

LAND OFF CONIGAR CLOSE, HEMYOCK, DEVON

(Centred on NGR ST 1321 1328)

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

Mid Devon District Council Outline Planning Reference:
16/00918/MOUT (condition 9)

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On behalf of:
West of England Developments Ltd

Report No: ACD1685/2/0

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AC archaeology

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The evaluation was commissioned by Andy Lehner of West of England Developments Ltd and managed for AC archaeology by John Valentin. The site works were carried out by Alex Farnell, Chris Blatchford and Alison Jones, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Leon Cauchois. The advice 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.

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation on land off Conigar Close, Hemyock, Devon (NGR ST 1321 1328), was undertaken by AC archaeology during October 2017. The evaluation consisted of the machine-excavation of 14 trenches totalling 155m in length and each 1.8m wide. These were positioned to target anomalies and 'blank' areas identified by a previous geophysical survey.

The majority of the trenches contained negative results. A paucity of features and finds on the site indicates that there is no surviving buried evidence for intensive use of the site for industrial activity or settlement. It appears that the main use of the site has been for agriculture in historic times and the shallow remains of a pair of isolated pits indicate that they have been heavily truncated by ploughing. The wide spread of small amounts of iron slag across the site suggests that it has been displaced from the known probable 8th century ironworking site just to the north and beyond the boundaries of the current proposed scheme. As well as the iron slag, a small collection of finds was recovered, comprising two pieces of prehistoric worked flint, one sherd of post-medieval pottery and an iron object.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** An archaeological trench evaluation on land off Conigar Close, Hemyock, Devon (NGR ST 1321 1328; Fig. 1), was undertaken by AC archaeology during October 2017. The evaluation was commissioned by West of England Developments Ltd and was required by Mid Devon District Council as a condition (9) of outline planning consent, as advised by the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team. The new development will comprise the construction of 22 dwellings, together with associated access and infrastructure.
- 1.2** The site occupies approximately 1.4 hectares of pasture land on the western edge of Hemyock (Plate 1). It encompasses a single whole field and part of another on land which slopes gently down to the north between 140m and 160m aOD (above Ordnance Datum). The underlying solid geology comprises Triassic Mercia Mudstone. The superficial geology is not recorded across most of the survey area but is mapped as Quaternary Diamicton colluvium on the western boundary of the area (www.bgs.ac.uk).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The site is located immediately to the south of where a recent archaeological excavation was undertaken on a probable 8th century ironworking site (Rainbird and Young 2015). Archaeology identified comprised a series of pit furnaces, as well as extensive spreads of smelting slag.
- 2.2** A geophysical survey of the present site (Dean 2016) identified limited evidence for archaeological activity, comprising two short linear anomalies only. A spread of debris in the northern part of the site is the remnants of a temporary spoil-heap generated from the recent housing development immediately to the north.

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 reference to buried remains relating to early ironworking. The results of the work reported here will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation.

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 14 trenches totaling 155m in length and with each 1.8m wide. These were positioned to target anomalies interpreted from the previous geophysical survey, as well as what were thought to be 'blank' areas.
- 4.2** All trenches were located with a Leica Net rover GPS with sub-10mm accuracy. The removal of overlying deposits within the trenches was undertaken in a maximum of 0.2m 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. Spoilheaps were scanned for displaced artefacts.
- 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

Only two of the trenches contained archaeological features (Trenches 1 and 7) and twelve had negative results. The trenches containing archaeological features are described in detail below, with descriptions for all trenches presented in tabulated form in Appendix 1. Across the site, the recorded layer sequence comprised a topsoil of mid greyish-brown silty clay, above a mid yellowish-brown silty clay agricultural subsoil, which was present in most of the trenches. The natural subsoil comprised clay in a variety of colours, with occasional patches of chert gravel. The natural subsoil was present at a depth of between 0.25m and 0.65m below the current ground surface. Overlying the natural subsoil in Trenches 5 and 10 was a colluvial deposit which appeared to have formed in a natural hollow that is currently followed by a drainage ditch on the west side of the hedge boundary dividing the two parts of the site.

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

This trench was located in the detached portion of the site, was positioned close to the temporary spoil-heap mound and in a blank area interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. The trench was aligned approximately north-south and was 20m long. The overlying layer sequence consisted of 0.32m of topsoil (context 100), above 0.15m of agricultural subsoil (101). The natural subsoil (102) was therefore present at 0.47m below the ground surface. The trench contained one pit or hollow (F104).

Pit F104

This possible pit or hollow was only partly revealed in the trench with maximum exposed dimensions of 4.5m long and 0.6m wide by 0.13m deep, with shallow sloping side and undulating base. It had a single fill (105) composed of mid grey silty clay loam. No finds were recovered.

5.3 Trench 7 (Plan Fig. 2c, sections Fig. 2d; Plate 4)

This trench was located in the central part of the main portion of the site and was positioned to test a short linear anomaly as interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. The trench

was aligned approximately northwest-southeast and was 10m long. The overlying layer sequence consisted of 0.23m of topsoil (context 700), above 0.10m of agricultural subsoil (701). The natural subsoil (702) was therefore present at 0.33m below the ground surface. The trench contained one pit (F703), which did not match with the linear anomaly.

Pit F703

This was circular in plan and measured 0.48m in diameter by 0.05m deep, with a bowl-shaped profile. It contained a single fill (704) composed of mid brownish-red silty loam, which contained one small piece of iron slag and two pieces of prehistoric worked chert, with the latter residual in this context.

6. THE FINDS *by Naomi Payne*

6.1 Introduction

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. Six of the fourteen trenches (nos. 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 and 10) produced finds and are summarised in Table 1 below.

Context	Context Description	Lithics		Post-medieval pottery		Iron		Slag	
		No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
101	Trench 1 topsoil					1	179		
103	Modern field drain							11	1101
201	Trench 2 subsoil							4	567
301	Trench 3 subsoil			1	13			3	221
502	Colluvium							1	6500
704	Fill of pit F703	2	6					1	1
1003	Colluvium							1	1088
Totals		2	6	1	13	1	179	21	9478

Table 1: Finds quantification by context (weights in grams)

6.2 Lithics

Two pieces (6g) of worked chert were recovered from context 704, fill of pit F703. They are both flakes. One is broken. This context also contained a piece of ironworking slag, so the flakes must be residual.

6.3 Post-medieval pottery

A single sherd (13g) of post-medieval pottery was recovered from context 301, Trench 3 topsoil. This is a body sherd from a Frechen stoneware bottle dating from c. 1550-1700. It includes the moulded edge of a probable bearded face at the point that the body of the bottle narrows into the neck.

6.4 Iron

A single iron find (179g) was recovered from the topsoil in Trench 1. This is a section of a flat iron bar, with a width of 43mm. It is broken at both ends and measures 112mm in length. It is likely to be modern in date.

6.5 Slag

A total of 21 pieces (9478g) of slag was recovered from six contexts in Trenches 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 and 10. All of the slag relates to iron smelting and includes both furnace slag and tap slag fragments. The large piece of slag from context 502, Trench 5 colluvium, has clear charcoal impressions on one side. One of the pieces from context 201, Trench 2 subsoil, has a vitrified surface. There is no furnace lining in the collection, indicating that the slag is not *in situ*.

7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The results from the trench evaluation largely support the geophysical survey interpretation, in that the trenches returned overwhelmingly low-level results.
- 7.2 The two widely spaced pits in Trenches 1 and 7 are of probable medieval or later date in that they contain iron slag which was being produced from iron smelting in the area of Hemyock from Saxon times onwards. Neither of the features appeared to be directly related to ironworking processes and it appears that the dense probable 8th century iron working activity identified alongside Culmstock Road directly to the north did not spread to the south or west.
- 7.3 The two pieces of prehistoric worked chert found in a residual context in pit F703 can be added to a broad background of prehistoric use of the area as attested by a further piece of worked flint and two sherds of Bronze Age pottery, also in residual contexts, collected from the probable 8th century iron smelting site to the north (Payne 2015).

8. CONCLUSION

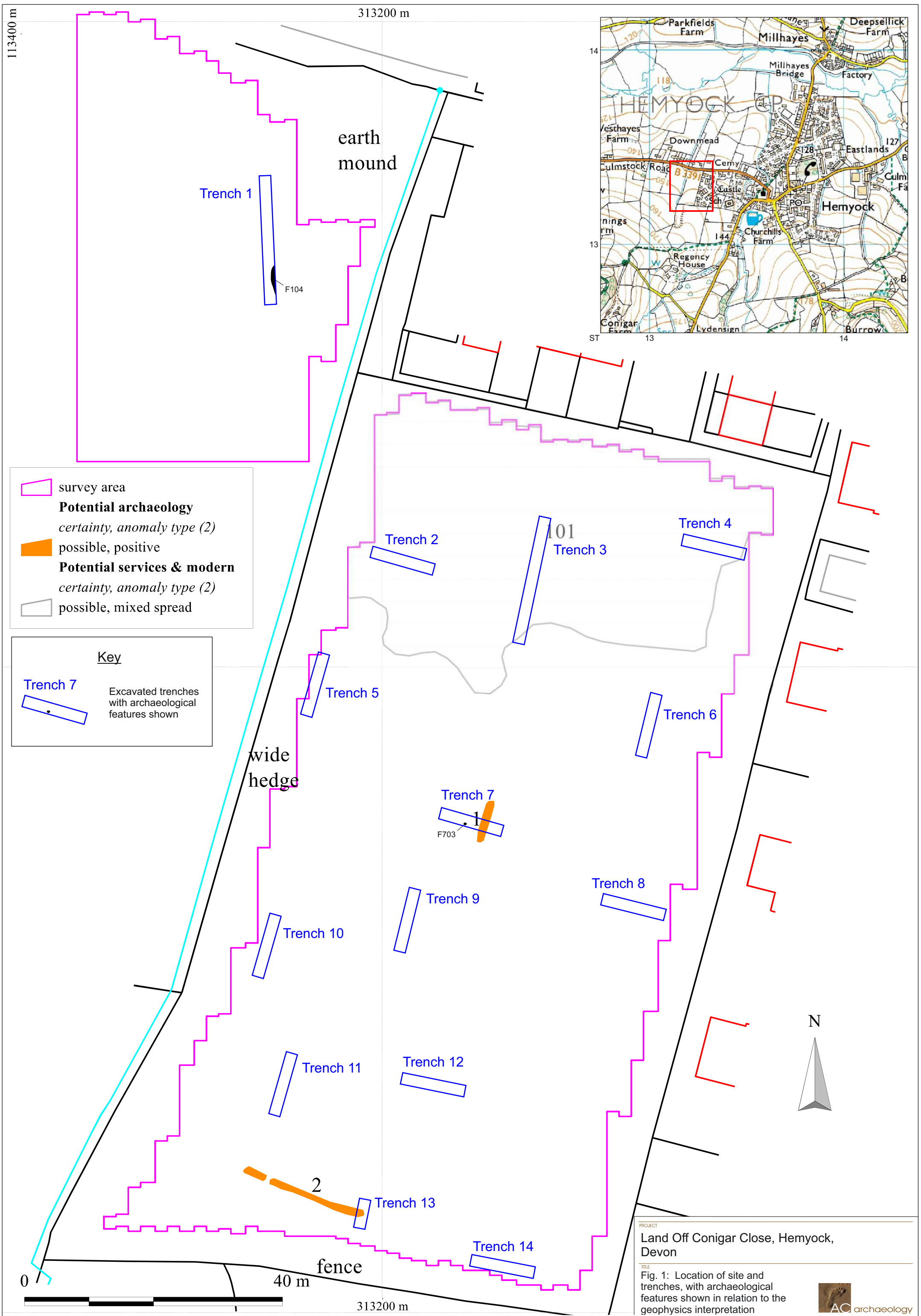
- 8.1 The paucity of features and finds on the site indicates that there is no surviving buried evidence for intensive use of the site for industrial activity or settlement. It appears that the main use of the site has been for agriculture in historic times and the shallow remains of the pair of isolated pits indicate that they have been heavily truncated by ploughing. The wide spread of iron slag across the site suggests that it has been displaced from the probable 8th century ironworking site previously excavated just to the north.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

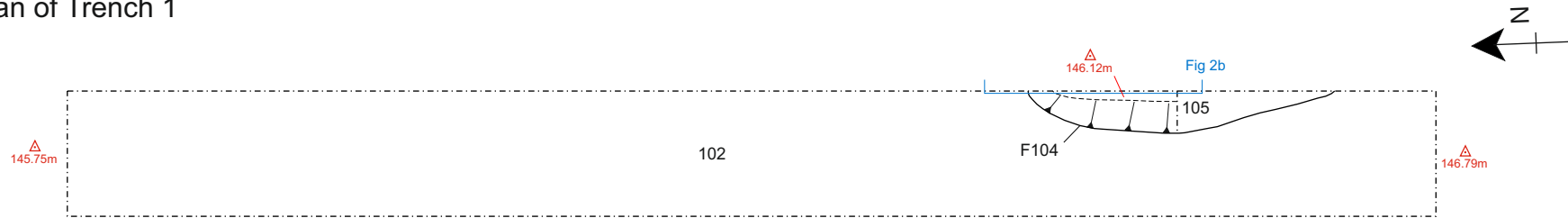
- 9.1 The finds, paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ under the unique project code of **ACD1685** and temporary reference number **RAMM: 17/57** received from the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM) Exeter. 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 **297505**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. REFERENCES

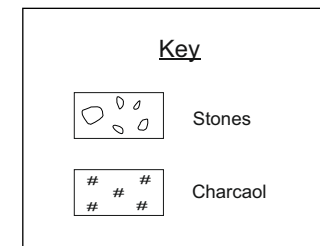
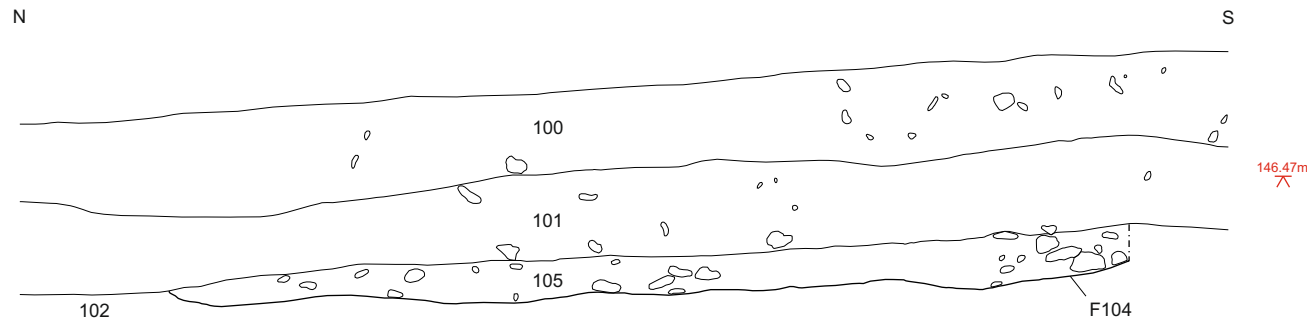
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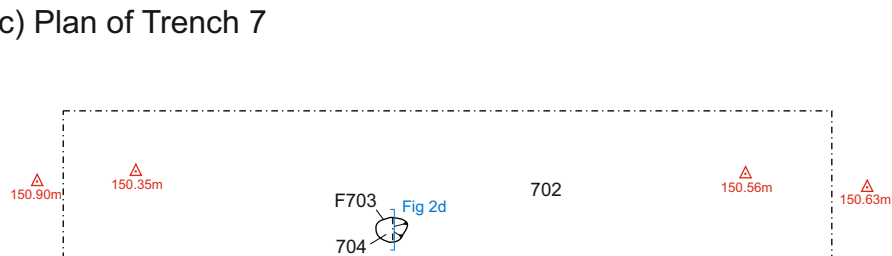
a) Plan of Trench 1



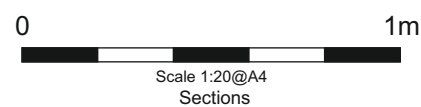
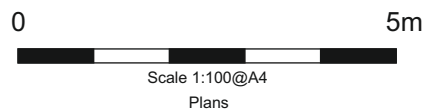
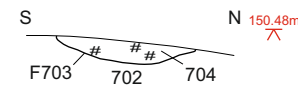
b) Section of pit or hollow F104



c) Plan of Trench 7



d) Section of pit F703



PROJECT

Land Off Conigar Close, Hemyock, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 2: Trench 1, plan and section and Trench 7, plan and section





Plate 1: General view of the main portion of the site, looking northwest



Plate 2: Trench 1, possible pit or hollow F104, looking northeast (1m scale)



Plate 3: Trench 1, east-facing section of possible pit or hollow F104 (0.4m scale)



Plate 4: Trench 7, east-facing section of pit F703 (0.2m scale)

Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trench

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		Length 20m	Width 1.8m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
100	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.32m	Topsoil	
101	Mid yellowish-brown silty clay	0.32-0.47m	Agricultural subsoil	
102	Mid red to reddish-brown clay with patches of chert gravels	0.47m+	Natural subsoil	
103	Unexcavated limestone packed linear	0.47m+	Modern field drain	
F104	Pit feature only partly revealed in the trench with maximum exposed dimensions of 4.5m long and 0.6m wide by 0.13m deep with shallow sloping side and undulating base	0.47-0.60m	Amorphous shallow pit	
105	Mid grey silty clay loam	0.47-0.60m	Fill of F105	

Trench 2		Length 10m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
200	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.25m	Topsoil	
201	Mid yellowish-brown silty clay	0.25-0.35m	Agricultural subsoil	
202	Mixed yellow and red clay	0.35m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 3		Length 20m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
300	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.25m	Topsoil	
301	Mid yellowish-brown silty clay	0.25-0.35m	Agricultural subsoil	
302	Mixed red and greyish-yellow clay	0.35m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 4		Length 10m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
400	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.30m	Topsoil	
401	Mixed red and greyish-yellow clay	0.30m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 5		Length 10m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
500	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.30m	Topsoil	
501	Mid yellowish-brown silty clay	0.30-0.50m	Agricultural subsoil	
502	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0.50-0.65m	Colluvium	
503	Mixed yellow and greyish-yellow clay	0.65m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 6		Length 10m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
600	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.30m	Topsoil	
601	Mixed yellow and greyish-yellow clay	0.30m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 7		Length 10m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
700	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.23m	Topsoil	
701	Mid yellowish-brown silty clay	0.23-0.33m	Agricultural subsoil	
702	Mixed yellow and greyish-yellow clay	0.33m+	Natural subsoil	
F703	Pit feature measured 0.48m in diameter by 0.05m deep with a bowl-shaped profile	0.33-0.38m	Pit	
704	Mid brownish-red silty loam	0.33-0.38m	Fill of F703	

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 8		Length 10m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
800	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.25m	Topsoil	
801	Mixed yellow and greyish-yellow clay	0.25m+	Natural subsoil	
802	Unexcavated limestone packed linear	0.25m+	Modern field drain	

Trench 9		Length 10m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
900	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.20m	Topsoil	
901	Mid yellowish-brown silty clay	0.20-0.30m	Agricultural subsoil	
902	Mixed red and greyish-yellow clay	0.30m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 10		Length 10m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
1000	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.27m	Topsoil	
1001	Mid yellowish-brown silty clay	0.27-0.47m	Agricultural subsoil	
1002	Mixed yellow and greyish-yellow clay	0.47m+	Natural subsoil	
1003	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0.47-0.54m	Colluvium	

Trench 11		Length 10m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
1100	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.25m	Topsoil	
1101	Mid yellowish-brown silty clay	0.25-0.35m	Agricultural subsoil	
1102	Mixed yellow and greyish-yellow clay	0.35m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 12		Length 10m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
1200	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.25m	Topsoil	
1201	Mid yellowish-brown silty clay	0.25-0.40m	Agricultural subsoil	
1202	Mixed red and greyish-yellow clay	0.40m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 13		Length 5m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
1300	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.38m	Topsoil	
1301	Mixed yellow and greyish-yellow clay	0.38m+	Natural subsoil	
1302	Ceramic pipe	0.38m+	Modern field drain	

Trench 14		Length 10m	Width 1.8m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
1400	Mid greyish-brown silty clay	0-0.28m	Topsoil	
1401	Mid yellowish-brown silty clay	0.28-0.36m	Agricultural subsoil	
1402	Mixed yellow and greyish-yellow clay	0.36m+	Natural subsoil	

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