

A PROPOSED NEW RECYCLING FACILITY ON LAND AT CHALLONSLEIGH FARM, LEE MILL, DEVON

(Centred on NGR SX 5934 5528)

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

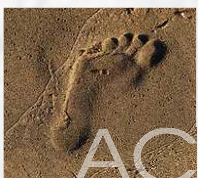
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On behalf of:
Wood Yew Waste Ltd

Report No: ACD1712/2/1

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archaeology

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Devon County Council Planning Application Ref: DCC/4018/2017

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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 trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during November 2017 on land at Challonsleigh Farm, Lee Mill, Devon (NGR SX 5934 5528). The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of five trenches totalling 150m in length, with each trench 1.5m wide. These were positioned to provide sample coverage of the site. The site is located close to where a recent investigation had identified a Middle Bronze settlement enclosure and medieval building

Two small ditches of probable medieval date were recorded in the southeast corner of the site. Further evidence of Middle Bronze Age and medieval settlement was not encountered, although a natural tree throw contained a flint bladelet of Late Mesolithic to Early Neolithic form.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during November 2017 to provide supporting information for a planning application for a proposed new recycling facility and related access, drainage and landscaping, on land at Challonsleigh Farm, Lee Mill, Devon (NGR SX 5934 5528). The work was required by Devon County Council as advised by their Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCCHET).
- 1.2 The evaluation was commissioned by BSA Heritage on behalf of Wood Yew Waste Ltd.
- 1.3 The site (Fig. 1, Plate 1) covers approximately 1.9 hectares on low-lying rough pasture and scrub. It lies at around 50m aOD (above Ordnance Datum), with the underlying solid geology recorded as Middle Devonian Slates sedimentary rock.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site has been the subject of a previous Heritage Assessment (BSA Heritage 2017). It is located in an area where the Devon Historic Environment Record (HER) records evidence for worked flint found during works on the A38 (HER ref. 14546), an irregular shaped cropmark enclosure of uncertain origin to the north (37022), while east of Challonsleigh is a 'Chapel Field' place-name and a small building is marked on the 1840 Plympton St. Mary parish tithe map (20333 and 32216)
- 2.2 A recent trench evaluation on land immediately to the north (Rainbird 2017) identified a sub-oval enclosure with pottery recovered indicating a Middle Bronze Age date. In a separate trench, closer to the present site, the foundations of a substantial wall were found, with associated roof tile indicating a 13th-14th century date. The wall foundation is present in the field named 'Chapel Field' as per the tithe apportionment.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aim of the evaluation 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, set out in this report, will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation should planning consent be obtained.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' document, *Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluation* (revised December 2014) and a Project Design prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2017). It comprised the machine-excavation of five trenches totaling 150m in length and with each trench 1.5m wide. Trenches were positioned to achieve sample coverage of the site (Fig. 1).
- 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 a 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 (trench locations Fig. 1)

Natural subsoil was exposed across all trenches at a depth varying between 0.55m in Trench 3 to a maximum of 1.1m in Trench 1. The recorded layer sequence comprised a consistent topsoil composed of mid yellowish grey soft silty clay and agricultural subsoil of mid yellowish to reddish-brown, soft silty clay. Trenches 1, 4 and 5 encountered an additional layer of colluvium composed of mid brown, soft silty clay-loam. A further layer of colluvium (104) was recorded in Trench 1. Archaeological and natural features were recorded in Trenches 2, 4 and 5. These trenches are described in detail below. Trench 3 was archaeologically negative and is tabulated by context only in Appendix 1.

5.2 Trench 1 (Plate 2)

Trench 1 was aligned E-W, measured 30m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.1m. Natural subsoil (context 102) was encountered at a depth of between 0.6m and 1.1m. A layer (104) of dark brown and grey brown silt overlay natural subsoil. It was up to 0.3m thick to the west and petering out within the trench to the east. (Plate 2). Its composition was variable, with E-W oriented bands containing quantities of mineralized soils and sub-angular stone, from coarse gravel up to cobble size. The highly mineralized and sterile nature of the deposit (which lacked charcoal or other organic content) suggested formation through natural processes and its occurrence related to the former topography of the site, ie it had formed within a natural hollow. This layer was sealed by colluvial soil (103) up to 0.5m thick, then by agricultural subsoil (101) and topsoil (100).

5.3 Trench 2 (Plan Fig. 2a, section Fig. 2b; Plate 3)

This trench was aligned approximately E-W, measured 30m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.55m. Natural subsoil (202) was encountered at a depth of 0.55m below up to 0.25m of subsoil (201) and 0.3m of topsoil (200). A single possible posthole was exposed towards the eastern end of the trench.

Posthole F203 was circular in plan, measuring 0.3m across and 0.12m deep, with steep concave sides and a flattish base. It contained a single fill of mid-dark greyish

brown soft silty clay, with rare sub-angular gravel inclusions and abundant charcoal flecks and fragments. No finds were recovered.

5.4 Trench 4 (Plate 4)

This trench was aligned approximately E-W, measured 30m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.55m. Natural subsoil (403) was encountered at a depth of 0.55m, below up to 0.2m of colluvial soil (402), 0.1m of agricultural subsoil (401) and 0.25m of topsoil. Three large natural features were exposed (F404, F407 and 408). Features F404 (Plate 4) and F407 were investigated and found to be amorphous in plan and section with undercutting and diffuse edges. They are likely to be tree throw pits. All were sealed by colluvial soil layer 402. One (F404) produced a single worked flint bladelet of possible Late Mesolithic to Early Neolithic date from its fill (405). The third feature (408) was diffuse and irregular in plan with an exposed upper fill of identical composition to F404 and F407. It was not excavated.

5.5 Trench 5 (Plan Fig. 2c, sections Fig. 2d-f; Plate 5)

This trench was aligned NE-SW, measured 30m long and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.8m. Natural subsoil (502) was encountered at a depth of c. 0.65m, below up to 0.2m of colluvial soil (507), 0.15m of agricultural subsoil (501) and 0.3m of topsoil (500). Two ditches (F503 and F505) were exposed (Plate 5). They were arranged at right angles to one another, aligned N-S and E-W, potentially intersecting beyond the trench to the west. Both were recorded as cutting colluvial soil 507, and were sealed by agricultural subsoil layer 501. The fills of both were very similar in composition to the surrounding colluvium and both were recognised in plan where they cut the natural subsoil.

Ditch F503 was aligned N-S, measured 0.6m wide and 0.2m deep, with moderately sloping straight sides and narrow concave base. Its true dimensions from the trench section were 1.3m wide and 0.55m deep. It contained a single fill (504) composed of mid greyish yellow silty clay, with occasional sub-angular pebbles and gravel, common shillet gravel and rare charcoal flecks. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered.

Ditch F505 was aligned E-W. Its true dimensions measured 0.8m wide and 0.3m deep, with moderately sloping straight sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill (506) composed of mid greyish-yellow clay, with rare sub-angular quartz pebbles, common shillet gravel and rare charcoal flecks. A single sherd of medieval pottery was recovered.

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. The collection of finds is summarised in Table 1 below.

Context	Context description	Worked flint		Medieval pottery	
		No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)
103	Colluvium	3	11		
405	Fill of tree throw F404	1	2		
504	Fill of ditch F503			1	5
506	Fill of ditch F505			1	3
Totals		4	13	2	8

Table 1. Summary of finds by context (weights in grams)

6.2 Worked flint/chert

Four pieces of worked flint (13g) were recovered from two contexts in Trenches 1 and 4. Colluvial layer 103 produced three crudely struck secondary flint flakes. All three are made from mottled dark greyish-brown flint and have areas of pebble cortex present on the dorsal surfaces. Context 405, fill of tree throw F404, contained a bladelet made from mid-grey flint. This may be of Late Mesolithic to Early Neolithic date, although bladelets were also made accidentally in later prehistory (Butler 2005, 35).

6.3 Medieval pottery

Two sherds of medieval pottery (8g) were recovered from two contexts in Trench 5. Both sherds are body sherds from jars. The larger sherd is from context 504, fill of ditch F503. This is Upper Greensand Derived pottery, which has been shown to have been made in the Blackdown Hills between c. AD 950-1350 (Allan, Hughes and Taylor 2011, pp. 168-9). The other sherd is from context 506, fill of ditch F505. It is a sherd of North Devon Medieval Coarseware dating from c. AD 1200-1450.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The site lies within a low-lying landscape, in a combe with land rising to the north, south and west and continuing to fall to the east with views across to Dartmoor. A colluvial soil was recorded below topsoil and subsoil layers across the western and southern parts of the site, in Trenches 1, 4 and 5. It had been cut by two ditches in Trench 5, dated by pottery to the medieval period, In Trench 4, the colluvium sealed a series of natural features, one of which produced a worked flint of probable Late Mesolithic to Early Neolithic date. The colluvium was removed in all trenches to expose potential earlier remains and, aside from the natural features exposed in Trench 4, a further naturally formed deposit was encountered in Trench 1. It produced three small possible struck flint pebbles, but was otherwise sterile and highly mineralized in character. Additionally a single, undated, possible burnt posthole was encountered in Trench 2.

7.2 Despite being located close to a well preserved Middle Bronze Age settlement enclosure positioned upslope to the north (Rainbird 2017), trial trenching produced no dated evidence of activity in this period. The development of the colluvial soil remains poorly-dated, occurring at some time between the Neolithic and medieval periods. Activity in the area pre-dating its formation is represented by a flint bladelet of probable Late Mesolithic to Early Neolithic date, deposited in a naturally formed feature.

7.3 Two probable medieval ditches in Trench 5 were arranged so as to form a right angle, intersecting beyond the trench edge to the northwest. They may represent plot boundaries, a paddock or other agricultural enclosure relating to the medieval manor of Challonsleigh (HER ref. MDV16923). A probable medieval structure recorded to the northeast may also be contemporary (Rainbird 2017).

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Relatively low level results were recorded during trial trenching of the site. Further Middle Bronze Age remains were not encountered, although an undated possible posthole was recorded. Well-dated remains represented a continuation of medieval activity previously identified to the northeast, in the form of small probable agricultural boundaries. Otherwise, naturally formed features and deposits produced a very small assemblage of prehistoric struck flints.

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 **ACD1712** and the accession number **PLYMG.2017.30** received from Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. It will be held until the need for any further archaeological work on the site is established, then it will be dealt with under their current accession policy.
- 9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier **302334** which includes a digital copy of this report.

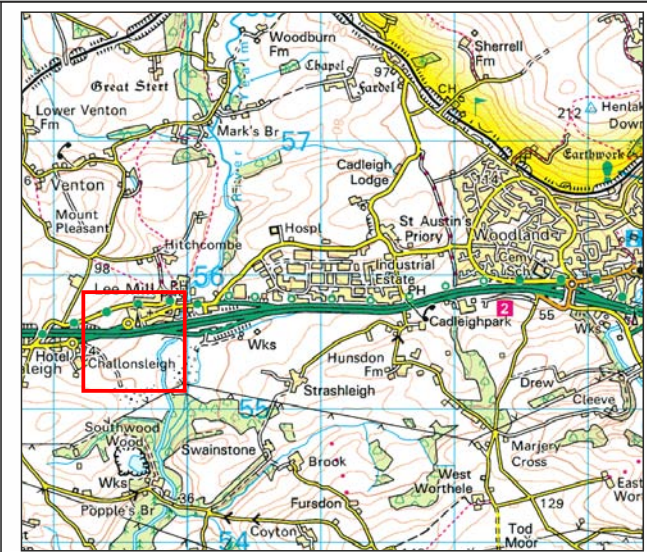
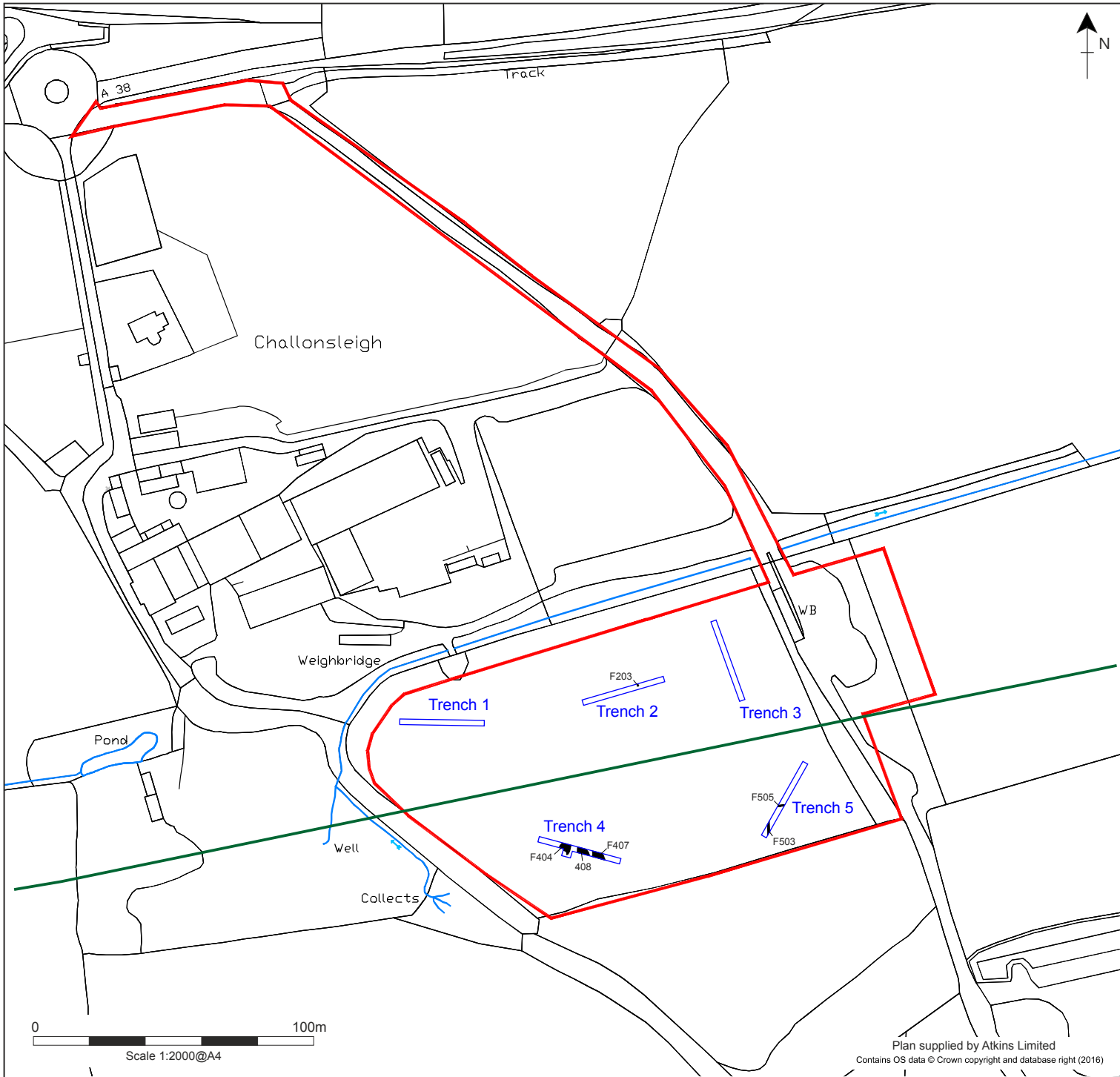
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Rainbird, P., 2017, *Land at Challonsleigh Farm, Lee Mill, Devon: Results of an archaeological trench evaluation*. AC archaeology unpublished report, ref. **ACD1697/2/0**.

Valentin, J., 2017, *A Proposed New Recycling Facility on Land at Challonsleigh Farm, Lee Mill, Devon: Project Design for an archaeological trench evaluation*. AC archaeology unpublished document, ref. **ACD1712/1/1**.



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Key

- Application site boundary
- Excavated trenches with archaeological/natural features shown
- Overhead cable



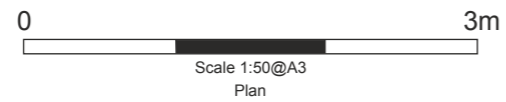
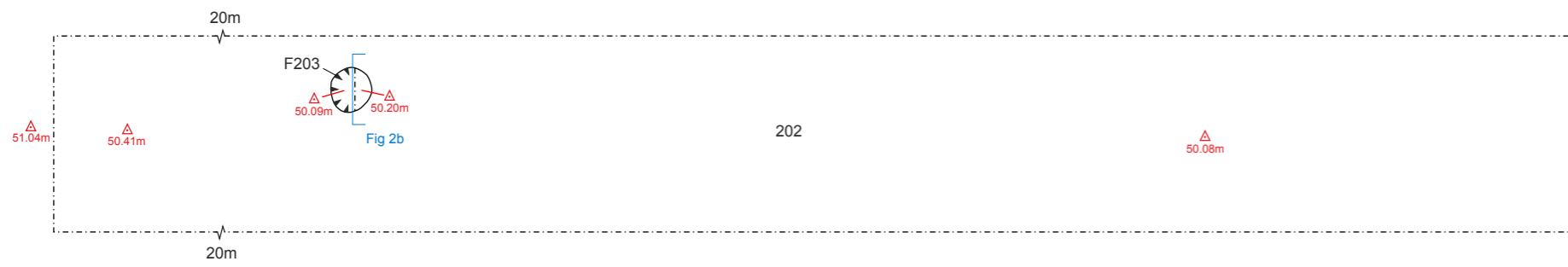
PROJECT
Proposed New Recycling Facility on Land at Challonsleigh Farm, Lee Mill, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 1: Location of site and trench locations

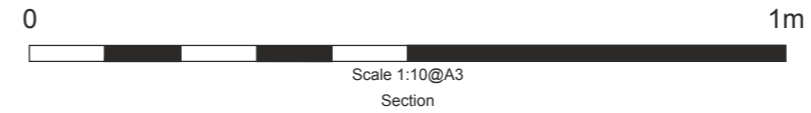
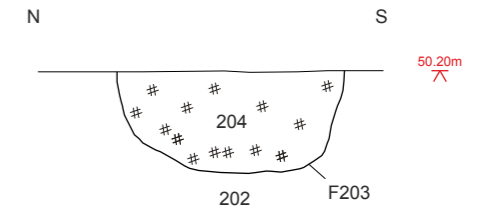
0 100m
 Scale 1:2000@A4

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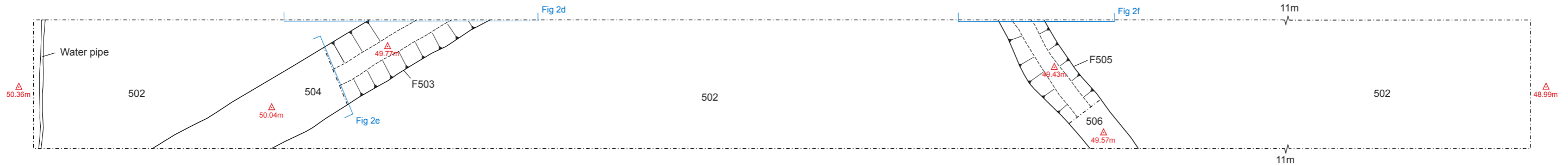
a) plan of Trench 2



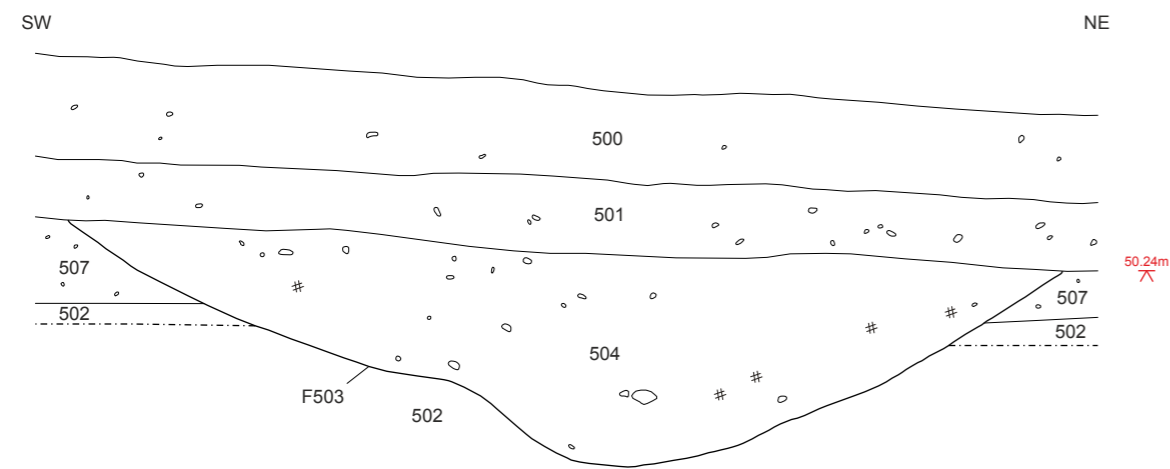
b) Section of posthole F203



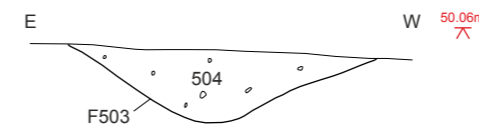
c) plan of Trench 5



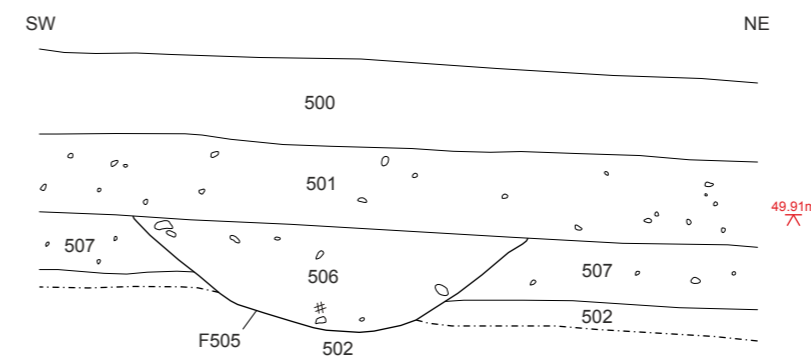
d) Section of ditch F503



e) Section of ditch F503



f) Section of ditch F505



Key	
	Stones
	Charcoal

PROJECT
Proposed New Recycling Facility on Land
at Challonsleigh Farm, Lee Mill, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 2: Trench 2, plan and
section and Trench 5, plan and
sections



Plate 1: General site during machining of Trench 2, looking east



Plate 2: View of deeper layer sequence in Trench 1, looking west. (Scale 1m)



Plate 3: Trench 2, section of possible posthole F203, looking east. (Scale 0.2m)



Plate 4: Trench 4, view of amorphous probable tree throw pit F404, looking southwest. (Scale 1m)



Plate 5: Trench 5, view of ditches F505 (foreground) and F503, looking southwest. (Scale 1m)

Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trench



APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		Length 30m	Width 1.5m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
100	Mid yellowish grey, soft, silty clay	0-0.25m	Topsoil	
101	Mid yellowish to reddish-brown, soft, silty clay	0.25-0.35m	Agricultural subsoil	
102	Light greyish yellowish clay, degraded shillet and occasional gravel	1.1m+	Natural subsoil	
103	Mid brown, soft, silty clay-loam	0.35-0.85m	Colluvium	
104	Dark brown and grey brown silt with E-W oriented bands containing variable quantities of mineralized material and sub-angular stone from coarse gravel up to cobble size.	0.85-1.1m	Combe deposit	

Trench 2		Length 30m	Width 1.5m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
200	Mid yellowish grey, soft, silty clay	0-0.3m	Topsoil	
201	Mid yellowish to reddish-brown, soft, silty clay	0.3-0.55m	Agricultural subsoil	
202	Light greyish yellowish clay, degraded shillet and occasional gravel	0.55m+	Natural subsoil	
F203	Circular in plan measuring 0.3m across and 0.12m deep with steep concave sides and a flattish base	-	Cut of posthole	
204	Mid-dark greyish brown, soft silty clay with rare sub-angular gravel inclusions and abundant charcoal flecks and fragments.	-	Fill of posthole	

Trench 3		Length 30m	Width 1.5m	Alignment N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
300	Mid yellowish grey, soft, silty clay	0-0.3m	Topsoil	
301	Mid yellowish to reddish-brown, soft, silty clay	0.3-0.55m	Agricultural subsoil	
302	Light greyish yellowish clay, degraded shillet and occasional gravel	0.55m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 4		Length 30m	Width 1.5m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
400	Mid yellowish grey, soft, silty clay	0-0.25m	Topsoil	
401	Mid yellowish to reddish-brown, soft, silty clay	0.25-0.35m	Agricultural subsoil	
402	Mid brown, soft, silty clay-loam	0.35-0.55m	Colluvium	
403	Light greyish yellowish clay, degraded shillet and occasional gravel	0.55m+	Natural subsoil	
F404	Amorphous in plan and section	-	Tree throw pit	
405	Light reddish brown, soft, silty clay	-	Upper fill of F404	
406	Light grey and yellow clay and shillet	-	Lower fill of F404	
F407	Amorphous in plan and section	-	Tree throw pit	
408	Light reddish brown, soft, silty clay	-	Fill of F407	
409	Amorphous in plan, exposed upper fill composed of light reddish brown, silty clay (unexcavated)	-	Probable tree throw pit	

Trench 5		Length 30m	Width 1.5m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
500	Mid yellowish grey, soft, silty clay	0-0.3m	Topsoil	
501	Mid yellowish to reddish-brown, soft, silty clay	0.3-0.45m	Agricultural subsoil	
502	Light greyish yellowish clay, degraded shillet and occasional gravel	0.65m+	Natural subsoil	
F503	Linear in plan, aligned N-S, measured 0.6m wide and 0.2m deep with moderately sloping straight sides and narrow concave base	-	Cut of ditch	

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

504	Mid greyish yellow, silty clay with occasional sub-angular pebbles and gravel, common shillet gravel and rare charcoal flecks. . A single medieval pottery sherd recovered	-	Fill of ditch
F505	Linear in plan, aligned E-W, measuring 0.8m wide and 0.3m deep with moderately sloping straight sides and a concave base	-	Cut of ditch
506	Mid greyish-yellow, clay with rare sub-angular quartz pebbles, common shillet gravel and rare charcoal flecks. A single medieval pottery sherd recovered	-	Fill of ditch
507	Mid brown, soft, silty clay-loam	0.45-0.65m	Colluvium

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