, sections Figs 2f-g; Plate 5)

This trench was located near the northwest corner of the site and measured 19m long northwest – southeast. It was positioned to examine a linear anomaly interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. Natural subsoil (402) was exposed at a depth of 0.56m below existing levels. The trench contained two linear features (F404 and F406) with one (F406) in the position of the geophysics anomaly and these are described below.

Linear features

Ditch F404 was aligned east-west and measured 0.9m wide by 0.32m deep, with steep sides and concave base. It had a single fill (403) consisting of mid yellowish-brown sandy clay. There were no finds.

Ditch F406 was aligned east-west and measured 0.65m wide by 0.12m deep, with moderately sloping straight sides and flat base. It had a single fill (405) consisting of dark brown silty clay. There were no finds.

5.5 Trench 5 (Plan Fig. 3a, sections Figs 3b-c; Plate 6)

This trench was located towards the northwest corner of the site and measured 16m long northeast - southwest. It was positioned to examine a linear anomaly interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. Natural subsoil (502) was exposed at a depth of 0.52m below existing levels. The trench contained two linear features (F504 and F506) with one (F506) in the position of the geophysics anomaly and these are described below.

Linear features

Ditch F504 was aligned north-south and measured 0.58m wide by 0.11m deep, with gently sloping sides and concave base. It had a single fill (503) consisting of mid brownish-grey silty clay. There were no finds.

Ditch F506 was aligned northwest-southeast and measured 0.8m wide by 0.52m deep with steep concave sides and concave base. It had a single fill (505) consisting of mid yellowish-brown sandy clay. There were no finds.

5.6 Trench 6 (Plan Fig. 3d, section Fig. 3e; Plate 7)

This trench was located centrally in the west of the site and measured 18m long east-west. It was positioned to examine a linear anomaly interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. Natural subsoil (602) was exposed at a depth of 0.5m below existing levels. The trench contained one linear feature (F604) matching closely the position of the geophysics anomaly and is described below.

Linear feature

Ditch F604 was aligned north-south and measured 1.4m wide by 0.51m deep, with steep convex sides and concave base. It had a single fill (603) consisting of light yellowish-brown silty sandy clay. There were no finds.

5.7 Trench 7 (Plan Fig. 4a, sections Figs 4b-c; Plate 8)

This trench was located centrally within the site and measured 21m long east-west. It was positioned to examine a linear anomaly interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. Natural subsoil (702) was exposed at a depth of 0.55m below existing levels. The linear anomaly was not found but the trench contained a gravel surface (704) and is described below.

Gravel surface

An irregular compact gravel surface (704) measured 6m long and was 1.2m wide within the trench but continued under the southern edge. A bottle top and rivet both dated to the late 19th or early 20th century were recovered from its surface. It was covered by a distinct layer (703) which consisted of a dark greyish-brown silty clay and contained one sherd of pottery dated to the late 19th century.

5.8 Trench 8 (Plan Fig. 4d, sections Figs 4e-g; Plates 9-10)

This trench was T-shaped and located centrally within the site and measured 19m long southeast-northwest and 29m northeast-southwest. It was positioned to examine two linear anomalies interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. Natural subsoil (802) was exposed at a depth of 0.56m below existing levels. The trench contained three linear features (F804, F806 and F808) two of which (F806 and F808) matched the positions of the geophysics anomalies and these are described below.

Linear features

Ditch F804 was aligned northwest-southeast and measured 0.5m wide by 0.08m deep, with gently sloping sides and concave base. It had a single fill (803) consisting of dark brownish-grey silty clay. There were no finds.

Ditch F806 was aligned northwest-southeast and measured 0.6m wide by 0.44m deep, with moderately steep straight sides and concave base. It had a single fill (805) consisting of dark yellowish-brown sandy clay. There were no finds.

Ditch F808 was aligned northeast-southwest and measured 0.83m wide by 0.43m deep with steep straight sides and flattish uneven base. It had two fills (807 and 809). Primary fill 809 consisted of mid greyish-brown sandy silt. Upper fill 807 consisted of dark yellowish-brown silty clay. There were no finds.

6. THE FINDS by Naomi Payne

6.1 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 examined to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. All of the collected finds were recovered from Trench 7 and consist of a bottle top, a brass rivet and a piece of post-medieval pottery all of which are described below.

6.2 Bottle top

The bottle top was recovered from gravel surface 704 and has the words, Carne, Falmouth and Truro on the top, this relates to the Carne Family who ran the Falmouth Brewery Company (1863-1921). The bottle top is an internal screw top to a beer bottle. The internal screw top was invented in 1872 and patented in 1880.

6.3 Brass rivet

A brass rivet or stud was also recovered from gravel surface 704, the use of this is unknown, but it is likely to date to the late 19th or early 20th century.

6.4 Post-medieval pottery

A single sherd of post-medieval pottery was recovered from deposit 703, this is a body sherd of a red ware vessel, dating from the 19th century.

7. DISCUSSION

- **7.1** The evaluation has identified a small number of archaeological features, but very little in the way of finds was present. The features comprised a gravel surface, linear ditches and a pit. The features were present at depths of between approximately 0.45m and 0.56m below existing levels. The recorded features generally matched well with the interpreted results of the geophysical survey.
- 7.2 The only dated feature was the irregular compact gravel surface 704 which had finds of late 19th and early 20th century date embedded in its surface. This is close to the line of the church path which exists as an asphalt-covered lane in the present day. The path connects St Budock Church with the Falmouth area which was formerly within St Budock parish. The path leading to the church appears to be of some antiquity, as it is shown on Thomas Martyn's 1748 map of Cornwall. It has been suggested that this track formed part of the route joining Budock churchtown to the town of Falmouth from at least the early 17th century (Walls 2013, 12). However, the position of the gravel surface is to the north of the current line of the path which, despite its current modern surface, appears to maintain its historic line. The gravel may be displaced material from an earlier path surface but forms the lining for a depression which was filled by a deposit of silty clay (703). This was a distinct deposit not found elsewhere on the site. A pond is marked close to this location, abutting the church path, on the 1880 Ordnance Survey (OS) 25-inch map and had been filled by the 1907 OS map, with the finds from the feature matching closely these dates. It appears likely that surface 704 marks the base of a short-lived shallow pond that was filled by deposit 703.
- **7.3** The excavated ditches matched the irregular pattern of linear anomalies interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. There are undated, but have the character of a former pattern of fields of prehistoric or Romano-British date. They appear to be a continuation of a system of fields identified in an archaeological evaluation of the adjacent fields directly to the south of the site, where there was pottery recovered of Bronze Age and Iron Age date (Bampton 2016). The focus of prehistoric settlement was found further to the south (three fields over), approximately 350m from the current site boundary, where the remains of three Middle Bronze Age houses were revealed. In this regard, given the paucity of finds and settlement-type features (with the exception of a small single pit), the current site may be the location of small fields situated very much on the periphery of the prehistoric settlement.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The trial trench evaluation has exposed a pattern of probable prehistoric fields matching and on the periphery of those previously found adjacent to the site to the south. In addition, the position of a small historic pond has been identified. The work has also show that geophysics is an effective technique on this type of geology.

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 **ACD1616**. It will be held until the need for any further archaeological work on the site is established.
- **9.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier **288202**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. REFERENCES

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- Kirkham, G., 2011: Land at Bickland Water Road, Falmouth, Cornwall: Archaeological Assessment. Cornwall Council Historic Environment Projects Report No: **2011R034**.
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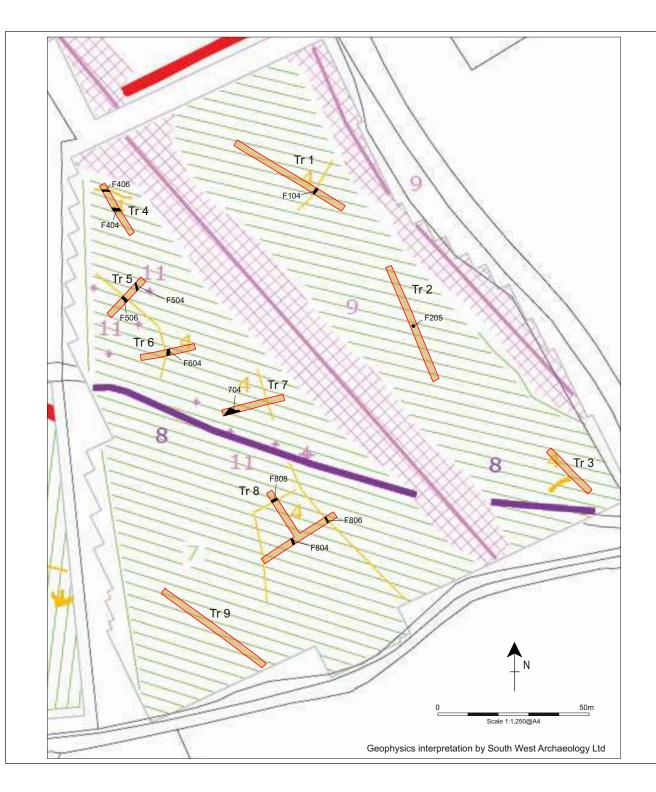
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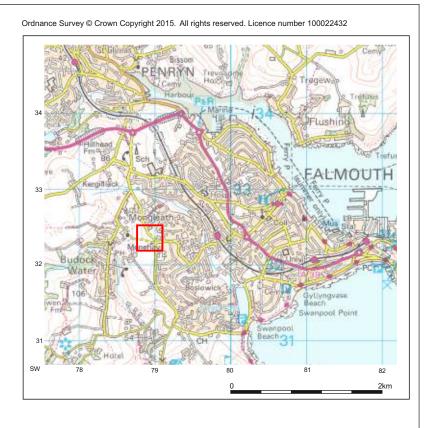
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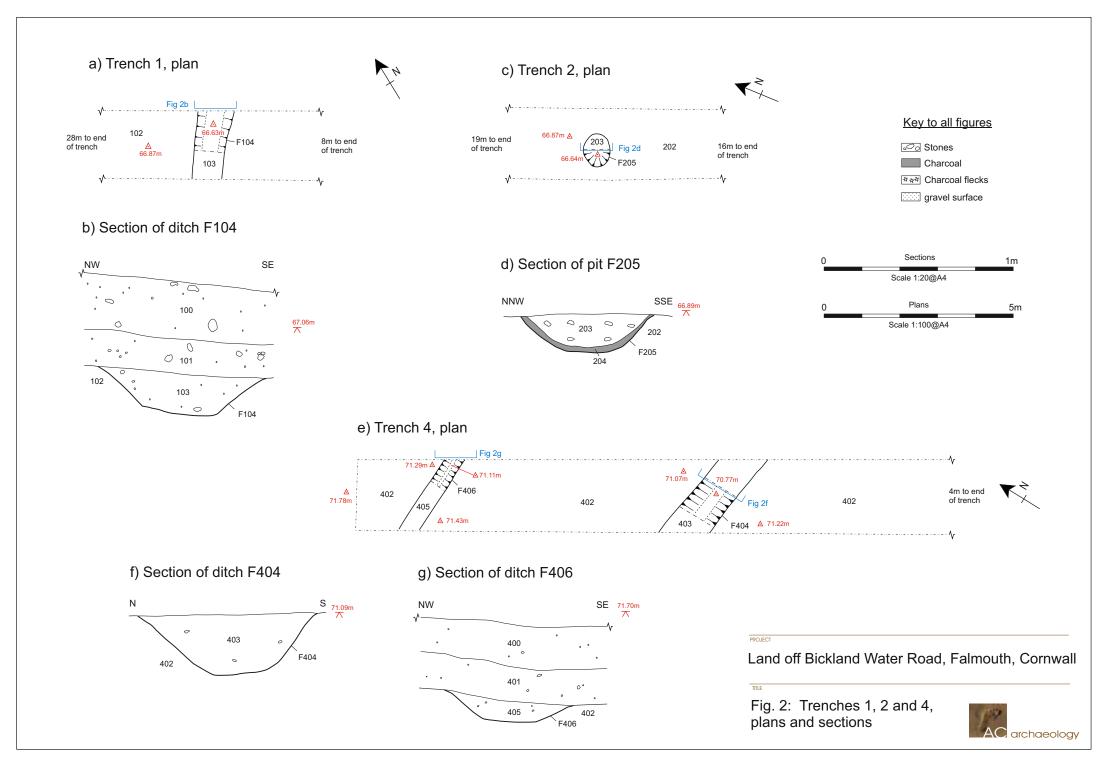
Land off Bickland Water Road, Falmouth, Cornwall

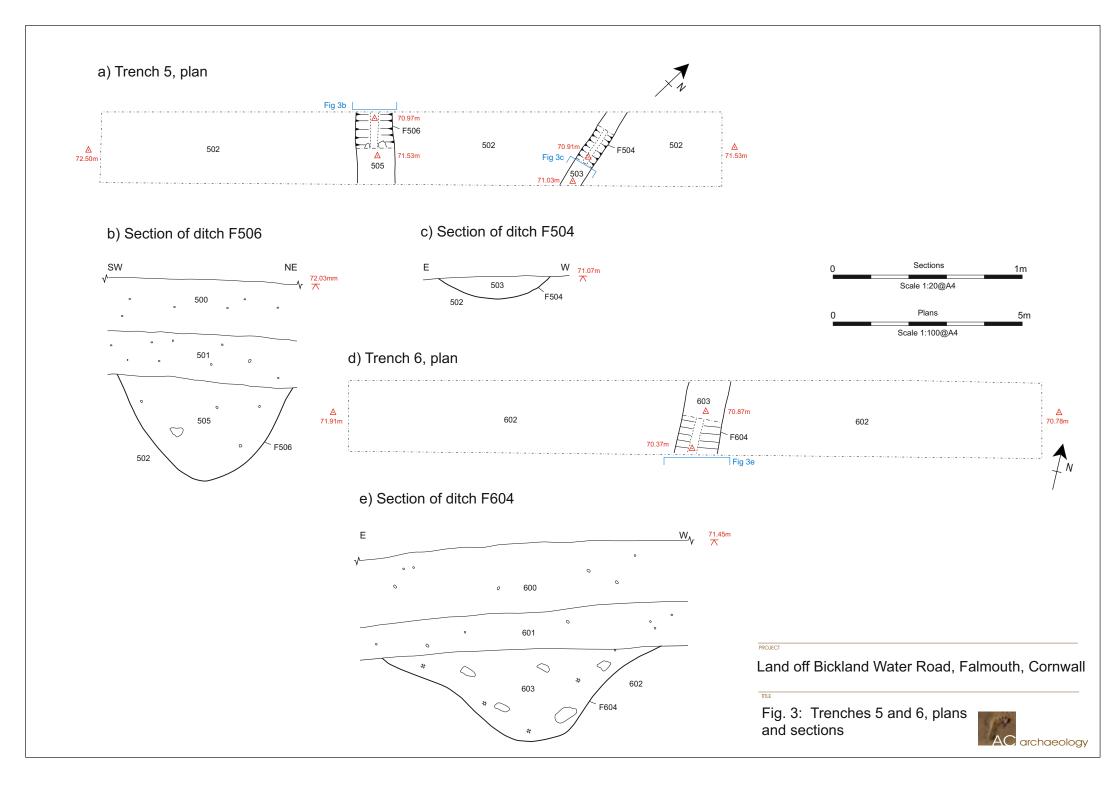
PROJECT

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Fig. 1: Location of site, trenches and archaeological features in relation to the geophysics interpretation







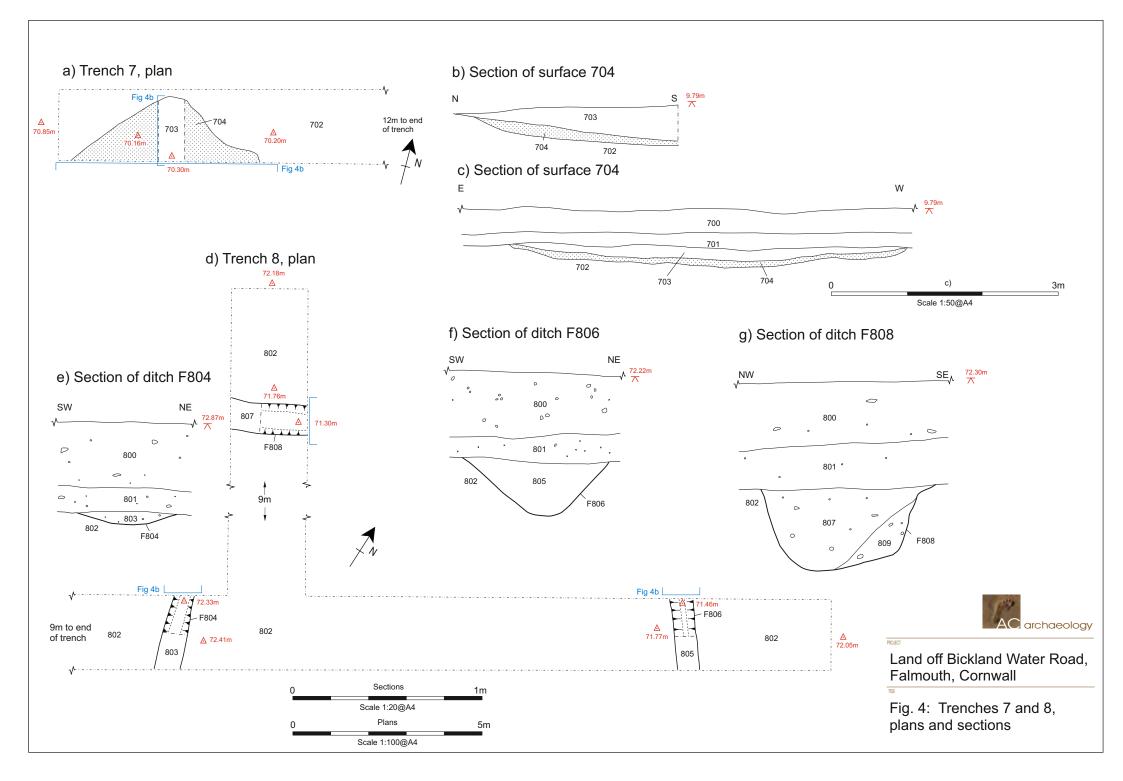




Plate 1: View of the site, work in progress, looking to west



Plate 2: Trench 1, view from southeast (1m and 1m scales)



Plate 3: Trench 1, northeast facing section of ditch F104 (0.5m scale)





Plate 4: Trench 2, west facing section of pit F205 (0.5m scale)



Plate 5: Trench 4, west facing section of ditch F404 (0.5m scale)



Plate 6: Trench 5, southeast facing section of ditch F506 (1m scale)



Plate 7: Trench 6, north facing section of ditch F604 (1m scale)





Plate 8: Trench 7, gravel surface 704 and deposit 703, view from north (1m and 1m scales)



Plate 9: Trench 8, southeast facing section of ditch F806 (1m scale)



Plate 10: Trench 8, southwest facing section of ditch F808 (1m scale)



Appendix 1 Tabulated trench descriptions



Appendix 1: Tabulated trench descriptions

| Trench 1 | | Length 41m | Width Alignment |
|---------------------|--|---------------|----------------------|
| Context Description | | Depth | Interpretation |
| 100 | Dark brown silty clay | 0-0.30m | Topsoil |
| 101 | Dark reddish-brown silty clay | 0.30-0.50m | Agricultural subsoil |
| 102 | Light yellowish-brown sandy clay | 0.50m+ | Natural subsoil |
| 103 | Dark yellowish-brown sandy clay | 0.50-0.71m | Fill of F104 |
| F104 | Linear 0.87m wide by 0.21m deep with moderately sloping straight sides and flat base | 0.50-0.71m | Field drain |

| Trench 2 | | Length | Width Alignment | |
|---------------------|---|------------|----------------------|--|
| | | 40m | 1.90m NNW-SSE | |
| Context Description | | Depth | Interpretation | |
| 200 | Dark brown silty clay | 0-0.30m | Topsoil | |
| 201 | Dark reddish-brown silty clay | 0.30-0.50m | Agricultural subsoil | |
| 202 | Light yellowish-brown sandy clay | 0.50m+ | Natural subsoil | |
| 203 | Light greyish-yellow sandy clay | 0.50-0.62m | Upper fill of F205 | |
| 204 | Dark brownish-black sandy clay and was charcoal rich | 0.62-0.68m | Primary fill of F205 | |
| F205 | Circular, 0.9m diameter and 0.18m deep with gently sloping sides and concave base | 0.50-0.68m | Pit | |

| Trench 3 | | Length 20m | WidthAlignment1.90mNW-SE | |
|----------|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------|--|
| Context | Description | Depth | Interpretation | |
| 300 | Dark brown silty clay | 0-0.35m | Topsoil | |
| 301 | Dark reddish-brown silty clay | 0.35-0.55m | Agricultural subsoil | |
| 302 | Light yellowish-brown sandy clay | 0.55m+ | Natural subsoil | |

| Trench 4 | | Length | Width Alignment | |
|---------------------|---|------------|----------------------|--|
| | | 19m | 1.90m NW-SE | |
| Context Description | | Depth | Interpretation | |
| 400 | Dark brown silty clay | 0-0.35m | Topsoil | |
| 401 | Dark reddish-brown silty clay | 0.35-0.56m | Agricultural subsoil | |
| 402 | Light yellowish-brown sandy clay | 0.56m+ | Natural subsoil | |
| 403 | Mid yellowish-brown sandy clay | 0.56-0.88m | Fill of F404 | |
| F404 | Linear 0.9m wide by 0.32m deep with steep sides and concave base | 0.56-0.88m | Field boundary ditch | |
| 405 | Dark brown silty clay | 0.56-0.68m | Fill of F406 | |
| F406 | Linear 0.65m wide by 0.12m deep with moderately sloping straight sides and flat base | 0.56-0.68m | Field boundary ditch | |

| Trench 5 | | Length | Width Alignment | |
|---------------------|---|------------|----------------------|--|
| | | 16m | 1.90m NE-SW | |
| Context Description | | Depth | Interpretation | |
| 500 | Dark brown silty clay | 0-0.27m | Topsoil | |
| 501 | Dark reddish-brown silty clay | 0.27-0.52m | Agricultural subsoil | |
| 502 | Light yellowish-brown sandy clay | 0.52m+ | Natural subsoil | |
| 503 | Mid brownish-grey silty clay | 0.52-0.63m | Fill of F504 | |
| F504 | Linear 0.58m wide by 0.11m deep with gently sloping sides and concave base | 0.52-0.63m | Field boundary ditch | |
| 505 | Mid yellowish-brown sandy clay | 0.52-1.04m | Fill of F506 | |
| F506 | Linear 0.8m wide by 0.52m deep with steep concave sides and concave base | 0.52-1.04m | Field boundary ditch | |

| Trench 6 | | Length 18m | WidthAlignment1.90mE-W | |
|----------|--|----------------------|------------------------|--|
| Context | Description | Depth Interpretation | | |
| 600 | Dark brown silty clay | 0-0.30m | Topsoil | |
| 601 | Dark reddish-brown silty clay | 0.30-0.54m | Agricultural subsoil | |
| 602 | Light yellowish-brown sandy clay | 0.54m+ | Natural subsoil | |
| 603 | Light yellowish-brown silty sandy clay | 0.54-1.05m | Fill of F604 | |
| F604 | Linear 1.4m wide by 0.51m deep with steep convex sides and concave base | 0.54-1.05m | ?Modern ditch | |

| Trench 7 | | Length 21m | WidthAlignment1.90mE-W | |
|----------|----------------------------------|---------------|------------------------|--|
| Context | Description | Depth | Interpretation | |
| 700 | Dark brown silty clay | 0-0.30m | Topsoil | |
| 701 | Dark reddish-brown silty clay | 0.30-0.55m | Agricultural subsoil | |
| 702 | Light yellowish-brown sandy clay | 0.55m+ | Natural subsoil | |
| 703 | Dark greyish-brown silty clay | 0.35-0.55m | Layer | |
| 704 | Cobble surface | 0.45-0.55m | Path | |

| Trench 8 | | Length 19m 29m | Width 1.90m | Alignment SE-NW NE-SW | |
|---------------------|--|----------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| Context Description | | Depth | Interpr | Interpretation | |
| 800 | Dark brown silty clay | 0-0.30m | Topsoil | | |
| 801 | Dark reddish-brown silty clay | 0.30-0.56m | Agricult | tural subsoil | |
| 802 | Light yellowish-brown sandy clay | 0.56m+ | Natural | subsoil | |
| 803 | Dark brownish-grey silty clay | 0.56-0.64m | Fill of F | 804 | |
| F804 | Linear 0.5m wide by 0.08m deep with gently sloping sides and concave base | 0.56-0.64m | Field bo | Field boundary ditch | |
| 805 | Dark yellowish-brown sandy clay | 0.56-1m | Fill of F | 806 | |
| F806 | Linear 0.6m wide by 0.44m deep with moderately steep straight sides and concave base | 0.56-1m | Field boundary ditch | | |
| 807 | Dark yellowish-brown silty clay | 0.56-0.99m | Upper f | fill of F808 | |
| F808 | Linear 0.83m wide by 0.43m deep with steep straight sides and flattish uneven base | 0.56-0.99m | Field bo | oundary ditch | |
| 809 | Mid greyish-brown sandy silt | 0.68-0.99m | Primary | / fill of F808 | |

| Trench 9 | | Length | Width | Alignment |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------|------------|----------------------|-----------|
| | | 41m | 1.90m | NW-SE |
| Context Description | | Depth | Interpretation | |
| 900 | Dark brown silty clay | 0-0.30m | Topsoil | |
| 901 | Dark reddish-brown silty clay | 0.30-0.50m | Agricultural subsoil | |
| 902 Light yellowish-brown sandy clay | | 0.50m+ | Natural | subsoil |

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