

MONKERTON PRIMARY SCHOOL LINK ROAD, CUMBERLAND WAY, EXETER, DEVON

(centred on NGR SX 9621 9365)

Results of archaeological investigations

Devon County Council planning reference
DCC/4004/2017 (condition 6)

Prepared by:
Alex Farnell

On behalf of:
Devon County Council

Report No: ACD1673/2/1

Date: January 2018



archaeology

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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

Archaeological trial trenching was undertaken by AC archaeology during October and November 2017 on land off Cumberland Way, Exeter, Devon (NGR SX 9621 9365). The work comprised the machine-excavation of four trenches positioned to provide a sample coverage of the site. Two further trenches were excavated to record profiles through two hedgebank boundaries that were to be breached. The area had been subject to a previous trench evaluation which recorded negative results.

A single undated ditch was recorded in one of the trenches. The trenches excavated across the hedgebanks exposed consistent profiles of banks flanked by ditches. These were undated but were considered to be of medieval to post-medieval origin.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Archaeological investigations were undertaken during October and November 2017 in advance of groundworks associated with the construction of an access road for a new primary school at Monkerton, on land off Cumberland Way, Exeter, Devon (NGR SX 9621 9365). The work was required as a condition of planning consent (ref DCC/4004/2017) granted by Devon County Council, following consultation with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCCHET).

1.2 The route of the new access road extends west from an existing arm on the Cumberland Way/Tithebarn Lane roundabout towards the site of the proposed new primary school, which incorporates a plot to the north of Hollow Lane (Fig. 1). Its route, which measures approximately 100m in length, crosses through two adjacent pasture plots separated by hedgebanks (Plate 1). The route is positioned across ground that slopes gradually to the north at around 45m aOD (above Ordnance Datum). The underlying solid geology comprises sandstone of the Monkerton Formation (British Geological Survey Online Viewer).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The site lies in an area that has undergone previous archaeological investigations associated with the construction of the Tithebarn Link Road and associated ongoing residential and amenity developments. The route of the new access road itself lies within a wider parcel of land to the west of Cumberland Way that has been subject to a previous geophysical survey (Dean 2013) and trench evaluation (Passmore 2015). This work exposed evidence of former ditch boundaries relating to multi-phase field systems. The earliest of these probably dated to the late prehistoric period. A small enclosure was also investigated and found to be of late medieval or early post-medieval origin, with this representing a possible stock enclosure (*ibid* 2015). As part of this work, three of the trenches lay within the route of the proposed new school access road. All these were negative for archaeological features or deposits

3. AIMS

3.1 The aim of the archaeological investigation was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during groundworks associated with the scheme. This is with particular reference for the potential for prehistoric, Romano-British and medieval activity to be on the site.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** Investigations comprised the machine-excavation of six trenches totaling 58m in length and with each trench 1.8m wide. Trenches 1-4 were positioned to provide a sample coverage of the site in areas not previously tested (Fig. 1). A further two trenches (5 and 6) were excavated to record sections across the two hedgebanks that were to be breached.
- 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 (Plan Fig. 1)

Natural subsoil, which consisted of a mid red silty-clay with common gravel inclusions, was exposed in Trenches 1 to 4 at a depth of between 0.4m and 0.7m below existing levels. This was overlain by up to a 0.5m thick mid reddish-brown sandy-silt loam subsoil beneath a dark reddish-brown topsoil. A single ditch was exposed within Trench 4 and the profiles of the two breached hedgebanks exposed in Trenches 5 and 6. These are described below.

5.2 Trench 4 (Plan Fig. 2a and section 2b; Plates 2-3)

Trench 4 measured 7m long and was excavated onto natural subsoil (context 402), which was present at a depth of 0.44m beneath subsoil (401) and topsoil (400) layers. The trench contained an approximately north to south aligned ditch (F403).

Ditch F403 measured 0.63m wide and 0.27m deep with steeply-sloping sides and a concave base. At its north extent it had a rounded terminal. The ditch contained a mid reddish-yellow clayey-sand fill with rare charcoal fleck inclusions. No finds were recovered.

5.3 Trench 5 (Plan Fig. 1 and section Fig. 2c; Plate 4)

Trench 5 was located across an approximately northwest to southeast aligned hedgebank. Excavation exposed it to be comprised of a central bank with two flanking ditches (F507 and F509). On the southwest side, ditch F509 had been re-cut (F503).

The bank, which measured 0.9m high, was comprised of a lower deposit of re-deposited natural subsoil (506), which sealed the underlying natural subsoil (512). This was then overlain by an upper deposit composed of mid red sandy-clay (505).

The flanking ditches measured between 1m (F507) and 1.65m (F509) wide and approximately 0.2m deep. They were filled with mid reddish-brown silty-sand and mid brown sandy-silt fills respectively (506 and 510). The southwest side of the hedgebank was overlain by an accumulation of mid brown silty-sand (511) which was in turn cut by re-cut F503. This measured 1.2m wide, 0.3m deep and contained a dark reddish-brown silty sand-loam (504). The upper exposed deposits consisted of subsoils (501 and 502) and root-disturbed topsoil (500). No finds were recovered.

5.4 Trench 6 (Plan Fig. 1 and section Fig. 2d; Plate 5)

Trench 6 targeted the east to west hedgebank on the south side of the site. The hedgebank was comprised of a bank flanked by two ditches (F604 and F606) that were cut into the natural subsoil (609). To the south, flanking ditch F604 measured 1m wide and 0.14m deep, and to the north ditch of F606 measured 1.5m wide and 0.2m deep. Both ditches contained similar dark grey to reddish-brown silty-sand fills (605 and 607).

The bank measured 1.2m high, with its basal deposit comprised of re-deposited natural subsoil (608). This was overlain by a mid reddish-brown sandy-silt (603), which extended over the fills of the flanking ditches. This was then sealed by dark reddish-brown sandy-loam agricultural soil layers (601 and 602) which were beneath a loose root mat (600). No finds were recovered.

6. COMMENTS

- 6.1 The results from the trial trenching were largely negative. Ditch F403, which was exposed in Trench 4, represented the only feature in addition to the hedgebanks targeted by Trenches 5 and 6. Elsewhere a simple agricultural soil sequence was exposed that sealed the natural subsoil. These results were therefore generally consistent with those from the previous phase of trial trenching (Passmore 2015).
- 6.2 Ditch F403 was fully excavated but produced no finds. Nevertheless, it did not closely reflect the orientation of the existing field boundaries suggesting its origins may have predated the existing field layout. Furthermore, its leached and mineralized fill composition compared to those present in the hedgebanks may also have indicated a greater age. Results obtained during the previous trial trenching of the wider site exposed evidence for a pre-existing field pattern that was considered to be of prehistoric origin (*ibid* 2015).
- 6.3 The hedgebanks targeted by Trenches 5 and 6 exposed a broadly consistent composition of a bank flanked by ditches. No surviving buried soil was present beneath either of the banks and no finds were recovered. Despite this, based on the field pattern in which they form a part, these are considered to be of late medieval to post-medieval date.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

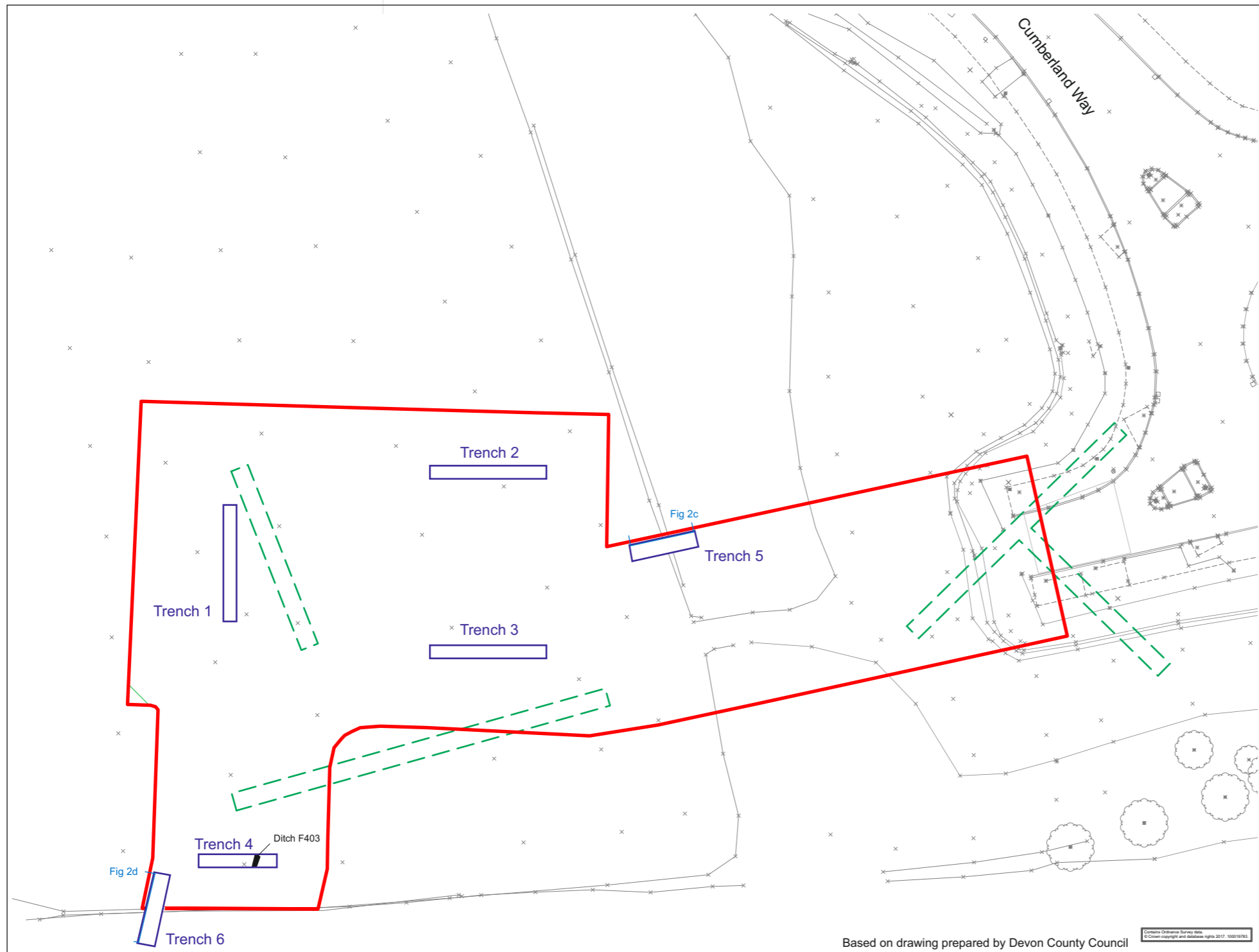
- 7.1 The paper and digital archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ under the unique project code of **ACD1673**. The digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeological Data Service (ADS), if required, in accordance with the ADS standards and guidelines.
- 7.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier **306833** which includes a digital copy of this report.

8. REFERENCES

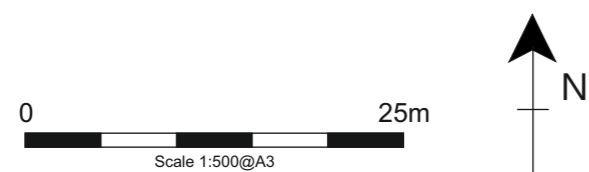
British Geological Survey Online Viewer, www.bgs.ac.uk.

Hughes, S., 2017, *Land off the western arm of Cumberland Way/Tithebarn Lane roundabout, Cumberland Way, Exeter, Devon: Project design for archaeological monitoring and recording*. Unpublished AC archaeology document ref. ACD1673/1/0

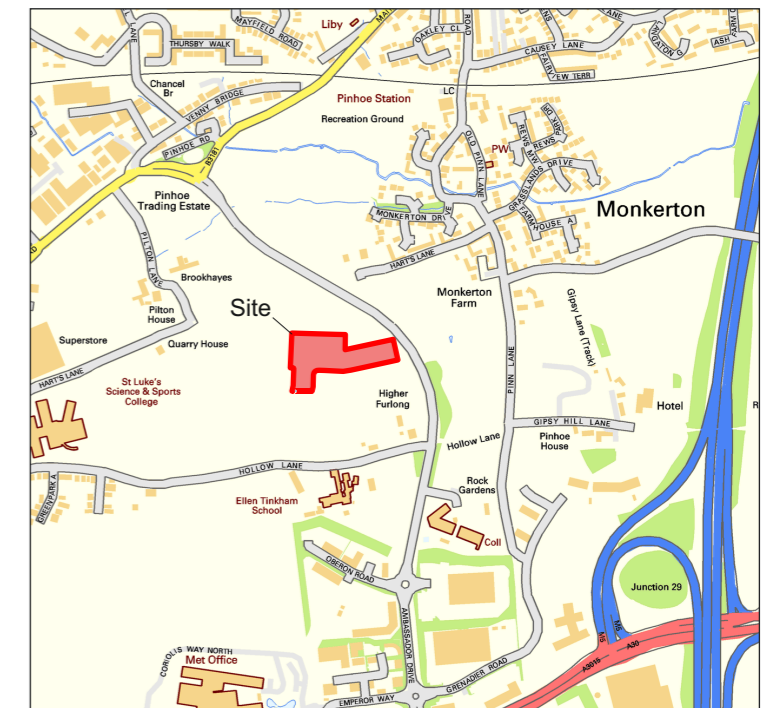
Passmore, A., 2015, *Land to the west of Cumberland Way, Monkerton, Exeter, Devon: Results of a staged programme of archaeological work*. Unpublished AC archaeology report, ref. ACD1073/2/1.



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Devon Ordnance Survey data
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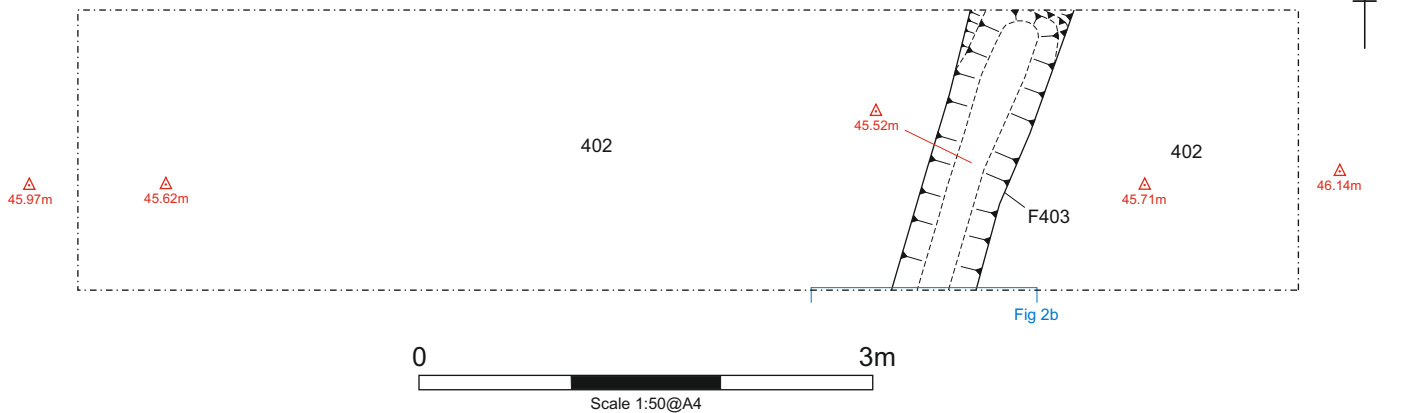
Key	
	Site boundary
	Excavated trench with archaeological feature shown
	Previously excavated trial trench



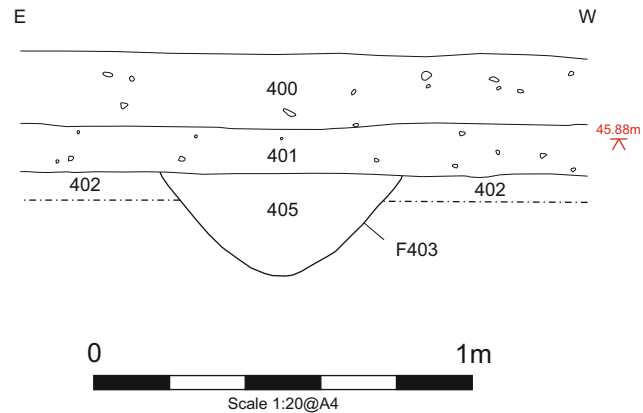
PROJECT
Monkerton Primary School Link Road, Cumberland Way, Exeter
 TITLE
Fig. 1: Location of Site and trench plan with archaeological features shown



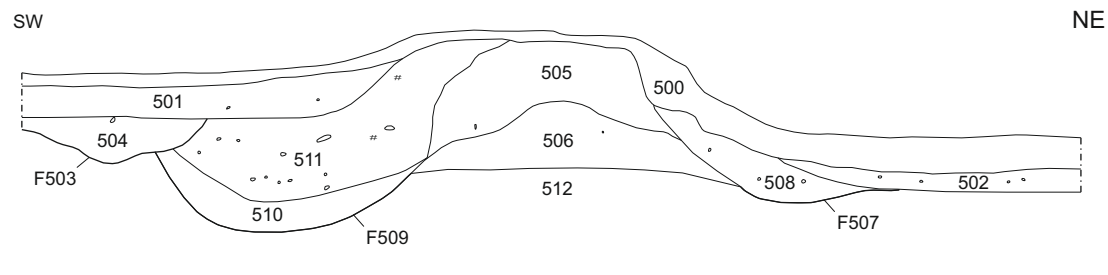
a) Plan of Trench 4



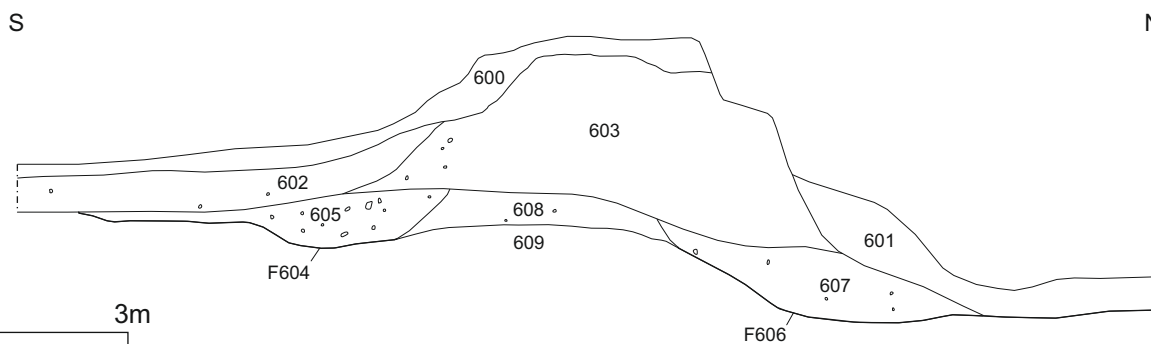
b) Section of ditch F403



c) Trench 5, hedgebank section



d) Trench 6, hedgebank section



PROJECT

Monkerton Primary School Link Road,
Cumberland Way, Exeter

TITLE

Fig. 2: Trench 4 plan and section and
Trenches 5 and 6 sections





Plate 1: General view of site, looking west with Trench 3 in foreground



Plate 2: Trench 4, ditch F403. View to southwest (scale 0.4m)



Plate 3: Trench 4, ditch F403. View to south (scale 0.4m)



Plate 4: Trench 5, hedgebank profile.
View to northeast (scale 1m)



Plate 5: Trench 6, hedgebank profile.
view to southwest (scale 1m)

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