

LAND AT NEW BARN FARM, DARTMOUTH, DEVON

(Centred on NGR SX 8551 5103)

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

South Hams District Council Planning Reference:
3259/18/OPA

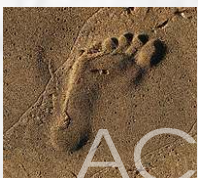
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On behalf of:
Luken Beck

Report No: ACD1976/3/0

Date: July 2019



archaeology

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Client	Luken Beck
Report Number	ACD1976/3/0
Date	25 July 2019
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Report Authors	Chris Caine and Paul Rainbird
Contributions	Naomi Payne
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Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned by Luken Beck on behalf of a client. The site works were carried out by Chris Caine, Lily Andrews and Tom Etheridge. Illustrations for this report were prepared by Sarnia Blackmore.

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 July 2019 on land at New Barn Farm, Dartmouth, Devon (NGR SX 8551 5103). The site lies on the western edge of the town of Dartmouth, to the north of Townstal Road (A31220) and comprises a large area of mixed agricultural land. The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of nine trenches totalling 305m in length, with each trench 1.6m wide. These were positioned to target anomalies and 'blank' areas identified by a previous geophysical survey.

The results of the trench evaluation support the geophysical survey interpretation, in that there are a few buried features of archaeological interest. The most interesting finding from the evaluation is the identification of a probable rectilinear enclosure of Middle to Late Iron Age date, although no evidence for internal associated settlement was present. Other features relate to small scale rural agriculture and industry in the form of a terraced trackway, drainage ditch and quarry pit. The small number of finds recovered comprise a small number of Middle to Late Iron Age pottery sherds from the enclosure ditch, one piece of prehistoric worked flint and two conjoining pieces of modern oven or furnace lining.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during July 2019 on land at New Barn Farm, Dartmouth, Devon (NGR SX 8551 5103; Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Luken Beck on behalf of a client and required by South Hams District Council, following consultation with the Archaeology Officer, Devon County Council Historic Environment Team.
- 1.2** The site is located within four agricultural fields on the western edge of the town of Dartmouth and to the north of Townstal Road (A3122). It comprises an area of 4.5 hectares that lies between 93m and 139m aOD (above Ordnance Datum). The site is bounded by New Barn Farm and its associated access track to the north and northwest, agricultural land to the east and by Townstal Road to the south (Plates 1 and 2). The land slopes down steeply to the north and sits at the head of a coombe containing a stream which falls to Old Mill Creek and is a minor tributary of the River Dart. The underlying solid geology comprises mudstone, siltstone, limestone and sandstone of the Bovisand Formation, a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 393 to 411 million years ago in the Devonian Period when the local environment was dominated by shallow seas. There are no superficial deposits recorded within the site (British Geological Survey 2019).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** There are currently no records within the proposed development site on the Devon Historic Environment Record, although it is situated in a landscape in which there is increasing evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British settlement and associated field systems, including directly opposite the site at Great Cotton Farm on the south side of Townstal Road (Bampton and Walls 2013).
- 2.2** A recent geophysical survey of the site (Edwards 2019) has highlighted the potential for archaeological deposits to be present within the site (Fig. 1). Of possible interest was thought to be a sub-rectilinear anomaly (anomaly 12 on Fig. 1) that may represent an enclosure of prehistoric date, with further internal anomalies that could be contemporary features. Elsewhere, a small number of anomalies may relate to possible kilns/burning as well as a former trackway. The remaining anomalies are

likely to represent former field boundaries, as well as those of uncertain archaeological origin.

3. AIMS

- 3.1** The aim of the work 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 anomalies identified by the geophysical survey, as well as late prehistoric and Romano-British occupation. The results from this work, as set out in this report, will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent mitigation and whether or not the significance and state of survival of any buried archaeological remains is great enough to influence the layout of the proposed development should planning consent be obtained.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2019) and with reference to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' document, *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* (revised December 2014). It comprised the machine-excavation of nine trenches totalling 305m in length, with each 1.6m wide. These were positioned to target anomalies interpreted from the previous geophysical survey, as well as areas thought to be 'blank' (Fig. 1).

- 4.2** All trenches were located with a Leica Netrover 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 exposed 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

Five of the nine trenches contained archaeological features (Trenches 2, 5, 6, 7 and 8). The trenches containing archaeological features are described in detail below, with context descriptions for all trenches presented in tabulated form in Appendix 1.

The natural subsoil was present at a depth of between 0.45m and 0.52m below the current ground surface and, across the site, comprised largely of a mid brownish-yellow silty clay. The natural subsoil was overlain by a mid yellowish-brown silty clay loam subsoil and this was sealed by a mid brown silty clay loam topsoil.

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

This trench was located central to the site and was positioned to target the possible enclosure and a possible ferrous object interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. The trench was T-shaped, aligned northwest to southeast and northeast to southwest and was a total of 40m long. The overlying layer sequence consisted of 0.26m of topsoil (context 200), overlying 0.21m of agricultural subsoil (201). The natural subsoil (202) was therefore present at 0.47m below the ground

surface. The trench contained three linear features (F203, F206 and 208). F203 and 208 appear to correspond with the enclosure.

Ditch F203

This was aligned northwest to southeast and measured 1.12m wide by 0.62m deep, with moderately sloping straight sides and a concave base (Fig. 2b; Plate 4). It contained two fills, with basal fill 204 composed of mid brown silty clay loam and this was overlain by upper fill 205, which was composed of mid yellowish-brown silty clay loam. Basal fill 204 contained six sherds of pottery dated to the Middle to Late Iron Age.

Terrace F206

This comprised a linear break of slope and levelled area aligned northwest to southeast, which was 2.96m wide by 0.28m deep with a shallowly sloping straight side and a flat base (Fig. 2b). It had a single fill (207) composed of mid yellowish-brown silty clay loam which contained no finds.

Ditch 208

This was not excavated but corresponded with the western side of the enclosure and was aligned northeast to southwest and measured 1.78m wide.

5.3 Trench 5 (Detailed plan Fig. 3a and section Fig. 3b; Plate 5)

This trench was located in the southwestern part of the site and was positioned to target several small irregular discrete geophysical anomalies. The trench was aligned approximately northeast to southwest and was 30m long. The overlying layer sequence consisted of 0.36m of topsoil (context 500), overlying 0.09m of subsoil (501). The natural subsoil (502) was therefore present at 0.45m below the ground surface. The trench contained one linear feature (F503), which possibly related to one of the geophysical anomalies.

Gully F503

This was a slightly curving linear feature aligned roughly northwest to southeast and measuring 0.50m wide by 0.24m deep, with a steeply sloping straight southwestern side, a moderately sloping stepped northeastern side and a concave base (Fig. 3b; Plate 5). It had a single fill (504) composed of dark yellowish-brown silty loam and contained no finds.

5.4 Trench 6 (Detailed plan Fig. 4a and section Fig. 4b; Plate 6)

This trench was located central to the site and was positioned to target the enclosure interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. The trench was aligned approximately northwest to southeast and was 50m long. The overlying layer sequence consisted of 0.35m of topsoil (context 600), overlying 0.11m of subsoil (601). The natural subsoil (602) was therefore present at 0.46m below the ground surface. The trench contained a single linear feature (F603) which corresponded with the western edge of the enclosure.

Ditch F603

This was aligned approximately northeast to southwest and measured 1.58m wide by 0.47m deep, with a moderately sloping southeast side and stepped northwest side with a concave base (Fig. 4b; Plate 6). It had a single fill (604) composed of mid yellowish-brown silty loam and contained no finds.

5.5 Trench 7 (Detailed plan Fig. 5a and section Fig. 5b; Plate 7)

This trench was located central to the site and was positioned to target a number of short east to west trending linear anomalies interpreted from the results of the

geophysical survey. The trench was aligned roughly north to south and was 25m long. The overlying layer sequence consisted of 0.26m of topsoil (context 700), overlying 0.21m of subsoil (701). The natural subsoil (702) was therefore present at 0.47m below the ground surface. The trench contained a single linear feature (F703) corresponding with the position of a group of linear anomalies.

Terrace F703

This was a linear feature aligned northwest to southeast and measured 2.80m wide by 0.22m deep, with shallowly sloping straight sides and a flat base (Fig. 5b). It had a single fill (704) composed of mid yellowish-brown silty clay loam which contained no finds.

5.6 Trench 8 (Detailed plan Fig. 6a and sections Figs 6b-c)

This trench was located in the eastern part of the site and positioned to target a discrete area of possible burning as interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. The trench was aligned northeast to southwest and was 50m long. The overlying layer sequence consisted of 0.32m of topsoil (context 800), overlying 0.20m of subsoil (801). The natural subsoil (802) was therefore present at 0.52m below the ground surface. The trench contained three discrete features (F803, 806 and 807) and F803 corresponded with the position of the anomaly identified by the geophysical survey.

Quarry pit F803

This was not fully exposed in the trench and measured 7.75m long, 1.6m wide and 0.81m deep, with irregularly sloping sides to a largely flat base, but appeared to have been dug deeper to a broad V-shape in the southeast (Figs 6b-c). It contained two fills, with the basal fill (804) composed of light grey silty clay which was overlain by upper fill 805 that was composed of mid brown clay loam. Upper fill 805 contained two conjoining fragments of oven or furnace lining and one piece of prehistoric worked flint which should be considered residual in this context.

Heat-affected natural 806 and 807

Two patches of heat-affected natural were observed to the southwest of pit F803. 806 was irregular in plan and measured 1.1m long by 0.65m wide. 807 was also irregular in plan, but was smaller, measuring 0.24m long by 0.18m wide.

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. The collection of finds is summarised in Table 1.

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

Context	Context Description	Lithics		Prehistoric pottery		Oven or furnace lining	
		No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt
204	Basal fill of enclosure ditch F203			6	21		
805	Fill of quarry pit F803	1	11			2	116
Totals		1	11	6	21	2	116

6.2 Lithics

A single worked flint (11g) was recovered from context 805, fill of quarry pit F803. This is an incomplete secondary flake with pebble cortex on the dorsal surface. It is likely to be of Neolithic or Early Bronze Age date.

6.3 Prehistoric pottery

Six sherds (21g) of prehistoric pottery were recovered from context 204, fill of enclosure ditch F203. All of the sherds are body sherds. One sherd has an incised horizontal line; this and the sherds' general character suggest they are South-West Decorated ware and are therefore Middle to Late Iron Age in date. All of the sherds have patches of residue on one or both surfaces.

6.4 Oven or furnace lining

Two conjoining fragments (116g) of oven or furnace lining were recovered from context 805, fill of quarry pit F803. The fragments have one smooth surface, which is vitrified. The high degree of vitrification suggests a relatively recent date, however there is no other dating evidence from this feature.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The evaluation has established that the results interpreted from the geophysical survey were generally accurate, with corresponding archaeological features exposed in the majority of the targeted locations. The most interesting finding was the confirmation of a probable Iron Age enclosure which corresponded with ditches F203, 208 and F603 in Trenches 2 and 6. The remaining features may be accounted for as relating to agricultural and other rural activities such as quarrying.

7.2 It is notable that the probable enclosure sits on gently sloping ground before it drops off steeply to the north. The north side follows the contour at the top of the steep slope. The pottery from the basal fill of ditch F203 indicates a Middle to Late Iron Age date for the enclosure. The extensive evaluation trenching at Great Cotton Farm, on the opposite side of the road to the south, failed to record features of this period, although two early phases of field pattern were given Bronze Age and Romano-British dates (Bampton and Walls 2013). Given that the east and south sides of the probable enclosure have not been defined, the possibility must remain that the ditches are part of a field system, rather than defining an enclosure, and this would be supported by the lack of features internal to the 'enclosure' in Trenches 2 and 6. However, there must be a strong possibility that the current field boundaries to the east and south are in close proximity to the missing sides which would make a rectilinear enclosure measuring approximately 70m by 40m, encompassing an area of 0.28 hectares. Square and rectilinear enclosures are typical of rural settlement sites dated to the later Iron Age and Romano-British periods in Devon (Brindle 2016, 345-6).

7.3 The broad level 'terraces' (F206 and F703) in Trenches 2 and 7 are likely to be part of the same feature and probably represent a slightly hollowed trackway, as they are aligned on either side of a gateway between the current fields and probably represent a route for farm transport and animals historically. The Devon County Council (DCC) Historic Landscape Characterisation of the fields within the site interprets them as 'Barton fields - These relatively large, regular enclosures seem likely to have been laid out between C15th-C18th. Some curving boundaries may be following earlier divisions in the pre-existing medieval fields' (DCC 2019).

7.4 The alignment of the possible trackway represented by F206 and F703 leads in a southeasterly direction to quarry pit F803. Quarrying is clearly an activity that has

occurred in the area historically, as the field containing Trenches 1 and 2 is listed as 'Quarry Field' in the Dartmouth (Townstal) tithe apportionment of 1840 and a quarry is marked on the 1880s first-edition Ordnance Survey map immediately to the north of New Barn Farm (DCC Historic Environment Record ref. MDV74881). Some small evidence of burning represented by patches of heat-affected natural to the south of the quarry pit is unlikely to be related to the oven/furnace lining found in the quarry pit, as this was heavily vitrified suggesting a very high temperature process. The small patches of heat-affected ground are more probably the result of localised bonfires.

- 7.5 The remaining feature is small gully F503 in Trench 5. This probably represents an agricultural drainage feature.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The identification of a probable rectilinear enclosure of Middle to Late Iron Age date provides a further chronological phase to the later prehistoric and Romano-British archaeology which is emerging as a busy local landscape thanks to the previous evaluation trenching undertaken at adjacent Great Cotton Farm to the south. As with the remains there, the buried archaeology has clearly been affected by subsequent ploughing over the years.

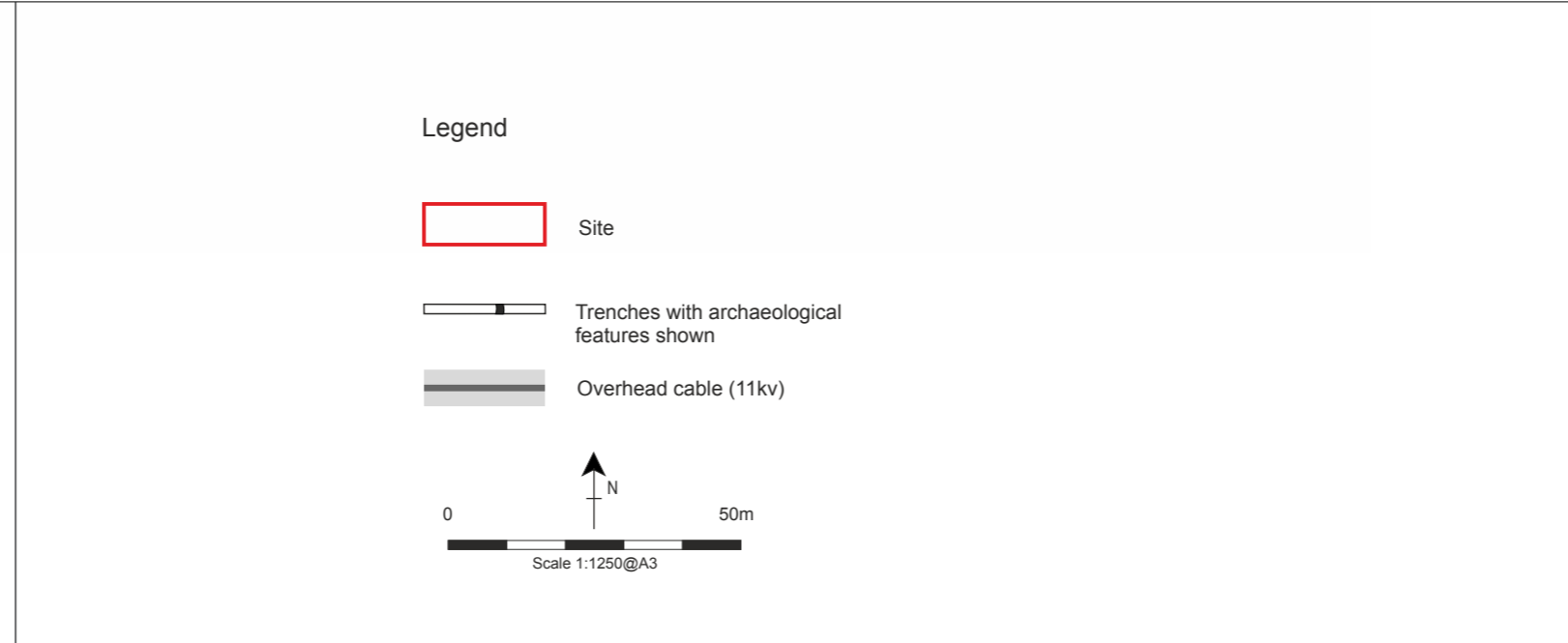
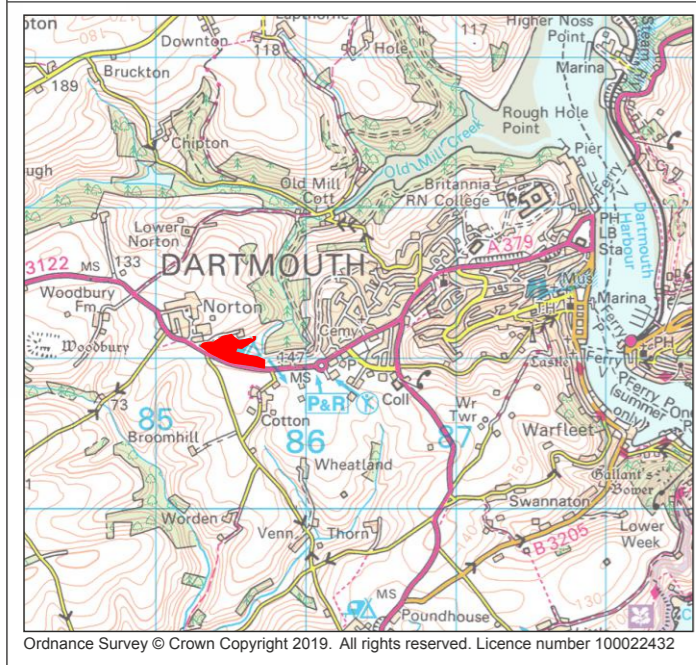
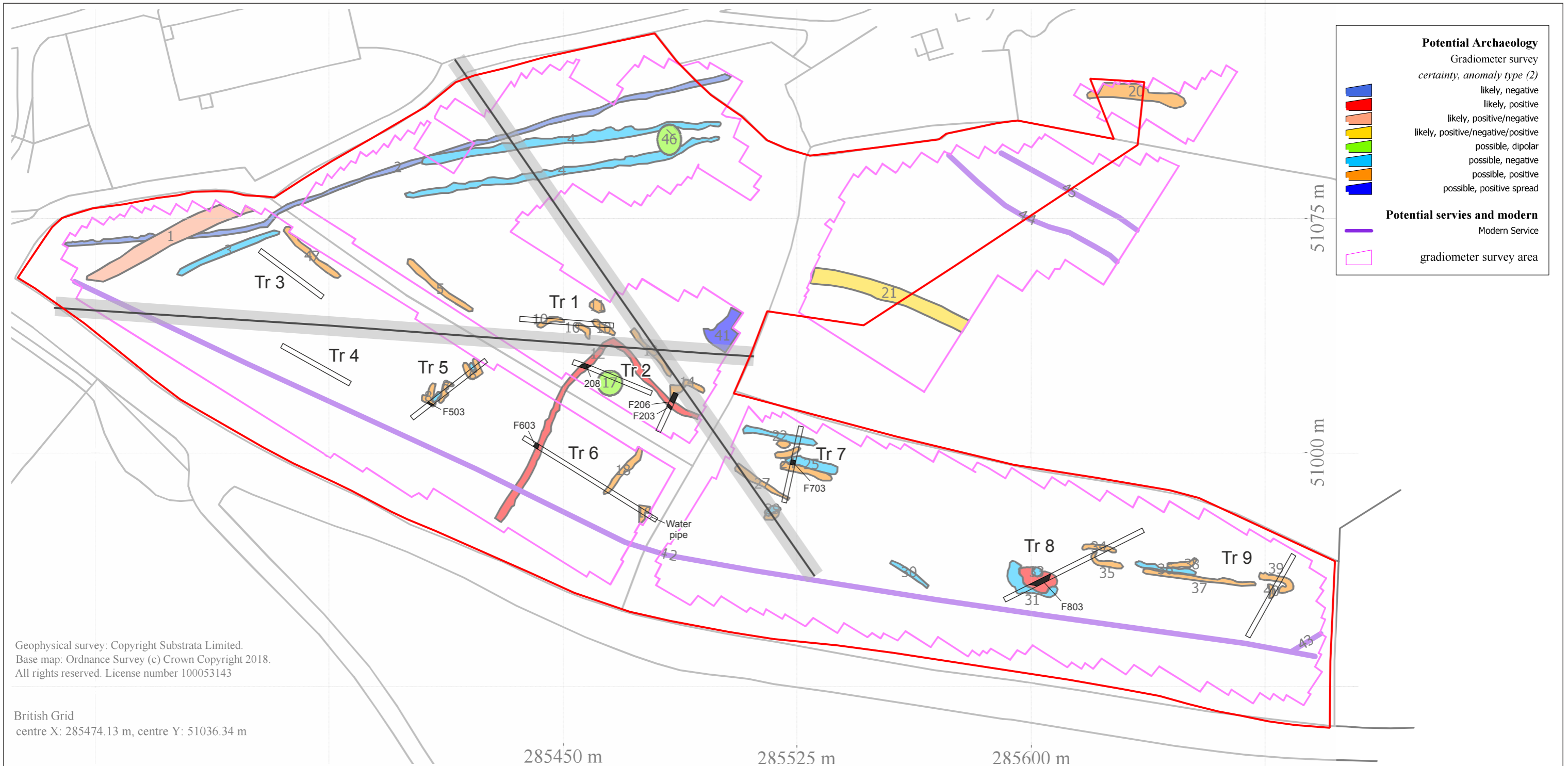
9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 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 **ACD1976**. It will be held until the need for any further archaeological work on the site is established. On completion of all archaeological work the finds and paper archive will be offered to Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. Also at this stage, if required a digital archive will be compiled in accordance with the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) standards, guidelines and the *AC archaeology Data Management Plan for Digital Archives* (Coles 2018).

- 9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed, using the unique identifier **355865** which includes a digital copy of this report.

10. REFERENCES

- Bampton, J. and Walls, S., 2013, *Great Cotton Farm, Dartmouth, Devon. Results of an Archaeological Evaluation*. South West Archaeology Ltd Report No. **130502**.
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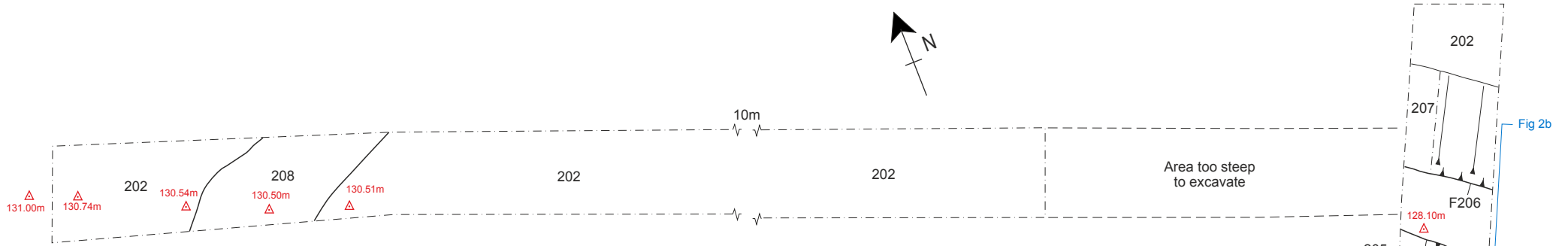
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 Fig. 1: Location of site and evaluation trenches,
 with archaeological features shown in relation to
 the geophysics interpretation

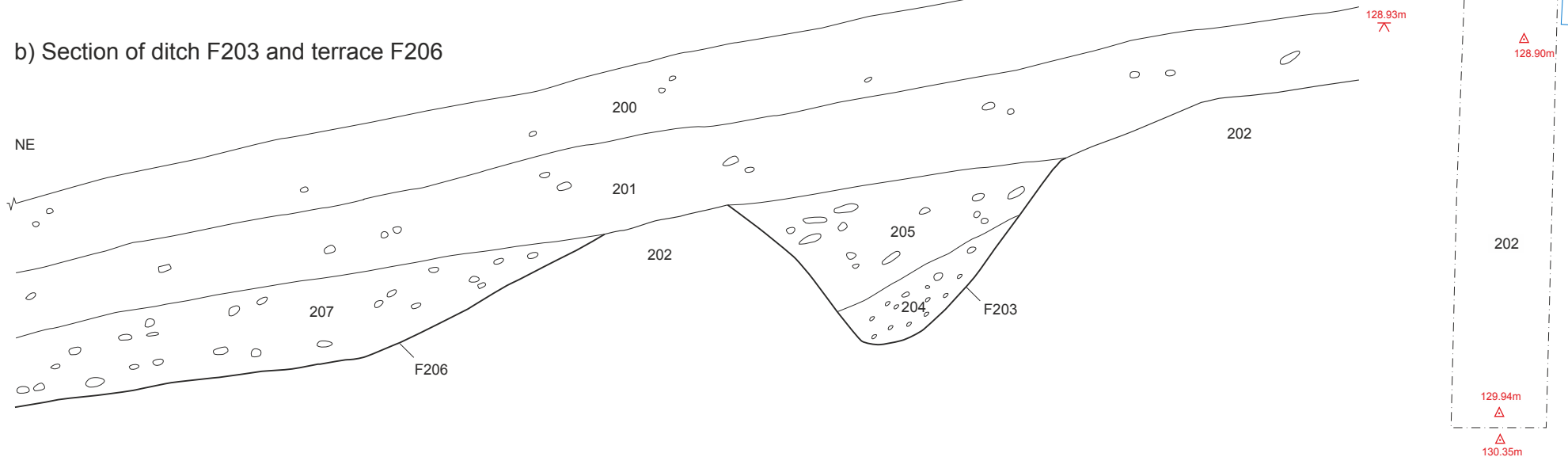
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a) Trench 2, plan



b) Section of ditch F203 and terrace F206



0 Plan 5m

Scale 1:100@A4

0 Section 1m

Scale 1:20@A4

Key to all figures

Stones

Charcoal

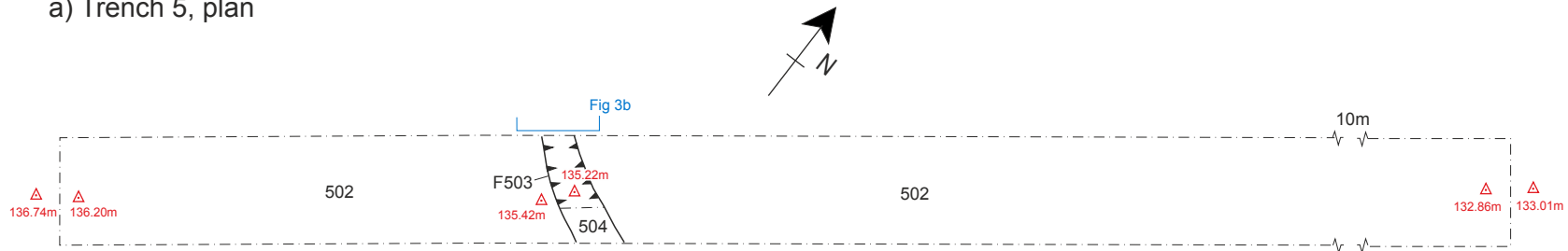
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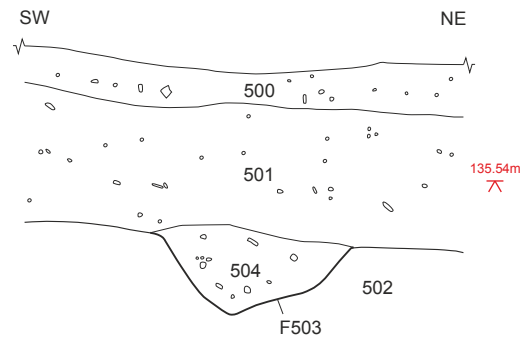
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Fig. 2: Trench 2, plan and section

a) Trench 5, plan



b) Section of gully F503



0 Plan 5m

Scale 1:100@A4

0 Section 1m

Scale 1:20@A4

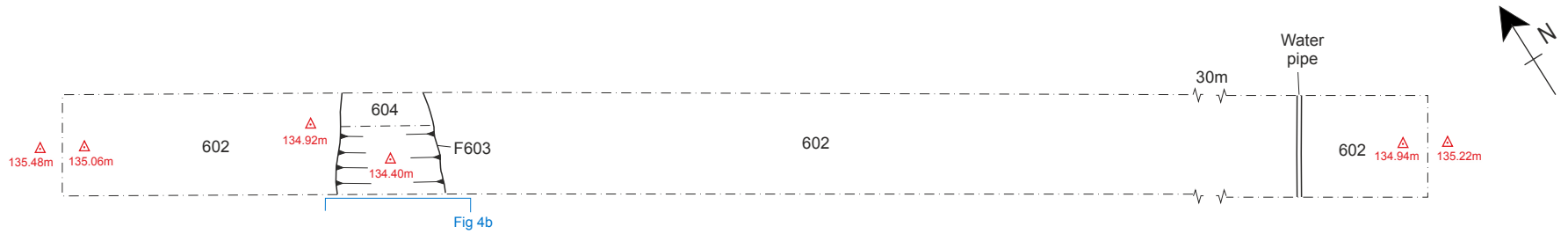
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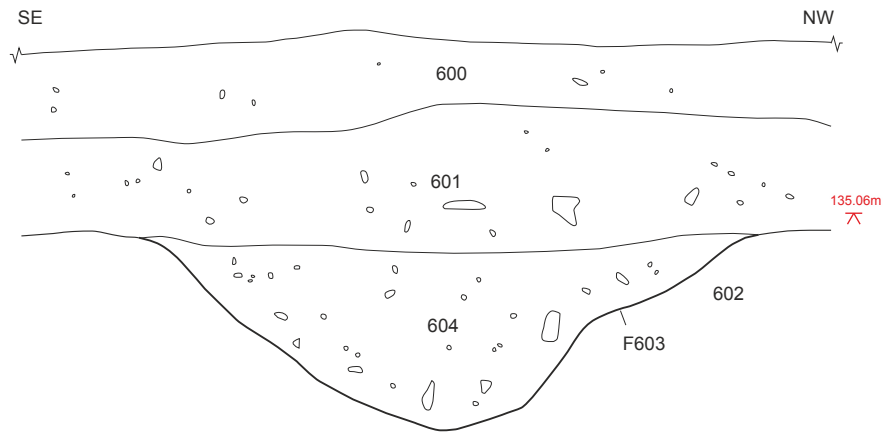
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Fig. 3: Trench 5, plan and section

a) Trench 6, plan



b) Section of ditch F603



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0 Section 1m

Scale 1:20@A4

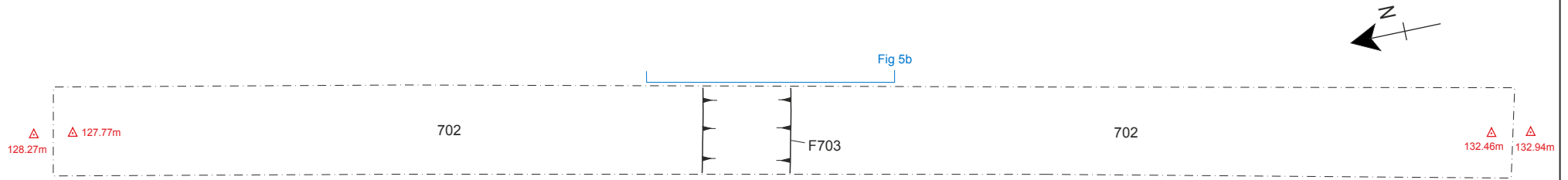
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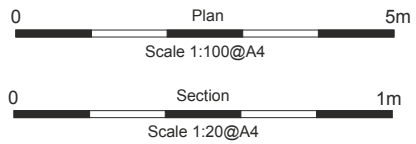
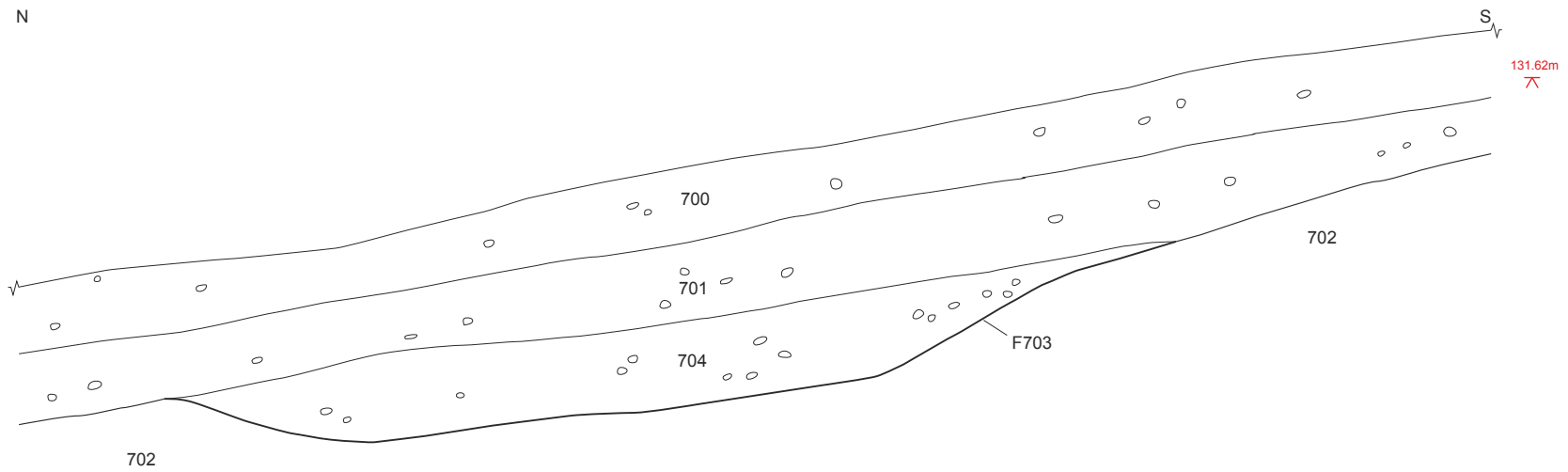
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Fig. 4: Trench 6, plan and section

a) Trench 7, plan



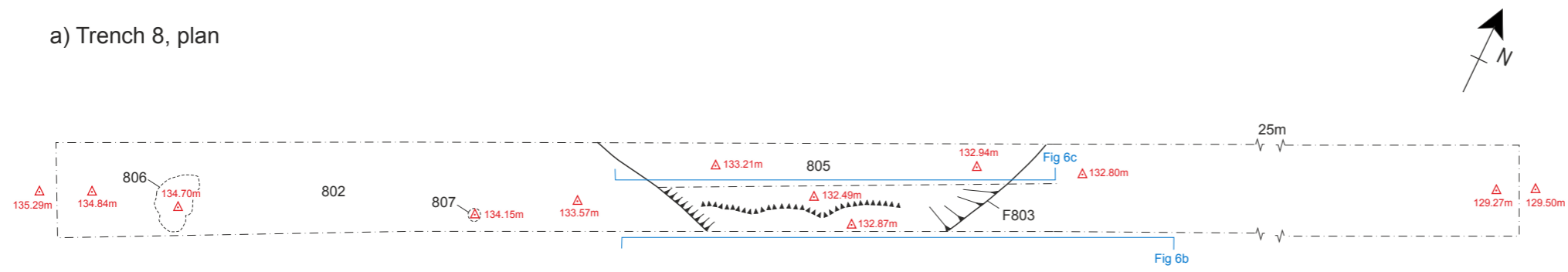
b) Section of terrace F703



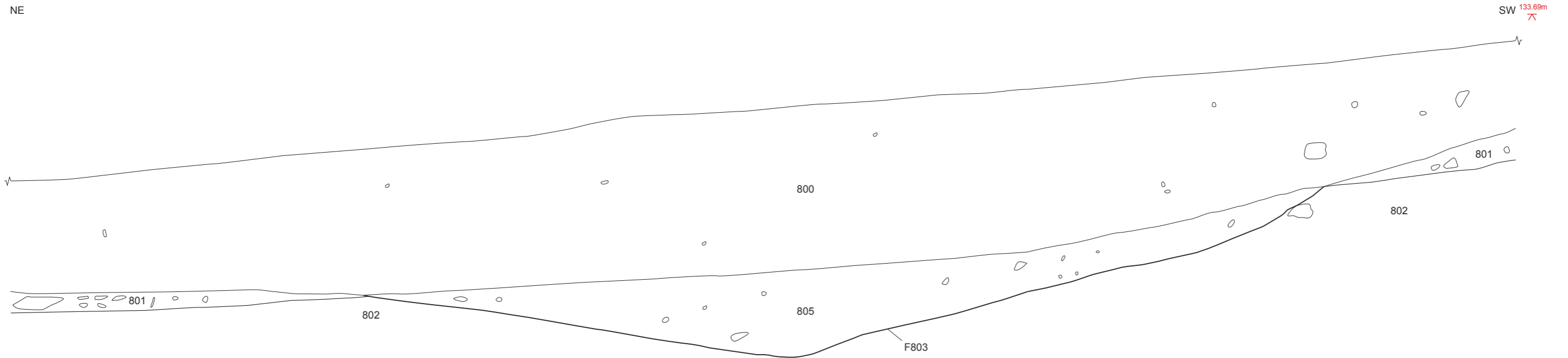
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Land at New Barn Farm, Townstal Road,
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TITLE
Fig. 5: Trench 7, plan and section

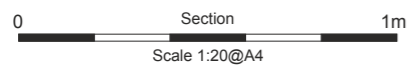
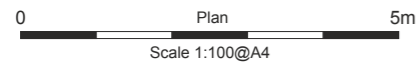
a) Trench 8, plan



b) Section of quarry pit F803



c) Section of quarry pit F803



PROJECT
Land at New Barn Farm, Townstal Road,
Dartmouth, Devon

TITLE
Fig. 6: Trench 8, plan and sections





Plate 1: General view looking southeast from the area of the site to the northwest of Trench 1 towards Trenches 8 and 9



Plate 2: General view of the site looking northwest, with Trench 9 in the foreground and New Barn Farm at the base of the hill, bottom right



Plate 3: Trench 2, looking northeast (1m scale)



Plate 4: Trench 2, ditch F203, looking east (1m scale)



Plate 5: Trench 5, gully F503, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 6: Trench 6, ditch F603, looking southwest (1m scale)



Plate 7: Trench 7, looking north (1m scale)

Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trench



APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		Length	Width	Alignment
		30m	1.6m	E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
100	Mid brown, friable, silty clay loam	0-0.28m	Topsoil	
101	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.28-0.46m	Agricultural subsoil	
102	Mid brownish-yellow, friable, silty clay	0.46m+	Natural	

Trench 2		Length	Width	Alignment
		27m 13m	1.6m	NW-SE NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
200	Mid brown, friable, silty clay loam	0-0.26m	Topsoil	
201	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.26-0.47m	Agricultural subsoil	
202	Mid brownish-yellow, friable, silty clay	0.47m+	Natural	
F203	Linear feature, moderately sloping straight sides, concave base	0.47-1.09m	Enclosure ditch	
204	Mid brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.66-1.09m	Basal fill of F203	
205	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.47-1.04m	Upper fill of F203	
F206	Linear feature, shallowly sloping straight side, sloping base	0.47-0.75m	Terrace or lynchet	
207	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.47-0.75m	Fill of F206	
208	Linear feature unexcavated, same as F203	-	Enclosure ditch	

Trench 3		Length	Width	Alignment
		25m	1.6m	NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
300	Mid brown, friable, silty clay loam	0-0.40m	Topsoil	
301	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.40-0.48m	Agricultural subsoil	
302	Mid brownish-yellow, friable, silty clay	0.48m+	Natural	

Trench 4		Length	Width	Alignment
		25m	2m	NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
400	Mid brown, friable, silty clay loam	0-0.30m	Topsoil	
401	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.30-0.50m	Agricultural subsoil	
402	Mid brownish-yellow, friable, silty clay	0.50m+	Natural	

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 5		Length	Width	Alignment
		30m	1.6m	NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
500	Mid brown, friable, silty clay loam	0-0.36m	Topsoil	
501	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.36-0.45m	Agricultural subsoil	
502	Mid brownish-yellow, friable, silty clay	0.45m+	Natural	
F503	Curvilinear feature, steeply sloping straight SW side, moderately sloping stepped NE side	0.45-0.69m	Gully	
504	Dark yellowish-brown, friable, silty loam	0.45-0.69m	Fill of F503	

Trench 6		Length	Width	Alignment
		50m	1.6m	NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
600	Mid brown, friable, silty clay loam	0-0.35m	Topsoil	
601	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.35-0.46m	Agricultural subsoil	
602	Mid brownish-yellow, friable, silty clay	0.46m+	Natural	
F603	Linear feature, moderately sloping straight SE side, moderately sloping stepped NW side	0.46-0.93m	Enclosure ditch	
604	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty loam	0.46-0.93m	Fill of F603	

Trench 7		Length	Width	Alignment
		25m	1.6m	N-S
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
700	Mid brown, friable, silty clay loam	0-0.26m	Topsoil	
701	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.26-0.47m	Agricultural subsoil	
702	Mid brownish-yellow, friable, silty clay	0.47m+	Natural	
F703	Linear feature, shallowly sloping straight side, sloping base	0.47-0.69m	Terrace or lynchet	
704	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.47-0.69m	Fill of F703	

Trench 8		Length	Width	Alignment
		50m	1.6m	NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
800	Mid brown, friable, silty clay loam	0-0.32m	Topsoil	
801	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.32-0.52m	Agricultural subsoil	
802	Mid brownish-yellow, friable, silty clay	0.52m+	Natural	
F803	Sub-circular discrete feature, irregularly sloping irregular sides, flat base	0.52-1.31m	Terrace cut / quarry pit	
804	Light grey, compact, silty clay	1.21-1.31m	Fill of F803	
805	Mid brown, firm, clay loam	0.52-1.21m	Fill of F803	
F806	Sub-oval discrete feature	-	Heat affected natural	
F807	Sub-circular discrete feature	-	Heat affected natural	

APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 9		Length	Width	Alignment
		30m	1.6m	NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation	
900	Mid brown, friable, silty clay loam	0-0.27m	Topsoil	
901	Mid yellowish-brown, friable, silty clay loam	0.27-0.35m	Agricultural subsoil	
902	Mid brownish-yellow, friable, silty clay	0.35m+	Natural	

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