

NEW PRIMARY SCHOOL, LAND OFF CREDITON ROAD, OKEHAMPTON, DEVON

(Centred on NGR SX 5982 9590)

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

West Devon Borough Council Outline Planning
Reference 01089/2013, Condition No. 5

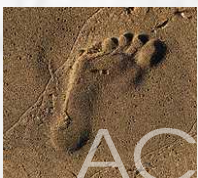
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With a contribution from:
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On behalf of:
NPS South West

Report No: ACD1656/3/0

Date: November 2017



archaeology

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Checked by	John Valentin
Approved by	John Valentin

Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned by Lucy Wigginton of NPS South West and managed for AC archaeology by John Valentin. The site works were carried out by Chris Caine with the assistance of Stephanie Ralph and Lexi Scard. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Sarnia Blackmore. The advice of Bill Horner, Devon County Council Archaeologist, 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.

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation on the site of a new primary school on land off Crediton Road, Okehampton, Devon (NGR SX 5982 9590), was undertaken by AC archaeology during November 2017. The evaluation consisted of the machine-excavation of five trenches totalling 228m in length and each 1.9m wide. These were positioned to target anomalies and 'blank' areas identified by a previous geophysical survey. The main archaeological interest is the proximity of the site – immediately to the southeast – of the scheduled Roman Fort, fortlet and associated enclosures at Okehampton. In addition, the course of a Roman road extends from the fort eastwards and to the north of the site.

The site as a whole was found to contain little of archaeological interest. A possible posthole and a pit, in the northeast part are of probable post-medieval date. A stony deposit to the south contained finds of late post-medieval date and was located above the subsoil. There was no structure to the arrangement of stones and this may represent a dump for a hard standing. The small number features and the paucity of finds from the site indicates that the new school site is located away from settlement contemporary with the Roman road, as identified during recent investigations to the north.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land off Crediton Road, Okehampton, Devon (NGR SX 5982 9590; Fig. 1), was undertaken by AC archaeology during November 2017. The evaluation was commissioned by NPS South West and was required by West Devon Borough Council as a condition (5) of outline planning consent, as advised by the Devon County Historic Environment Team. The development will comprise the construction of the new primary school as part of the outline consent.
- 1.2 The site covers approximately 1.5 hectares, is located 2km to the northeast of the centre of Okehampton and is situated to the north of Crediton Road on what is currently agricultural land that slopes gently down to the north at around 170m above Ordnance Datum (Plates 1-2). The underlying solid geology is formed of Carboniferous mudstone and siltstone of the Ashton Mudstone Member, alongside smaller outcrops of sandstone associated with the Crackington Formation (www.bgs.ac.uk).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The application area lies to the southeast of the Roman Fort, fortlet and associated enclosures at Okehampton, Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1015829) and has been subject to previous archaeological investigation. A desk based assessment (Kerr-Peterson 2013), a geophysical survey (Dean 2014) and a targeted evaluation and auger survey (Pears 2014) have all previously been undertaken as supporting information for the outline application. The geophysical survey identified features likely to relate to a Roman road associated with the fort to the northwest of the site. A number of clusters of possible large pits or postholes identified to the north and south of the Roman road were suggested to represent *in situ* heated deposits such as kilns, hearths and furnaces. Following the geophysical survey a targeted trench evaluation was undertaken (Pears 2014). Four trenches were excavated with archaeological features identified in three of them, including a 7.5-8m wide NW-SE aligned Roman road.

2.2 Within the present application area the geophysical survey identified a number of linear and disrupted linear anomalies where the proposed new school buildings and playing field are located.

3. AIMS

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 the Roman military occupation, as well as early land division and settlement. The results of the work, as set out in this report, 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 (Costen and 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 228m in length and with each 1.9m 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 Netrover 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

Two of the trenches contained archaeological features and three (Trenches 2, 3 and 5) 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 dark brown silty loam, above an occasional agricultural subsoil of mid yellowish-brown silty loam. The natural subsoil largely comprised light yellowish-brown to light greyish-yellow silty clay. The natural subsoil was present at a depth of between 0.2m and 0.45m below the current ground surface.

5.2 Trench 1 (Plan Fig. 2a, sections Figs 2b-d; Plates 3-4)

This trench was located in the northeast part of the site and positioned to test three linear anomalies interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. The trench was aligned approximately north-south and was 40m long. The overlying layer sequence consisted of 0.2m of topsoil (context 100) and a patch of natural interface composed of light greyish-brown silty loam (106) 0.05m thick. The natural subsoil (101) was therefore present at a depth of between

0.20m and 0.25m below the ground surface. The trench contained two discrete features (F102 and F104) and one amorphous hollow feature (F107).

Posthole F102

This was not fully revealed in trench measuring 0.37m in diameter by 0.07m deep, with shallow sloping sides and concave base. It contained a single fill (103) composed of light greyish-brown silty clay, which contained one sherd of post-medieval pottery, dating from the late 18th or 19th centuries.

Pit F104

This was not fully revealed in the trench measuring 0.51m in diameter by 0.54m deep, with steep and slightly stepped sides and flat base. It had a single fill (105) composed of mid greyish-brown with some yellow mottling silty clay. No finds were recovered.

Hollow F107

This was a linear feature measuring 3.94m wide by 0.44m deep, with shallow sloping irregular sides and a flat, slightly irregular, base. It contained three fills (108-10). Upper fill 110 was composed of dark grey silty loam. Secondary fill 109 was composed of mid grey loamy sand, while primary fill 108 was composed of light grey silty loam. No finds were recovered.

5.3 Trench 4 (Plates 5-6)

This trench was located in the southern part of the site and positioned to test a linear anomaly interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. It was T-shaped, measuring 40m long north-south and 30m long east-west. The overlying layer sequence consisted of 0.3m of topsoil (context 400), overlying 0.1m of agricultural subsoil (401). The natural subsoil (402) was therefore present at 0.4m below the ground surface. The trench contained a stony deposit (403), which did not correspond with the linear anomaly interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey.

Stony deposit 403

This was approximately E-W aligned and composed of sub-angular stone in a mid greyish-brown silty clay matrix sitting above subsoil 401. Two sherds of post-medieval pottery and a piece of 19th century brick were recovered from this deposit.

6. THE FINDS by Charlotte Coles

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. The collection of finds is summarised in Table 1.

Context	Context Description	Post-medieval pottery		CBM	
		No	Wt	No	Wt
103	Fill of posthole F102	1	3		
403	Stone layer	2	3	1	881
Total		3	6	1	881

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

6.2 Post-medieval pottery

A total of three sherds of post-medieval pottery (6g) was recovered from two contexts, two of these are white glazed stoneware, dating from the late 18th or 19th centuries. The remaining sherd from context 403 is white industrial ware, dating from the 19th or 20th centuries.

6.3 Ceramic building material (CBM)

A single piece of brick was recovered from context 403, this is domestic house brick dating from the 19th century.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The results of the trench evaluation largely support the geophysical survey interpretation, in that the blank areas interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey were found to be negative. The site as a whole was found to contain little of archaeological interest. Two trenches (1 and 4) contained archaeological features.

7.2 A possible posthole (F102) and a pit (F104) in Trench 1 are of probable post-medieval date. Posthole F102 contained a sherd of late post-medieval pottery, although pit F104 contained no finds. They indicate only limited use of this part of the site and the trench also showed that the linear anomalies interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey are not of archaeological origin. The stony deposit in Trench 4 is of similar character to a surface/track identified during recent trenching to the north (Rainbird 2017), The deposit in Trench 4 contained finds of late post-medieval date and was located above the subsoil. There was no structure to the arrangement of stones and this may represent a dump for a hard standing, perhaps for a temporary field track.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The small number features and the paucity of finds from the site indicates that they are probably located at relatively some distance from any contemporary settlement sites. The site clearly falls outside of any activity related to the Roman road and adjacent associated settlement located to the north, as recently identified by trial trenching there (Rainbird 2017).

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

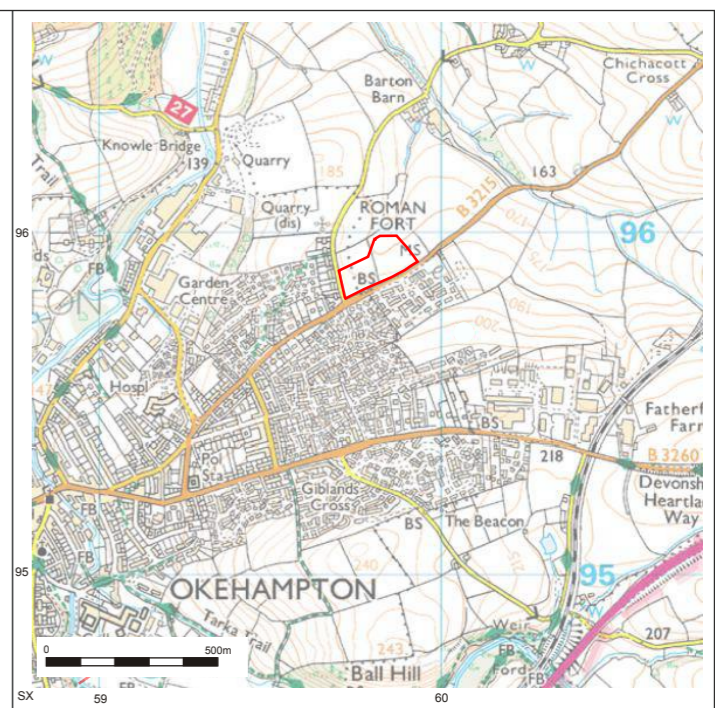
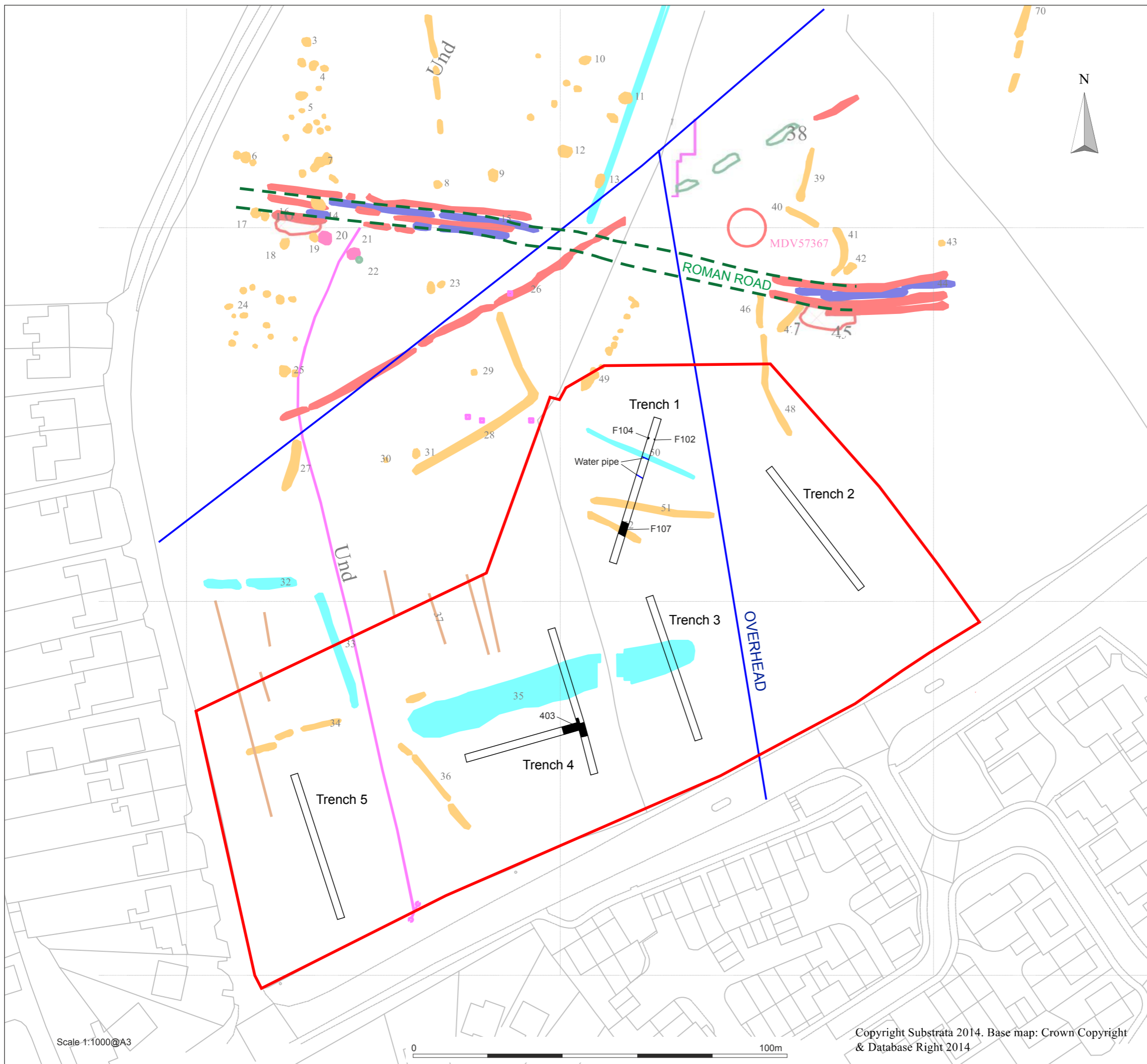
9.1 The finds, paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ under the unique project code of **ACD1656** and under the accession number **PLYMG.2017.31** received from from Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. 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 **301573**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. REFERENCES

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- Legend**
- Site boundary
 - Potential archaeology**
 - certainty, anomaly type*
 - likely positive (2)
 - likely negative (2)
 - likely positive spread (2)
 - likely dipole spread (2)
 - possible positive
 - possible negative
 - possible negative spread
 - possible north-south high-low
 - possible dipole
 - possible repeated parallels (3)
 - Trench with archaeological features shown
 - Projected line of Roman road

Scale 1:1000@A3

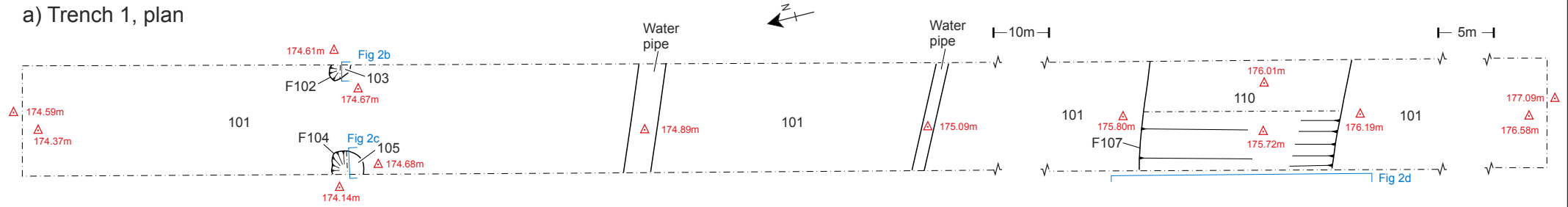


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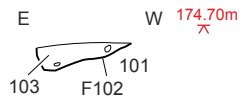
PROJECT
 New primary school, land off Crediton Road,
 Okehampton, Devon

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

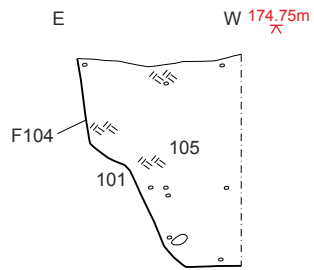
a) Trench 1, plan



b) Section of posthole F102

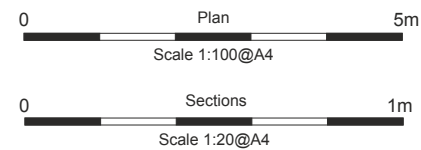
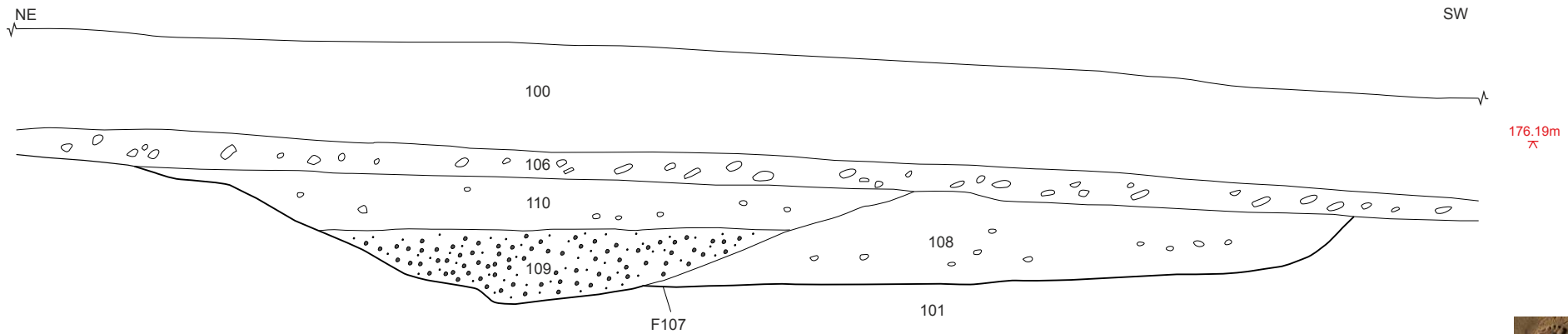


c) Section of pit F104



Key	
	Stones
	Clay
	Gravel & manganese

d) Section of hollow F107



PROJECT AC archaeology

New Primary School, Land off Crediton Road, Okehampton, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 2: Trench 1, plan and sections



Plate 1: General view of site in the vicinity of Trench 1, looking south



Plate 2: General view of site in the vicinity of Trench 3, looking northeast



Plate 3: Trench 1, north-facing section of pit F104 (0.4m scale)



Plate 4: Trench 1, east-facing section of hollow F107 (1m scale)



Plate 5: Trench 4, stony deposit 403 in centre of the trench, looking north (1m scale)



Plate 6: Trench 4, stony deposit 403, looking west (1m scale)

Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trench



APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		Length 40m	Width 1.9m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
100	Dark brown silty loam	0-0.20m	Topsoil	
101	Light yellowish-brown to light greyish-yellow silty clay	0.20m+	Natural subsoil	
F102	Pit feature not fully revealed in trench measuring 0.37m in diameter by 0.07m deep with shallowly sloping sides and concave base	0.20-0.27m	Posthole	
103	Light greyish-brown silty clay	0.20-0.27m	Fill of F102	
F104	Pit feature not fully revealed in trench measuring 0.51m in diameter by 0.54m deep with steep and slightly stepped sides and flat base	0.20-0.74m	Pit	
105	Mid greyish-brown with some yellow mottling silty clay	0.20-0.74m	Fill of F104	
106	Light greyish-brown silty loam	0.20-0.25m	Natural interface	
F107	Linear feature measuring 3.94m wide by 0.44m deep with shallowly sloping irregular sides and flat, slightly irregular, base	0.25-0.69m	Natural hollow	
108	Light grey silty loam	0.25-0.55m	Primary fill of F107	
109	Mid grey loamy sand	0.60-0.80m	Secondary fill of F107	
110	Dark grey silty loam	0.49-0.69m	Upper fill of F107	

Trench 2		Length 40m	Width 1.9m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
200	Dark brown silty loam	0-0.34m	Topsoil	
201	Light yellowish-brown to light greyish-yellow silty clay	0.34m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 3		Length 40m	Width 1.9m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
300	Dark brown silty loam	0-0.45m	Topsoil	
301	Light yellowish-brown to light greyish-yellow silty clay	0.45m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 4		Length 40m 30m	Width 1.9m	Alignment N-S E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
400	Dark brown silty loam	0-0.30m	Topsoil	
401	Mid yellowish-brown silty loam	0.30-0.40m	Subsoil	
402	Light yellowish-brown to light greyish-yellow silty clay	0.40m+	Natural subsoil	
403	Sub-angular stone in a mid greyish-brown silty clay matrix sitting above subsoil 401	0.30-0.58m	Stone layer	
404	Light brownish-yellow clay loam - unexcavated	0.40m+	Natural deposit	

Trench 5		Length 38m	Width 1.9m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
500	Dark brown silty loam	0-0.38m	Topsoil	
501	Light yellowish-brown to light greyish-yellow silty clay	0.38m+	Natural subsoil	

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