

# GARDEN REACH, THE RETREAT DRIVE, TOPSHAM, DEVON

(NGR SX 96814 88740)

Results of Archaeological Monitoring and Recording

Exeter City Council Planning Ref. 18/0075/FUL (condition 3)

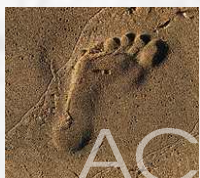
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Report No: ACD2070/2/1

Date: October 2019



archaeology

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Report Authors	George Gandham and Simon Hughes
Contributions	Naomi Payne
Checked by	Paul Rainbird
Approved by	Simon Hughes

## **Acknowledgements**

The monitoring and recording was commissioned by the owner of the property and coordinated for AC archaeology by Simon Hughes. The site works were carried out by George Gandham, Simon Hughes and Tom Etheridge with the illustrations for this report prepared by Leon Cauchois. The advice of Andrew Pye, Exeter City Council Principal Project Manager (Heritage) is duly 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

*Archaeological monitoring and recording was undertaken by AC archaeology during July 2019 at Garden Reach, The Retreat Drive, Topsham, Exeter, Devon (SX 95814 88740). The archaeological works were comprised of monitoring groundworks associated with the construction of a two-storey extension to the property. The Retreat, which bounds the site to the northwest is Grade II listed and comprises a large late 18th century house that was converted from an earlier sugar refinery. The 1843 Topsham parish tithe map depicts the site, which was previously within the grounds of The Retreat, as having been occupied by an earlier structure. This was then removed sometime prior to the 1936 Ordnance Survey map edition.*

*The groundworks exposed footings of a structure predating the current mid to late 20th century Garden Reach property. The exposed portion of the building comprised a 19th century brick-built room of 1m width and with a brick floor. A breccia footing, which was present only along one side of the structure, may have represented an earlier element of the building, with overlying brick footings comprising a later addition or modification. This structure probably represented part of, or an associated element of, the building shown on the historic mapping.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Archaeological monitoring and recording associated with the construction of an extension to Garden Reach, The Retreat Drive, Topsham, Exeter, Devon (SX 95814 88740) was undertaken by AC archaeology during July 2019. The investigations were required under condition 3 of planning consent granted by Exeter City Council (planning reference: 18/0075/FUL), following consultation with the Exeter City Council Principal Project Manager (Heritage) (hereafter ECC PPMH).
- 1.2 Garden Reach lies towards the northwest extent of Topsham, on land to the southeast of The Retreat house and grounds, with the River Exe bounding the site to the southwest (Fig. 1). It lies at 4m aOD (above ordnance datum) on ground that slopes towards the banks of the River Exe (Plate 1). The underlying solid geology consists of sandstone of the Dawlish Sandstone Formation, beneath clay, silt, sand and gravel tidal flat deposits ([www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk))

### 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Garden Reach lies in an area containing numerous sites of prehistoric and Romano-British date, many of which have been recorded during developments of the adjacent plots. Evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity includes Late Neolithic pits and flints from the excavations in the adjacent M5 corridor (Jarvis and Maxfield 1975) and during recent improvements to the Newport Mobile Home Park also situated to the northwest (Hughes 2017).
- 2.2 To the northeast, the Exeter/Topsham Road represents the alignment of a Roman road extending from a probable Roman port at Topsham to the legionary fortress at Exeter. Excavations carried out at nearby Wessex Close recorded evidence for occupation throughout the later 1st to early 4th centuries AD (Farnell and Rainbird 2017). Investigations immediately northwest of the M5 on the site of the Aldi supermarket identified the remains of Roman military timber buildings, set back from the line of the Roman road (Garland and Orellano forthcoming). Evidence for Roman occupation immediately adjacent to the site has been suggested by roof tile fragments and pottery sherds that were recovered during the rebuilding of garages at The Retreat (Devon County Council Historic Environment Record reference MDV71562). Further Roman finds comprising pottery have been recorded from a number of riverfront properties to

the southeast. These were recovered from the properties Waterside and Spindleberry (MDV60421, MDV9933 and MDV71563), while at Windwhistle the pottery was associated with pits and a posthole exposed during groundworks for an extension (MDV125436 and MDV125438).

- 2.3** The Retreat, which bounds the site to the northwest is Grade II listed (National Heritage List for England reference 1103993). It comprises a large late 18th century house that was converted from an existing sugar refinery. The 1843 Topsham parish tithe map depicts the site within what was originally part of the grounds to The Retreat. On this a building is shown in the position of the current Garden Reach property. This may have comprised an outbuilding. The building is then shown as slightly larger and with a narrow projecting northwest range on the 1888 First Edition and 1903 Second Edition Ordnance Survey maps but is then absent by the 1936 edition.

### **3. AIMS**

- 3.1** The aim of the archaeological monitoring and recording was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during groundworks associated with the scheme. This was with particular reference to the potential for Roman activity and evidence for the earlier building shown on historic mapping to be present on the site.

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1** The monitoring and recording was carried out in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Hughes 2019) and with reference to the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (2014).
- 4.2** All groundworks were undertaken using a mechanical excavator working under constant archaeological supervision. This comprised the monitoring of the footings trench excavation extending from the east corner of the existing Garden Reach property (Fig. 2 and Plate 2). These measured 1m wide and were between 0.9m and 1.5m deep.
- 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 1:20 and 1:50 as appropriate.

### **5. RESULTS** (Detailed plan Fig. 2 and sections Figs 3a-c; Plates 3-4)

- 5.1** Natural subsoil (context 101), which consisted of river gravels in a red and yellow sand and grit matrix, was exposed at a depth of approximately 1.2m below existing levels. It was overlain in the northeast portion of the site by a 0.15m thick mid brown sandy silt loam subsoil (106). This was then sealed by a mixed levelling layer of mid-red sand with patches of dark reddish-brown silty sand (102). Layer 102, which principally comprised redeposited natural subsoil, measured between 0.2m thick to the northwest, while to the southwest it extended to 0.8m in thickness to form a level terrace adjacent to the River Exe.

**5.2** Levelling layer (102) was cut by a northwest to southeast aligned construction cut F104, which contained some breccia block footings (S105) comprised of pieces of up to 0.9m long. One brick fragment and pieces of animal bone were recovered from the backfill of the construction cut (112). Abutting the northeast side of footing S105 was a further mixed sandy levelling layer (108). Footings S105 and the associated levelling layer 108 were overlain by a brick wall (S107). This comprised three to four courses of 19th century bricks (S107) that formed a 1m wide rectangular structure which was also exposed in the northeast and southeast sides of the excavated footing and extended beneath the existing Garden Reach property. At the northwest extent of the structure, the remains of a brick surface was exposed (109), which was sealed by mixed demolition material and cinders (110). Abutting the southwest side of the structure was a garden soil (100), which was sealed by a gravel makeup (103) for the existing brick drive (111). Finds recovered from garden soil 100 consisted of 19th century pottery, glass, iron objects, tile fragments and animal bone.

## **6. THE FINDS** by Naomi Payne with a contribution from Charlotte Coles

### **6.1 Introduction**

All finds recovered on site during the monitoring and recording 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.

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

Context	Context Description	Post-medieval pottery		Iron		Glass		CBM		Animal bone	
		No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt	No.	Wt
100	Garden soil	2	14	2	41	1	18	2	262		
112	Fill of construction cut F104							1	64	3	60
<b>Totals</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>326</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>60</b>

### **6.2 Post-medieval pottery**

Two sherds (14g) of post-medieval pottery were recovered from garden soil 100. They include a body sherd from a stoneware jar or bottle and a body sherd of blue-on-white transfer-printed china. Both sherds are likely to date from the 19th century.

### **6.3 Metal finds**

Two iron objects were recovered from garden soil 100. They include a large nail and a short length from a flat iron strap with a width of 23mm.

### **6.4 Glass**

A single shard (18g) of glass was recovered from garden soil 100. This is a fragment from a transparent light greenish mineral water bottle. The vertically embossed letters 'NIE' are visible.

### **6.5 CBM**

Three fragments (326g) of post-medieval building material were recovered from two contexts. This material includes single brick fragments from garden soil 100 and construction cut fill 112, and a piece of Victorian wall tile from garden soil 100. The

external surface of the latter is a dark teal green and features a feather or foliate pattern.

#### **6.6 Animal bone by Charlotte Coles**

Three pieces (60g) of animal bone were recovered from construction cut fill 112. They include a cattle vertebrae spinus process and two unidentified fragments.

### **7. COMMENTS**

**7.1** The groundworks exposed some structural remains predating the current mid to late 20th century Garden Reach property. The exposed portion of the structure, a 1m wide 19th century brick-built room with a brick floor of unknown function. Breccia footing S105, which was present only along its southwest side, may have represented an earlier element to the structure, with overlying brick footings S107 comprising a later addition or modification. Based on the historic mapping these remains probably formed part of, or an associated element of, the building shown in the grounds of The Retreat house on the 1842 Topsham parish tithe map and is then present on the First and Second-Edition Ordnance Survey map until sometime prior to the 1936 edition.

**7.2** Despite the reasonable potential for Roman activity to be present on the site, nothing of this date was recovered from the site.

### **8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS**

**8.1** This report forms the sole archive for the project.

**8.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed using the unique number **369677**, which includes a digital version of this report.

### **9. REFERENCES**

British Geological Survey Online Viewer, [www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk).

Devon County Council Environment Viewer <http://map.devon.gov.uk/dccviewer/>

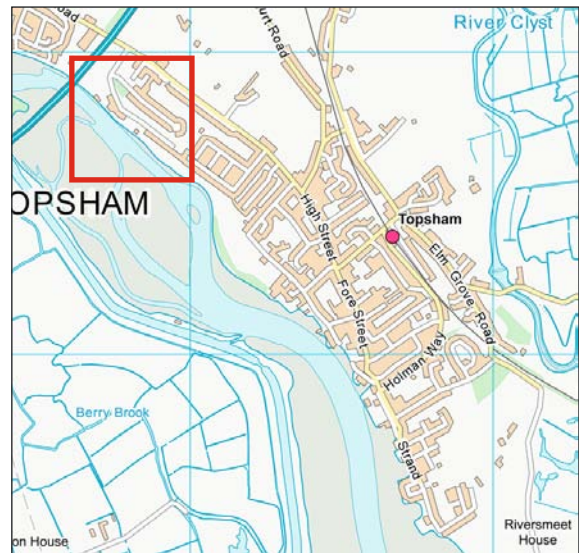
Farnell, A. and Rainbird, P, 2017, *Land north of Wessex Close, Topsham, Near Exeter, Devon: Results of Archaeological Excavations – Technical Report*. Unpublished AC archaeology report ref. ACD1360/3/0

Garland, N. and Orellano, J., forthcoming, 'Prehistoric and Roman occupation along the river Exe: Archaeological investigations at the Aldi Site, Exeter Road, Topsham, Devon', *Proceedings of the Devon Archaeological Society* 76

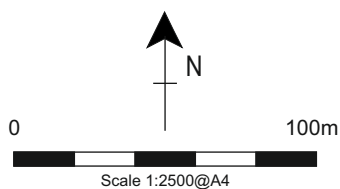
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Hughes, S., 2019. *2 Garden Reach, The Retreat Drive, Topsham, Devon: Written Scheme of Archaeological Work for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording*. Unpublished AC archaeology document No. ACD2070/1/1





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PROJECT  
Garden Reach, The Retreat Drive,  
Topsham, Devon

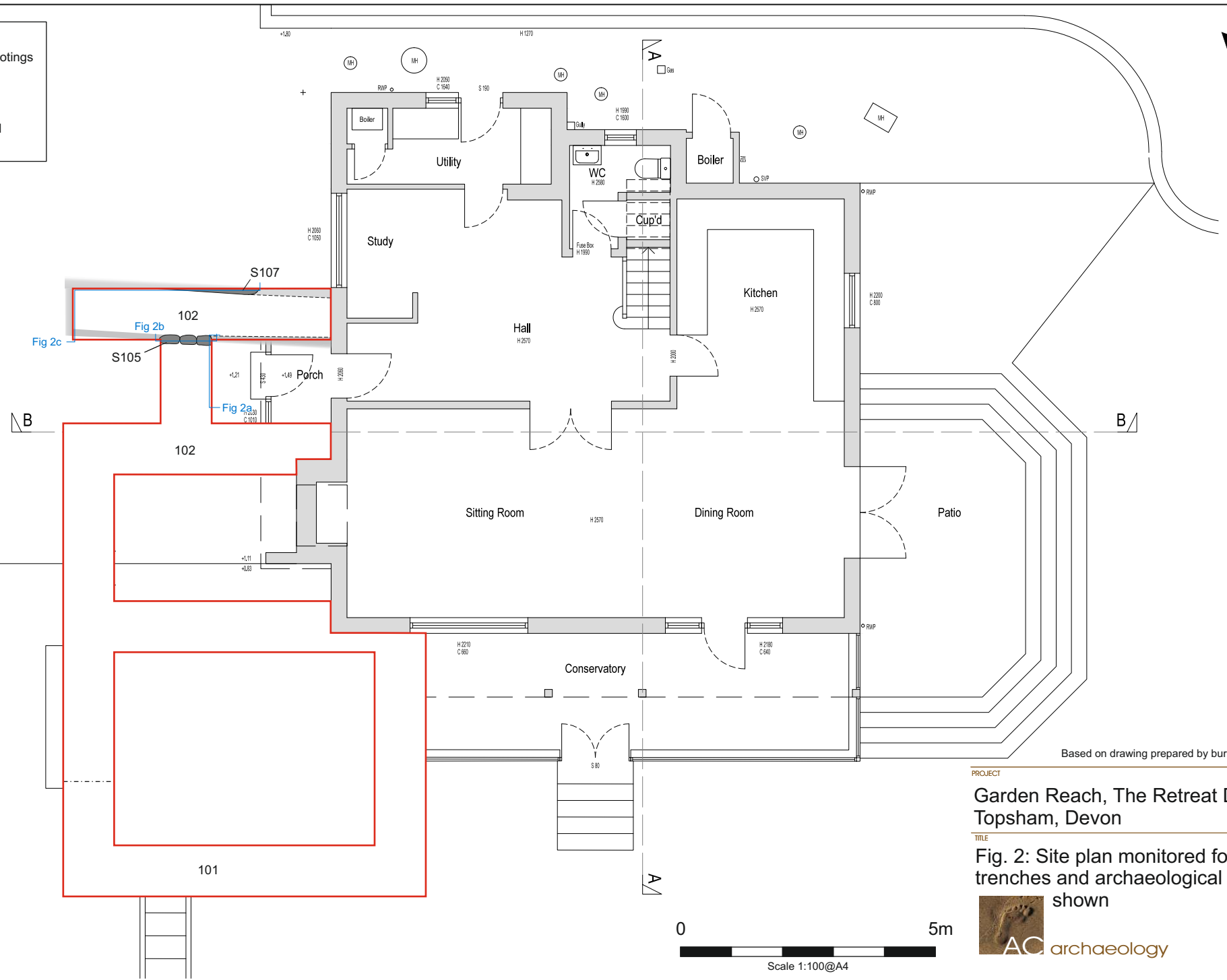
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Fig. 1: Site location



**Key**

- Monitored footings trench
- Structure
- Extrapolated structure



Based on drawing prepared by burley partnership

PROJECT  
**Garden Reach, The Retreat Drive,  
 Topsham, Devon**

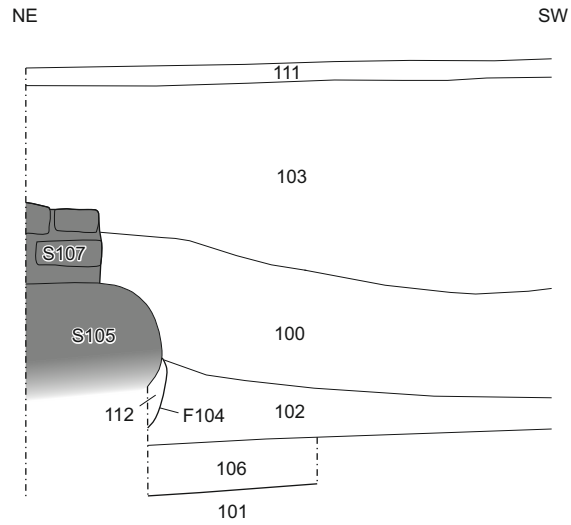
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**Fig. 2: Site plan monitored footings  
 trenches and archaeological features  
 shown**



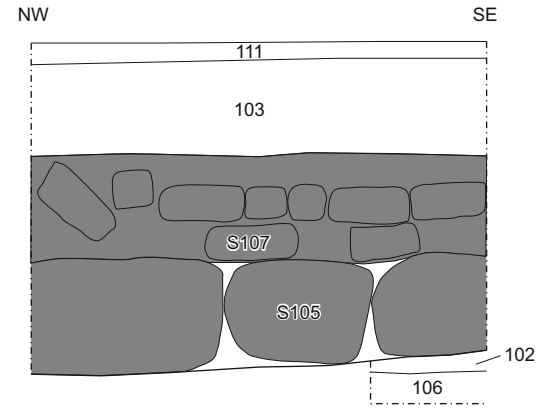
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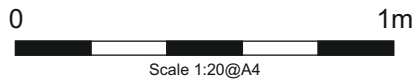
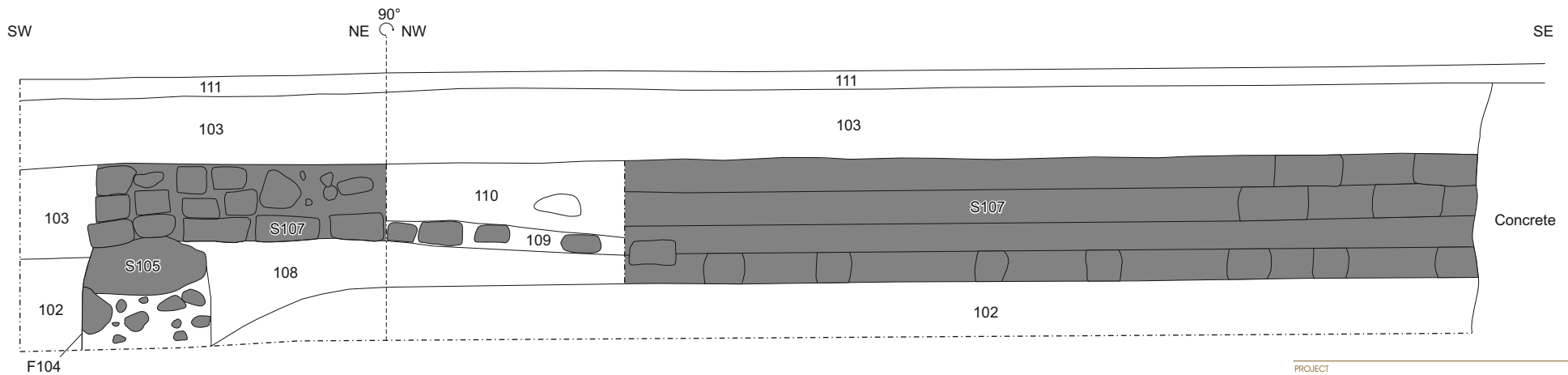
a) Section of Structure S105 and S107



b) Section of Structure S105 and S107



c) Section of Structure S105 and S107



PROJECT

Garden Reach, The Retreat Drive,  
Topsham, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 3: Sections



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Plate 1: General working view of site looking south towards Garden Reach



Plate 2: Showing excavated footings trenches. View to southwest (scale 1m)



Plate 3: Breccia footing S105. View to southeast (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Showing excavated footing with brick footing S107. View to north (scale 0.5m)

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