

LAND WEST OF OAKLAND PARK SOUTH, STICKLEPATH, BARNSTAPLE, DEVON

(Centred on NGR SS 538 328)

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

North Devon District Council Planning Reference: 57310,
Appeal Reference APP/X1118/W/16/3157373 (condition
12)

Prepared by:
Paul Cooke

With contributions from:
John Allan, Naomi Payne
and Henrietta Quinnell

On behalf of:
John Blaney Ltd

Report No: ACD1648/2/0

Date: September 2017



archaeology

LAND WEST OF OAKLAND PARK SOUTH, STICKLEPATH, BARNSTAPLE, DEVON

(NGR SS 538 328)

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

North Devon District Council planning ref 57310, appeal ref.
APP/X1118/W/16/3157373 (condition 12)

Client	John Blaney Ltd on behalf of Mr John Evans
Report Number	ACD1648/2/0
Date	22 September 2017
Status	Version 1
Report Author	Paul Cooke
Contributions	John Allan, Naomi Payne, Henrietta Quinnell
Checked by	Paul Rainbird
Approved by	John Valentin

Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned by John Blaney Ltd on behalf of their client Mr John Evans and was co-ordinated for AC archaeology by John Valentin. The site works were carried out by Paul Cooke and Tom Etheridge, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Sarnia Blackmore. The advice of Stephen Reed, Devon County Council Historic Environment Team, is gratefully 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.	Aims	2
4.	Methodology	2
5.	Results	2
6.	The finds	4
7.	Discussion	5
8.	Conclusions	6
9.	Archive and OASIS	6
10.	References	6

List of figures

- Fig. 1: Site location
- Fig. 2: Location of trenches, with archaeological features shown in relation to the geophysical interpretation
- Fig. 3: Trench 2, plan and sections
- Fig. 4: Trench 3, plans and section
- Fig. 5: Trench 4, plans and section

List of plates

- Plate 1: General view of site, looking northwest to Trenches 2 and 3
- Plate 2: Trench 2, feature F204, looking northwest
- Plate 3: Trench 3, general view, looking northwest
- Plate 4: Trench 3, northeast-facing sections of ditches F305, F310 and F314
- Plate 5: Trench 4, north-facing section of ditch F403

List of tables

- Table 1: Trench 1 layer sequence
- Table 2: All finds by context

Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation on land west of Oakland Park South, Sticklepath, Barnstaple, Devon (SS 538 328), was undertaken by AC archaeology during August 2017. The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of four trenches totaling 85m in length, with each trench 1.6m wide. These were positioned to target anomalies identified by a previous geophysical survey.

There was localised evidence for a prehistoric presence, with a large sherd of Bronze Age pottery found in a shallow possible tree-throw, as well as residual prehistoric worked flint flakes from a ditch. Further activity on site appears limited to long-term agricultural use, with linear features recorded likely to represent field boundaries of likely medieval to post-medieval date. A small number of medieval and post-medieval pottery sherds were recovered from the topsoil and subsoil layers.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** An archaeological trench evaluation on land west of Oakland Park South, Sticklepath, Barnstaple, Devon (SS 538 328; Fig. 1), was undertaken by AC archaeology during August 2017. The archaeological work was required as a condition (no. 12) of planning consent granted by The Planning Inspectorate (ref. APP/X1118/W/16/3157373), following consultation with the Devon Council Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCHET). The works were commissioned by John Blaney Ltd on behalf of their client Mr John Evans.
- 1.2** The proposed development area covers approximately five hectares on the northwest side of Sticklepath and close to the River Taw estuary. It is bounded to the east by residential properties branching from Oakland Park South and to the south by the grounds of Ellerslie House. The site comprises the eastern portion of a wider arable field that slopes gradually towards the River Taw between 47m and 26m aOD (above Ordnance Datum). Its underlying solid geology consists of grey mudstones and siltstones with thin to thick-bedded, locally calcareous sandstones and beds and lenses of limestone of the Carboniferous and Devonian Pilton Mudstone Formation (www.bgs.ac.uk).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The site has been subject to a previous heritage statement (Passmore 2014) and geophysical survey (Dean 2015). While no previously recorded heritage assets were located within the site, the heritage statement identified that the area was characterised by the remains of medieval strip fields, the boundaries of which had been adopted into the later agricultural landscape.
- 2.2** The results from the geophysical survey were limited, with only a small number of linear anomalies interpreted (Fig. 2). The majority of these correspond with the positions of field boundaries as shown on the 1903 25-inch Second Edition Ordnance Survey Map and which have been subsequently removed. A small number clearly relate to this former field system, but have been removed pre-1840 or 1903, based on their absence either from the 1903 Ordnance Survey Map or the 1840 Fremington parish tithe map.

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. This was with particular reference for the presence of features pre-dating the existing field pattern. The results of the work, as set out in this report, will be reviewed and used to inform the need for further work.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Hughes 2017) and with reference to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluation* (2014). It comprised the machine excavation of four trenches totaling 85m in length, with each 1.6m wide. These were positioned to target anomalies interpreted from the previous geophysical survey.
- 4.2 All trenches were located with a Leica Net rover GPS, accurate to 1cm. The removal of soils within the trenches was undertaken in 20cm spits (maximum) under the control and direction of the site archaeologist. Stripping by mechanical excavator ceased at the level at which archaeological deposits or natural subsoil 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.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction (Fig. 2)

Archaeological features were exposed in Trenches 2, 3 and 4 and all of the trenches are described below. The natural subsoil was highly variable and was present at a depth of between 0.37m and 0.68m below the current ground surface.

5.2 Trench 1

This trench was aligned approximately northwest – southeast and was 14m long. It was positioned to investigate a discrete anomaly interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. No features, deposits or finds were present in the trench. The geophysical anomaly is a result of the soft, superficial geology encountered in this immediate area, which probably resulted from periglacial weathering processes. Table 1 presents the recorded sequence of overlying and natural deposits.

Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation
100	Mid yellow brown silty clay loam	0-0.30m	Ploughsoil
101	Mid yellow grey silty clay loam	0.30-0.40m	Subsoil
102	Pale yellowish-brown sandy loam	0.40m+	Natural subsoil

Table 1: Trench 1 layer sequence

5.3 Trench 2 (Detailed plan Fig. 3a, section Figs 3b-c; Plate 2)

This trench was aligned approximately northeast – southwest and was 20m long. It was positioned to examine a possible short linear anomaly identified in the interpreted results of the geophysical survey. Two features were exposed (F204 and F207) one of which (F207) matched the position of the anomaly identified by the survey. An

extension to the trench measuring 4m by 3.5m was made to further investigate feature F204. Natural subsoil (203), composed primarily of yellow clay with chert gravel, was exposed at a depth of up to 0.68m below existing ground level. It was overlain by a subsoil (201), composed of pale yellowish grey silty clay loam, which was sealed by a ploughsoil (200) of dark grey brown silt loam. In the trench extension and at the northern end of the trench the natural subsoil (203) was overlain by 0.18m of a buried ploughsoil layer (202) composed of pale brownish grey silty clay loam. A further layer (209) composed of pale brownish grey clay loam was present at the very northern end of the trench, overlying feature F207 and below layer 202.

Feature F204

This was a shallow amorphous feature which was not fully revealed in the trench and extension. It had maximum exposed dimensions of 2.64m wide and 0.20m deep, with shallow concave sides and slightly undulating flat base. It contained two fills (205-6). Primary fill 205 was composed of pale yellow grey silty clay loam which contained six sherds of Bronze Age pottery. Upper fill 206 was a pale grey clay loam.

Linear feature F207

This was a shallow feature with a clear southern edge, but appearing to peter out to the north. It measured 2.75m+ wide and 0.12m deep, with a concave southern edge leading to a flat base which followed the slope of the natural subsoil (203) dropping to the north. It contained a single fill (208), composed of pale grey brown silty clay. No finds were recovered.

5.4 Trench 3 (Detailed plan Fig. 4a, section Fig. 4b; Plates 3-4)

This trench was aligned northwest – southeast and was 31m long. It was positioned to examine two possible linear anomalies identified in the interpreted results of the geophysical survey. Natural subsoil 304 was composed of a mix of bedded shale amongst yellow clay/clay loam and was exposed at a depth of 0.37m below existing levels. It was overlain by 0.15m of subsoil 301, composed of mid yellow-brown silt loam and this was sealed by 0.22m of ploughsoil 300. At the southeast end the natural subsoil 304 was overlain by a buried ploughsoil (316), which was composed of mid grey brown silt loam. A series of inter-cutting linear features was exposed in the centre of the trench (F305, F310 and F314), which matched the position of one of the linear anomalies interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey.

Ditch F305

This was aligned northeast – southwest and measured 1.25m wide by 0.54m deep, with steep convex sides and a concave base. It contained four fills (306-9), none of which produced any finds. Primary fill 306 was composed of mid brown silt loam. Secondary fill 307 was a mid reddish brown silty clay loam. Tertiary fill 308 was composed of mid reddish brown silt loam, while upper fill 309 was a pale brown silt loam.

Ditch F310

This was aligned northeast – southwest and measured 0.93m wide and 0.33m deep, with a steep convex sloping east side and a shallow concave base. It contained three fills (311-3), none of which produced any finds. Primary fill 311 was composed of pale yellow brown silt loam. Secondary fill 312 was a mid brown silt loam, while upper fill 313 was a mid reddish brown sandy silt loam. It cut ditch F305 on its east edge, while in turn was truncated by ditch F314 which has removed the west side.

Ditch F314

This was aligned northeast – southwest and measured 2.12m wide by 0.35m deep, with shallow concave sides and a flat/slightly undulating wide base. It contained a

single fill (315) composed of mid grey brown silt loam. Sealing ditch F314 was a further subsoil deposit (302) composed of mid brownish-yellow silty clay loam. Ditch F314 truncated ditches F305 and F310.

5.5 Trench 4 (Detailed plan Fig. 5a, section Fig. 5b; Plate 5)

This trench was aligned approximately east – west and measured 20m long. It was positioned to examine a possible short linear anomalies identified in the interpreted results of the geophysical survey. Natural subsoil 402, composed primarily of bedded shale, was exposed at a depth of 0.60m below existing levels and was overlain by subsoil 401 and topsoil 400. A single linear feature (F403) was exposed which matched the position of the anomaly identified in the results of the geophysical survey.

Ditch F403

This was aligned north - south and measured 1.12m wide and 0.54m deep, with steep sloping concave sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill (404) composed of mid yellow brown silty clay loam. Two prehistoric flint flakes and one sherd of post-medieval pottery were recovered.

6. THE FINDS *by Naomi Payne and John Allan, with a contribution from Henrietta Quinnell*

- 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. The collection of finds is summarised in Table 2.

Context	Context Description	Worked Flint		Prehistoric pottery		Medieval pottery		Post-medieval pottery		Slag	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
200	Trench 2, topsoil							3	30		
205	Fill of irregular feature F204			6	87						
300	Trench 3, topsoil					3	13	3	45		
301	Trench 3, subsoil							1	10		
400	Trench 4, topsoil					1	3	4	15	1	3
404	Fill of ditch F403	2	15					1	3		
Total		2	15	6	87	4	16	12	103	1	3

Table 2: All finds by context (weights in grams)

6.2 Worked flint

Two pieces of prehistoric worked flint were recovered from the fill of ditch F403 in Trench 4. They include a burnt mottled light to mid grey flake and a broken mottled dark grey flake. Neither piece is retouched and both are likely to be late prehistoric, probably Bronze Age, in date.

6.3 Prehistoric pottery *by Henrietta Quinnell*

A base angle sherd and five fragments from it (together weighing 87g) of prehistoric pottery were recovered from context 205, fill of irregular feature F204, in Trench 2. The fabric is thick, < 10mm or more and contains abundant inclusions <7mm, of smashed quartz and other rock. The base angle has finger modelling on the wall which straightens as it joins the base. This general form and the fabric strongly suggest Late

Bronze Age Plain Ware, 11th to 9th century BC, as found for example further up the Bristol Channel at Monty's Farm, Norton Fitzwarren (Quinnell 2016 with references). If so this is the first occurrence of pottery of this date in North Devon. There is an outside chance that the sherds may be earlier and relate to the Trevisker material of the Middle Bronze Age, of which the only North Devon published example comes from Embury Beacon (Quinnell 2014).

6.4 Medieval pottery

Four sherds (16g) of medieval pottery were recovered from two contexts in Trenches 3 and 4. Two of the sherds from Trench 3 topsoil are body sherds of North Devon medieval coarse ware dating from c. AD 1200-1450. The third sherd from this context is also a body sherd, but in a finer fabric. There is no trace of glaze, but this is probably a jug sherd. Trench 4 topsoil produced a single sherd from a glazed North Devon jug dating from the 14th or 15th centuries.

6.5 Post-medieval pottery

A total of 12 sherds (103g) of post-medieval pottery was recovered from five contexts in Trenches 2, 3 and 4. The topsoil in Trench 2 produced three sherds of glazed earthenware, including two body sherds and a bowl rim, all in North Devon gravel-free ware. The sherds from Trench 3 include a tea cup foot-ring sherd in industrially produced white porcelain dating from after c. 1750, a body sherd of North Devon gravel-tempered pottery, a body sherd of North Devon gravel-free ware and a shoulder sherd from a 19th century English stoneware bottle. The North Devon sherds are most likely 17th or 18th century in date. The four fragments from Trench 4 topsoil include two sherds of North Devon calcareous pottery dating from the 16th or early 17th centuries, a sherd of North Devon gravel-tempered pottery and a sherd of Staffordshire whiteware dating from after 1850. The single sherd from the fill of ditch F403 is a Staffordshire white salt-glazed stoneware bowl rim dating from c. 1730-1770.

6.6 Slag

A single piece of undiagnostic slag or clinker was recovered from context 400, topsoil, Trench 4.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The results of the trench evaluation largely support the geophysical survey interpretation, in that the linear anomalies were mainly found to be features (F305, F310, F314 and F403) that relate to rural activities in relation to an agricultural landscape of ditches for field boundaries and drainage; these appear to relate to the pattern of medieval strip fields which characterise the historic landscape of the area (Passmore 2014). Of particular note is the irregular feature containing prehistoric pottery in Trench 2.

7.2 While the flint flakes from ditch F403 are considered residual in that context, the fragment of Bronze Age pottery from feature F204 in Trench 2 is relatively unabraded and may date the feature from which it was recovered. However, feature F204 was not fully revealed and is amorphous in shape and not easily interpreted in regard to function, but may represent a tree throw. The pottery is unique to the area and, with the flint flakes, are indicative of some prehistoric use of the immediate vicinity. The position of the site overlooking and in close proximity to the Taw may have been attractive to a prehistoric community. Neighbouring linear feature F207 looks less like an actual deliberate feature and more like an incidental or natural one. Its origin and date cannot be established.

8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The features related to linear anomalies interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey and found across the site have been shown to relate to an agricultural landscape of ditches for field boundaries and drainage. There were no finds from these features, but they relate to a pattern fields established on the periphery of contemporary settlement during the medieval period.
- 8.2 Evidence for prehistoric occupation on the site was identified in Trench 2 and relates to some unspecified and highly-localised use of the site during the Bronze Age. Two worked flint flakes from a residual context may also be Bronze Age in date.
- 8.3 Based on the current scheme layout, the feature identified in Trench 2 lies in an area of open-space and is therefore unlikely to be further impacted upon by development.

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 **ACD1648**. It will be held until the need for any further archaeological work on the site is established and ultimately will be offered to the Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon under the accession number **NDDMS:11.2017a**, but if they are unable to accept this, then it will be dealt with under their current accession policy.
- 9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier **296259**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. REFERENCES

British Geological Survey Online Viewer, www.bgs.ac.uk.

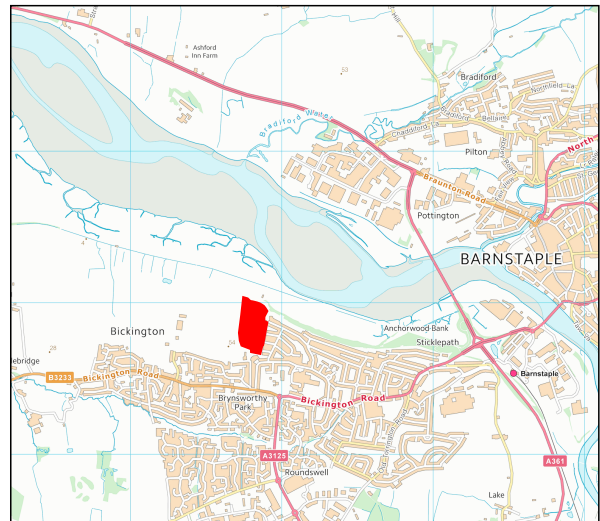
Dean, R., 2015, *An archaeological gradiometer survey: Belmont Park, Bickington, Fremington, Devon*. Unpublished Substrata report ref. **1511BEL-R-1**.

Hughes, S., 2017, *Land west of Oakland Park South, Sticklepath, Barnstaple, Devon: Project Design for a Programme of Archaeological Work*. Unpublished AC archaeology doc. no. **ACD1648/1/0**.

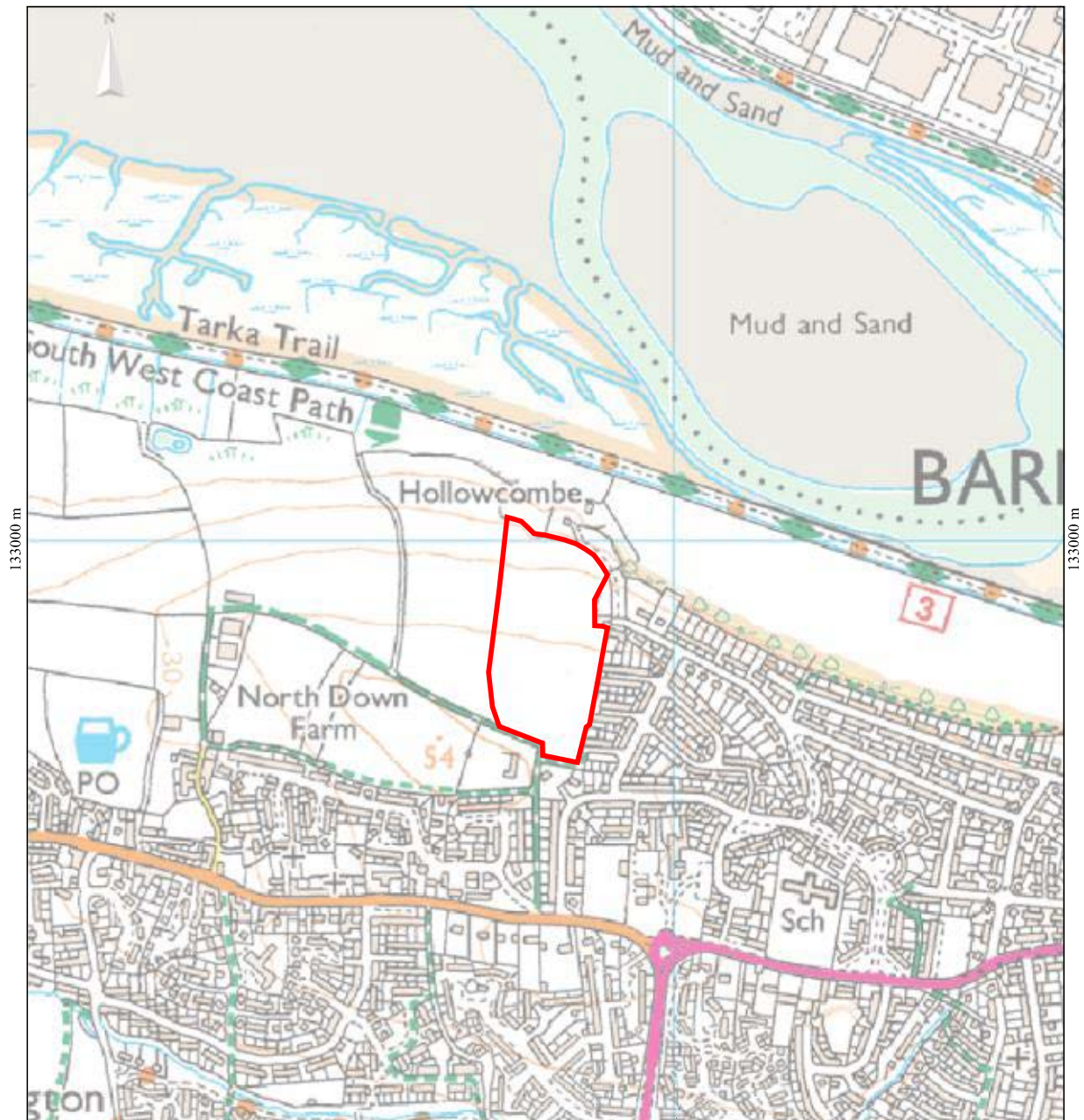
Passmore, A., 2014, *Belmont Park, Bickington, Fremington, Devon: Heritage Statement*. Unpublished AC archaeology report no. **ACD890/1/1**.

Quinnell, H., 2016, *ACD1282 Monty's Farm, Norton Fitzwarren prehistoric finds*. Unpublished report for AC archaeology.

Quinnell, H., 2014, The Bronze Age Pottery, in Sims, R., Allen, M.J. and Rainbird, P., Iron Age and medieval activity and land-use at Embury Beacon Fort, Hartland, Devon, *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society* **72**, 88.



254000 m



Base map: Ordnance Survey (c) Crown Copyright 2015, Licence number 100022432. All rights reserved.

254000 m

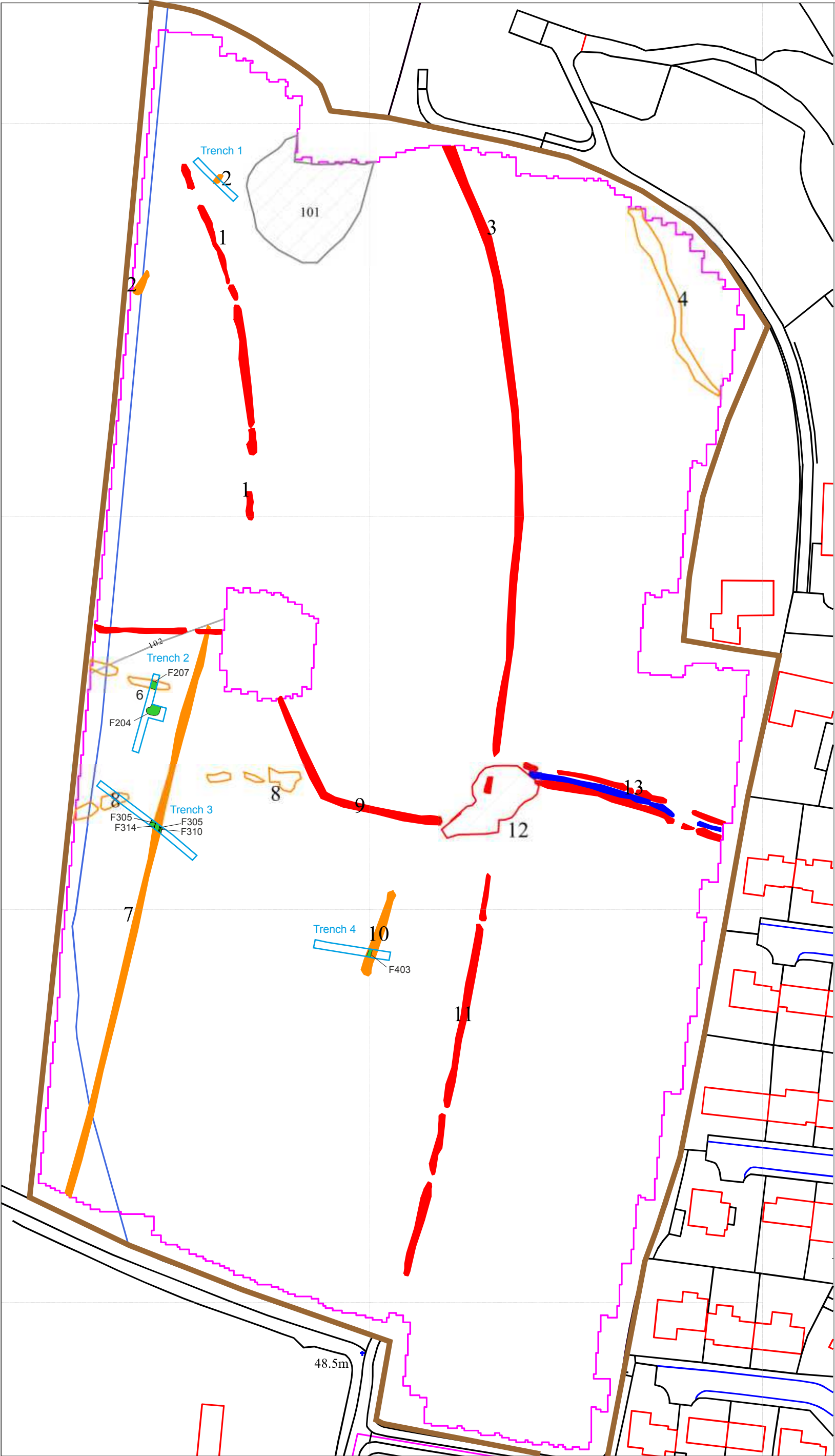
0 500m
Scale 1:10,000@A4

PROJECT

Land west of Oakland Park South, Sticklepath, Barnstaple, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



Key

- survey area
- Potential archaeology**
 - certainty, anomaly type*
 - likely, positive (2)
 - likely, positive spread (2)
 - likely, negative (2)
 - possible, positive
 - possible, positive spread
- Potential services & modern**
 - certainty, anomaly type*
 - possible, mixed spread
 - possible regular narrow linears
- Site boundary
- Trenches showing archaeological features identified

Based on drawing prepared by Substrata



British Grid
centre X: 253788.09 m, centre Y: 132847.39 m
Geophysical survey: Copyright Substrata 2015.
Base map: Ordnance Survey (c) Crown Copyright 2015,
Licence number 100022432. All rights reserved.

PROJECT

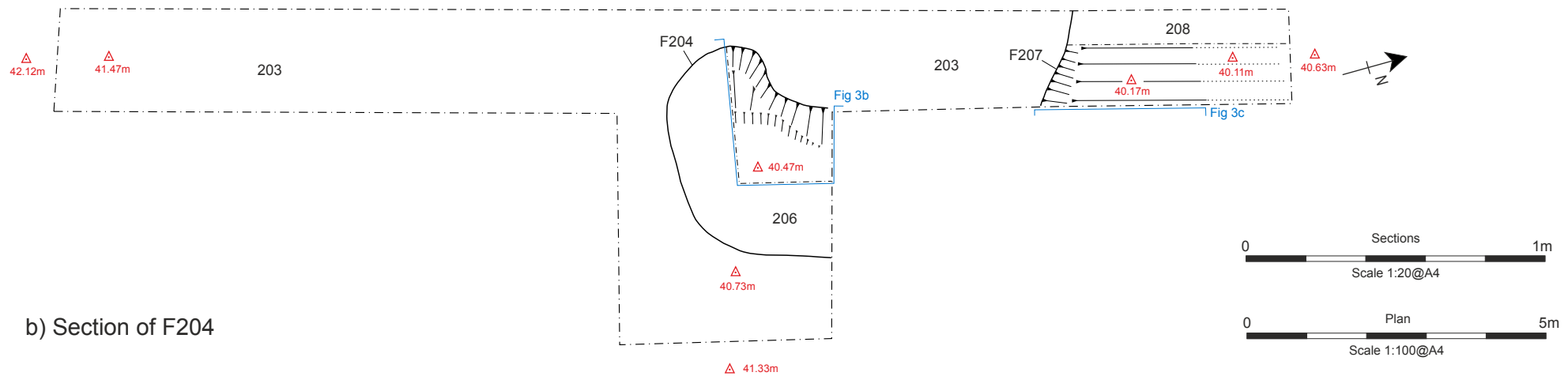
Land west of Oakland Park South, Sticklepath, Barnstaple, Devon

TITLE

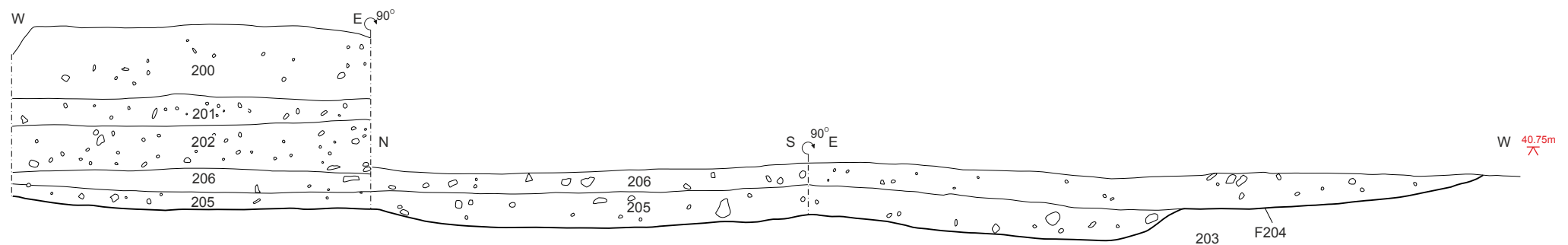
Fig. 2: Location of trenches with archaeological features shown in relation to the geophysical interpretation



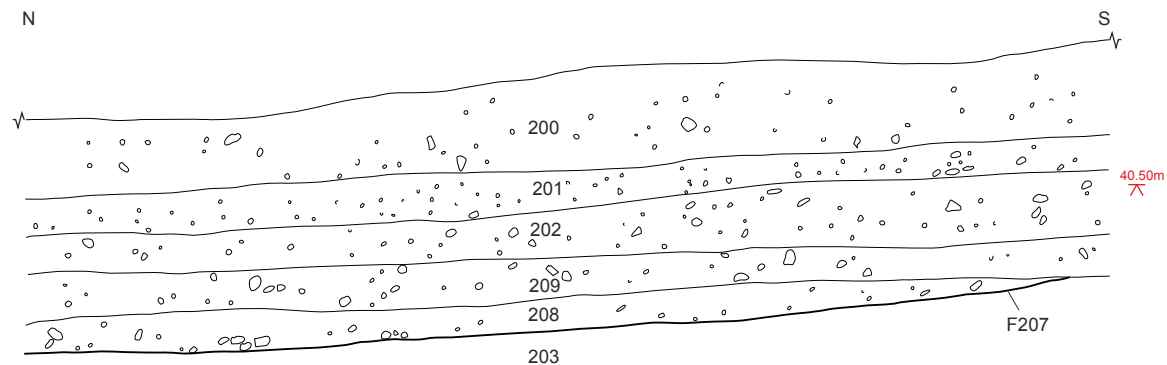
a) Trench 2, plan



b) Section of F204



c) Section of F207



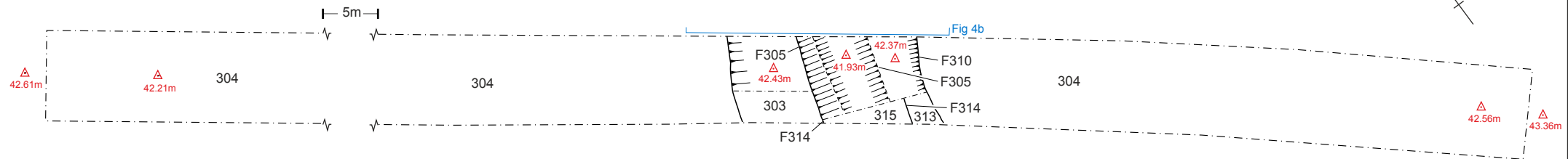
PROJECT
Land west of Oakland Park South, Sticklepath,
Barnstaple, Devon

TITLE

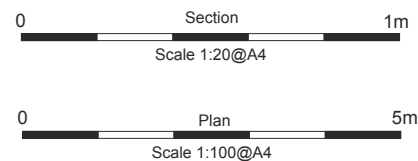
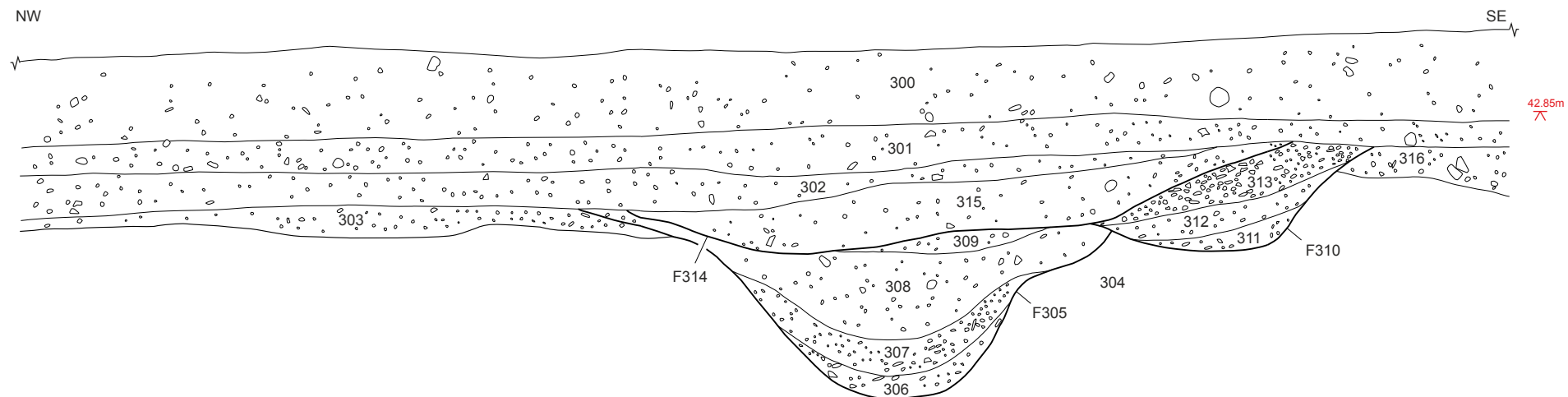


Fig. 3: Trench 2, plan and sections

a) Trench 3, plan



b) Section of F305, F310 and F314



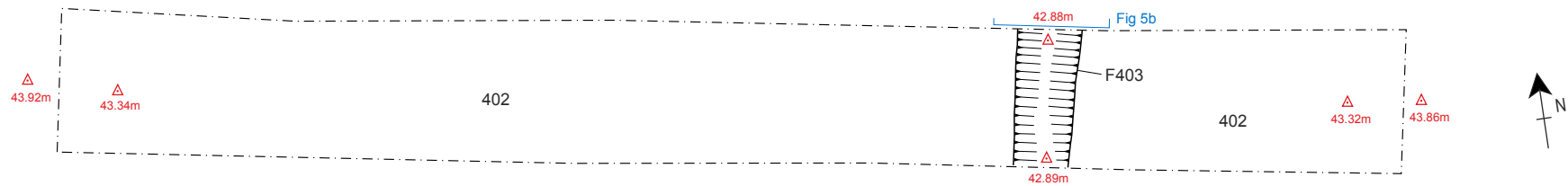
PROJECT
Land west of Oakland Park South, Sticklepath,
Barnstaple, Devon

TITLE



Fig. 4: Trench 3, plan and section

a) Trench 4, plan



b) Section of ditch F403

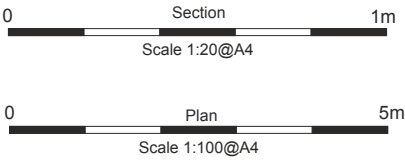
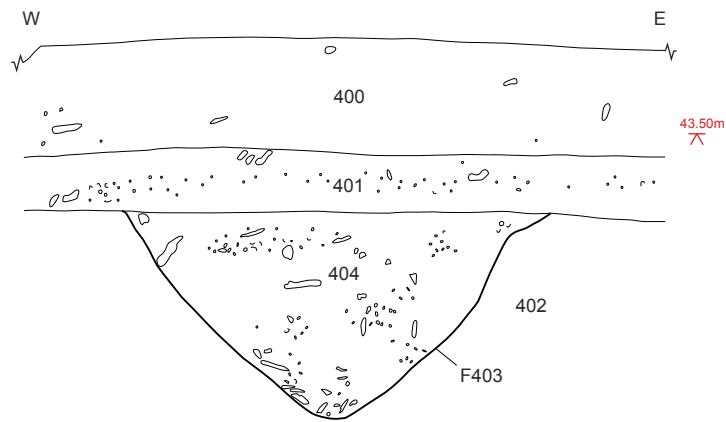


Fig. 5: Trench 4, plan and section



Plate 1: General view of site, looking northwest towards Trenches 2 and 3



Plate 2: Trench 2, feature F204, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 3: Trench 3, general view, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 4: Trench 3, northeast-facing sections of ditches F305, F310 and F314 (1m scale)



Plate 5: Trench 4, north-facing section of ditch F403 (1m scale)

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