

LAND AT PITT FARM, MUXBEARE LANE, WILLAND, DEVON

(Centred on NGR ST 04436 1 2250)

Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

Mid Devon District Council Planning Reference:
19/01513/FULL

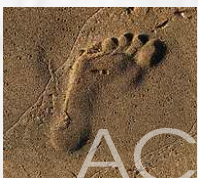
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On behalf of:
XL Planning

Report No: ACD2142/2/0

Date: October 2019



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

An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during October 2019 on land at Pitt Farm, Willand, Devon (NGR ST 04436 12250). The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of five trenches totalling 50m in length, with each 1.5m wide. The main archaeological interest in the site is that it is located in a general area where evidence for late prehistoric and Romano-British archaeology has been recorded.

The evaluation produced low level results with one probable pit and one field boundary or drainage ditch uncovered. A single find comprised a prehistoric worked flint recovered from the topsoil.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land at Pitt Farm, Willand, Devon (NGR ST 04436 12250), was undertaken by AC archaeology during October 2019. The evaluation was required as supporting information for a planning application to Mid Devon District Council, following consultation with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team. The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was commissioned by XL Planning on behalf of a client.
- 1.3 The site is located on the north side of Willand and currently comprises a single agricultural building surrounded by agricultural land (Plates 1 and 2). It lies on generally level ground at around 98m aOD (above Ordnance Datum), with the underlying solid geology comprising mudstone of the Aylesbeare Mudstone Group (British Geological Survey Online Viewer 2019).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The main archaeological interest in the site is that it is located in a general area where evidence for late prehistoric and Romano-British archaeology has been recorded. To the south of the site is a single-ditched and square settlement-type enclosure recorded from aerial photography (Devon Historic Environment Record [HER] ref. MDV40089), while a geophysical survey at Langlands Farm to the southwest identified a ring ditch perhaps relating to a ploughed-out Bronze Age burial mound (EDV5907). In this location a prehistoric flint artefact scatter is also recorded (MDV106167).
- 2.2 The field in which the site is located was of a similar shape and size on the Halberton tithe map of 1838 where it was plot no. 2336 and part of Pitt Farm. It was recorded as 'Horse Piece' and in arable use in the accompanying tithe apportionment of 1840.

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 present. This was with particular reference for evidence for late prehistoric or Romano-British buried archaeology. The results of the work, as set out in this report, will be used to inform any further archaeological work on the site if required.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* (revised December 2014). It comprised the machine-excavation of five trenches totalling 50m in length, with each 1.5m wide. Trenches were positioned on the footprint of where new hardstanding will be placed (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 the 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 or 1:20, while all site levels relate to Ordnance Datum (OD).

5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Trenches 4 and 5 contained archaeological features and are described in more detail below, while tabulated context descriptions for all trenches are provided in Appendix 1. Context numbers are prefixed by the relevant trench number (e.g. 100 for Trench 1, 500 for Trench 5 etc.).

- 5.2 Natural subsoil, which comprised mid reddish brown sandy clay with frequent gravel, was exposed at a depth of between 0.45m to 0.65m. The natural subsoil was overlain by topsoil 0.3 to 0.45m in thickness, and a subsoil between 0.15m and 0.25m thick.

5.3 Trench 4 (*Detailed plan Fig. 2a and sections Figs 2b-c*)

This trench was located in the northwest corner of the site and was positioned to provide sample coverage of the area. In the centre of the trench a post-medieval/modern field drain (F405) was exposed cutting a probable pit (F403).

5.4 Probable pit F403

This was sub-circular in plan measuring >1.65m long by >0.83m wide by 0.32m deep, with a steep stepped side and a flat base. It was only partially revealed in the trench and was cut by land drain F405. It had a single fill (404) composed of dark brown silty loam. No finds were recovered.

5.5 Trench 5 (*Detailed plan Fig. 2d and section Fig. 2e*)

This trench was located in the centre of the site and was positioned to provide sample coverage of the area. A single linear feature (F503) was exposed.

5.6 Ditch F503

This was aligned northwest-southeast measuring 1m wide by 0.4m deep, with moderately steep sides and flat base. It was cut from the level of subsoil (501). It had a single fill (504) composed of mid yellowish greyish brown clayey silt. No finds were recovered.

6. NOTE ON THE FIND *by Naomi Payne*

- 6.1 A single worked flint (6g) was recovered from the topsoil (400) in Trench 4. This is a tertiary flake made from medium grey flint with some lighter patches. At the distal end there is a hinge fracture, and this edge has been lightly retouched to form a scraper. There is damage to both lateral edges.

7. COMMENTS

- 7.1 The results of the evaluation may be considered low level with only two features identified. These comprised a ditch and a probable pit.
- 7.2 The only find was a piece of prehistoric worked flint. This came from topsoil in Trench 4 and may have been introduced to the site through manuring or represent general use of the area in prehistory. A small assemblage of flints comprising three flint flakes broadly dating to the prehistoric period, and a flint end scraper of Neolithic to Early Bronze Age date was recovered from topsoil during an archaeological watching brief approximately 300m to the south of the site (Devon HER ref. MDV106167).
- 7.3 A large probable pit (F403) was only partially revealed within Trench 4. It contained no finds and predated a late post-medieval or modern land drain by which it was cut. This could be a former extraction pit for stone or clay to be used on Pitt Farm. Two extraction pits have been recorded from aerial photographic evidence in the field to the north of the site (Devon HER ref. MDV108925).
- 7.4 Ditch F503 in Trench 5 matches the alignment of the extant field boundary to the northeast. It probably represents the line of a former field boundary. It does not appear on the Halberton tithe map of 1838 and must have been removed prior to this date. The Devon Historic Landscape Characterisation records the field within which the site is located as being part of a large area of 'medieval enclosures based on strip fields' (DCC 2019). If this is the case, then field boundaries will have been removed to create the current field pattern and, given that the ditch was cut from the level of subsoil, this may be a late post-medieval reworking of a field boundary ditch which may have maintained a boundary line that originated in a medieval field pattern.
- 7.5 Based on the results it is unlikely that the site contains evidence for early settlement. Only a single prehistoric worked flint flake was recovered.

8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 8.1 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 **ACD2142**. It will be held until it is known if any further archaeological work on the site is required. On completion of all archaeological work the finds and paper archive will be offered to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), Exeter under temporary reference number **RAMM: 19/45**. 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).
- 8.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed using the unique identifier **368873**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

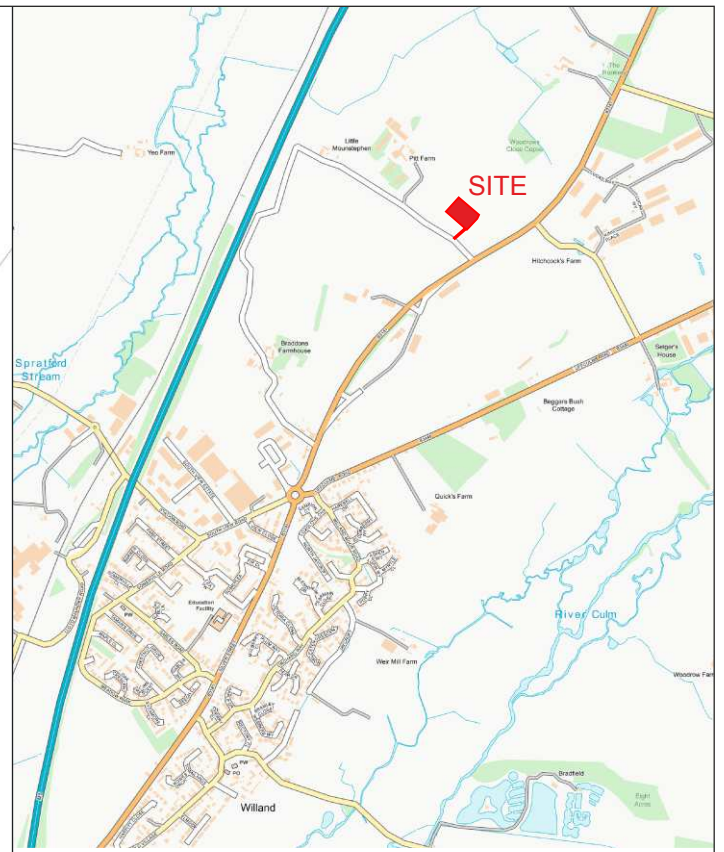
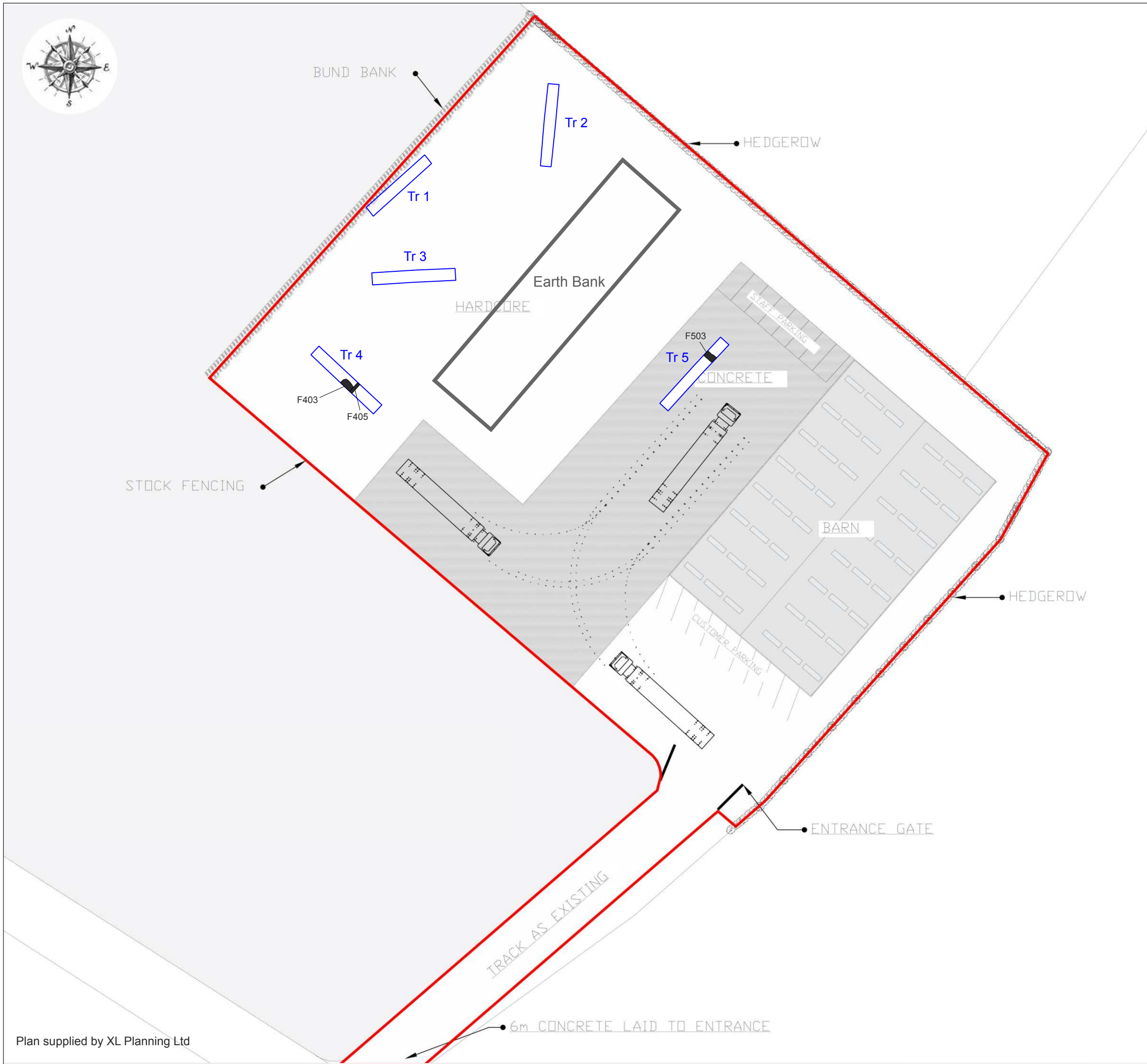
9. REFERENCES

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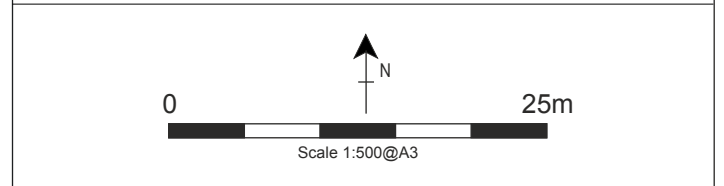
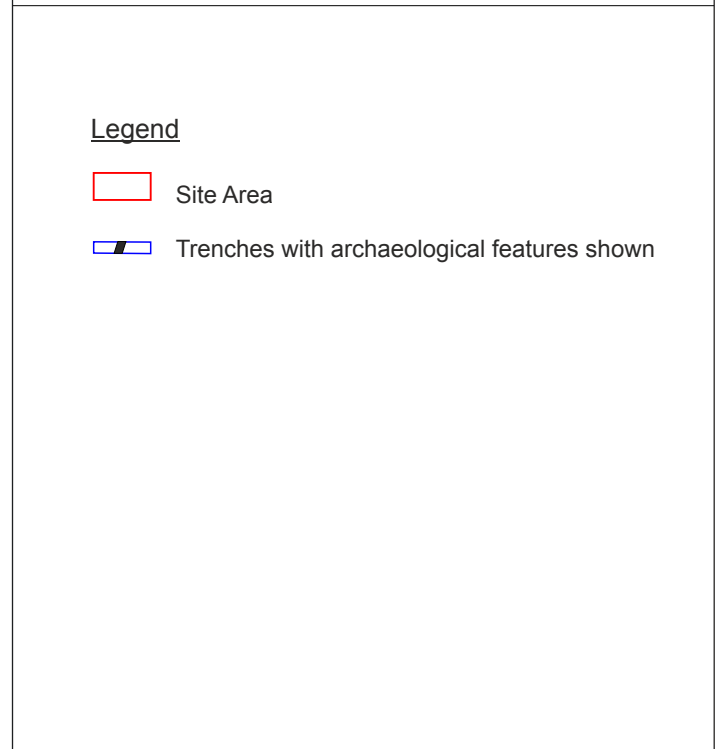
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PROJECT  AC archaeology

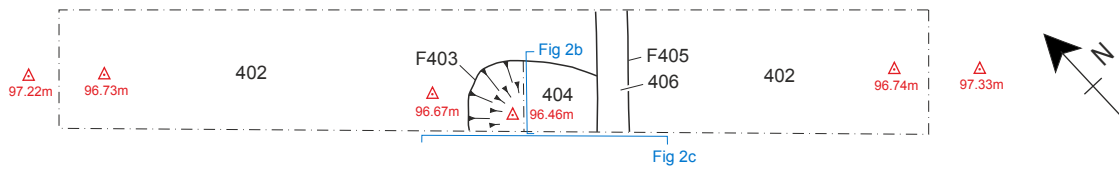
Land at Pitt Farm, Willand, Devon

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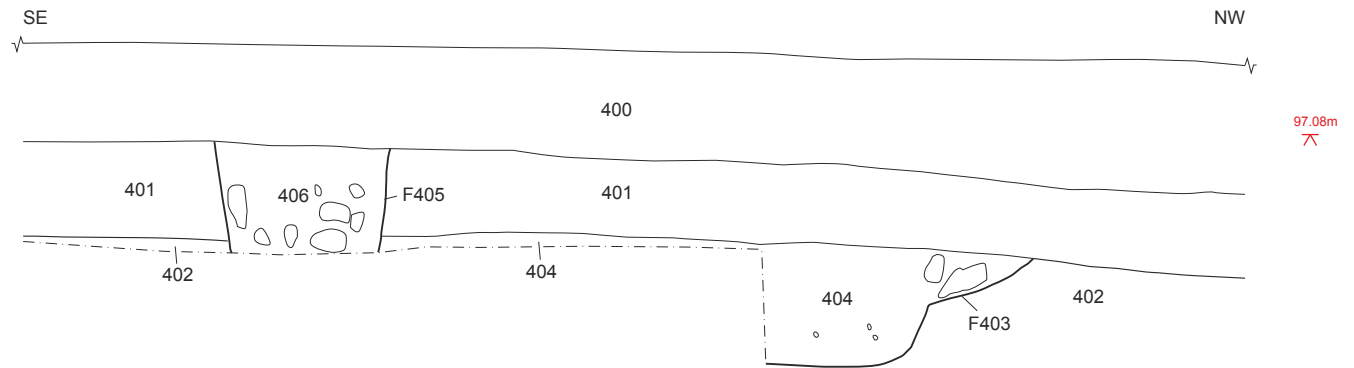
Fig. 1: location of site and trenches with archaeological features identified

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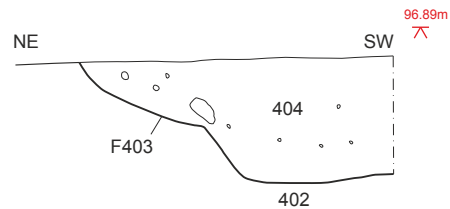
a) Trench 4, plan



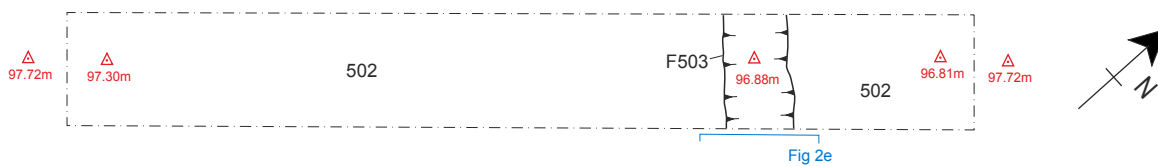
c) Section of pit F403 and land drain F405



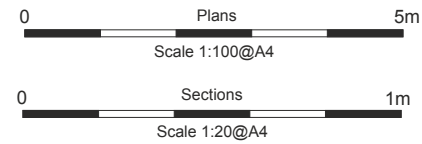
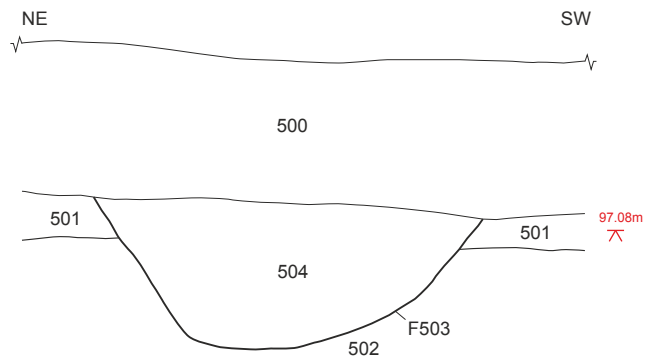
b) Section of pit F403



d) Trench 5, plan



e) Section of ditch F503



PROJECT
Land at Pitt Farm, Willand, Devon

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Fig. 2: Trench 4, plan and sections and Trench 5, plan and section





Plate 1: General view of the north part of the site, with Trench 3 in the foreground, looking north



Plate 2: General view of Trench 5, looking east

Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trench



APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		Length 10m	Width 1.5m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
100	Dark brown sandy silty clay	0-0.4m	Topsoil	
101	Mid yellowish brown sandy clay with frequent gravel and stones	0.4m-0.6m	Subsoil	
102	Mid reddish brown sandy clay with frequent gravel	0.6m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 2		Length 10m	Width 1.5m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
200	Dark brown sandy silty clay	0-0.45m	Topsoil	
201	Mid yellowish brown sandy clay with frequent gravel and stones	0.45m-0.65m	Subsoil	
202	Mid reddish brown sandy clay with frequent gravel	0.65m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 3		Length 10m	Width 1.5m	Alignment E - W
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
300	Dark brown sandy silty clay	0-0.3m	Topsoil	
301	Mid yellowish brown sandy clay with frequent gravel and stones	0.3-0.45m	Subsoil	
302	Mid reddish brown sandy clay with frequent gravel	0.45m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 4		Length 10m	Width 1.5m	Alignment NW - SE
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
400	Dark brown sandy silty clay	0-0.32m	Topsoil	
401	Mid yellowish brown sandy clay with frequent gravel and stones	0.32-0.56m	Subsoil	
402	Mid reddish brown sandy clay with frequent gravel	0.56m+	Natural subsoil	
F403	Sub-circular probable pit feature measuring >1.65m long by >0.83m wide by 0.32m deep with a steep stepped side and a flat base. Only partially revealed in the trench and cut by land drain F405	0.56-0.88m	Cut of pit	
404	Dark brown silty loam	0.56-0.88m	Fill of F403	
F405	Linear feature aligned northeast-southwest measuring 0.45m wide by >0.26m deep with steep sides. Not bottomed	0.32-0.58m+	Cut of land drain	
406	Stone rubble	0.32-0.58m+	Fill of F405	

Trench 5		Length 10m	Width 1.5m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
500	Dark brown sandy silty clay	0-0.0.44m	Topsoil	
501	Mid yellowish brown sandy clay with frequent gravel and stones	0.44-0.59m	Subsoil	
502	Mid reddish brown sandy clay with frequent gravel	0.59m+	Natural subsoil	
F503	Linear feature aligned northwest-southeast measuring 1m wide by 0.4m deep with moderately steep sides and flat base. Cut from level of subsoil (501)	0.44-0.84m	Cut of ditch	
504	Mid yellowish greyish brown clayey silt	0.44-0.84m	Fill of F503	

b.g.s = below ground surface

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