

# LAND AT 2 WELL COTTAGES, BUCKFASTLEIGH, DEVON

(Centred on NGR SX 7632 6523)

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

South Hams District Council Planning ref. 3808/19/FUL

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Report No: ACD2202/2/0

Date: January 2020



archaeology

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## Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned by the site owner and coordinated for AC archaeology by Simon Hughes. The site works were carried out by Stuart Randall and Holly Gillingham, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Leon Cauchois. The advice of Stephen Reed, Devon County Senior Historic Environment Officer, 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

*An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken out by AC archaeology during January 2020 on land at 2 Well Cottages, Buckfastleigh, Devon (SX 7632 6523). Investigations comprised the machine excavation of three trenches totaling 25m in length, with each trench 1.2m wide. The site is located to the rear of 2 Well Cottages within an area that is currently occupied by a polytunnel, vegetable garden, lawn and pond.*

*The main interest in the site was its proximity to a possible triple-ditched squared enclosure that had been interpreted from cropmarks shown on an aerial photograph. This lies adjacent to the site and potentially represents activity of Iron Age to Romano-British date. Approximately half of its likely full extent is visible on the aerial photograph and its remaining projected portion had the potential to continue partially into the current site.*

*The results from the trial trenching were largely negative, with no evidence for a continuation of the enclosure extending into the site. A single linear feature likely to represent part of a former modern farm track was the only feature exposed.*

*A small assemblage of post-medieval pottery sherds were recovered from topsoil layers.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during January 2020 on land at 2 Well Cottages, Buckfastleigh, Devon (SX 7632 6523). The work was required by South Hams District Council to provide supporting information for a planning application (ref. 3808/19/FUL) for a proposed new single dwelling, following consultation with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCCHET).

1.2 Situated approximately 2km to the southeast of Buckfastleigh, Well Cottages comprises a small hamlet of dwellings and converted outbuildings within an agricultural landscape to the northeast of the A384 road (Fig. 1). The position of the proposed new dwelling lies to the rear of 2 Well Cottages within an area currently occupied by a polytunnel, vegetable garden, lawn and pond (Plate 1). It lies at approximately 80m aOD (above Ordnance Datum), on ground that slopes gradually to the south. The underlying solid geology consists of slate of the Upper Devonian Slates formation ([www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)).

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 The main interest in the site is its proximity to a possible enclosure that has been interpreted from cropmarks shown on an aerial photograph (Devon County Council Historic Environment Record reference MDV125480) (Fig 1). This lies immediately to the north of the site within a pasture plot and potentially represents activity of Iron Age to Romano-British date. The recorded cropmarks are thought to represent the north portion of a triple ditched square enclosure, the projected south extent of which had the potential to continue into the current site. Further cropmarks have been recorded within the wider plot to the north, with these consisting of further enclosures and associated former field boundaries of potential prehistoric to Romano-British date (MDV122194 and MDV29896).

### **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 evidence for remains related to the projected extent of the cropmark enclosure to be present on the site. The results of the work 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** All works were undertaken in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Hughes 2020) and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' document, *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* (revised December 2014). It comprised the machine excavation of three trenches totalling 25m in length, with each trench 1.2m wide (Figs 1 and 2). Trench locations are shown on Fig. 1 and were positioned to provide a sample coverage of the proposed development, whilst avoiding existing services.
- 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** (Fig. 2; Plates 2-3)

Natural subsoil was exposed in each of the trenches and comprised weathered slate geology in a light brownish yellow silty clay matrix. Trenches 1 and 2 did not contain any archaeological features or deposits, while a single linear feature was present in Trench 3 (F302). The results from Trench 3 are described below, while tabulated context descriptions by trench are provided in Appendix 1. Context numbers are prefixed by the relevant trench number (e.g. 100 for Trench 1, 300 for Trench 3 etc.).

#### **5.2 Trench 3** (Detailed plan Fig 3a and section Fig. 3b; Plate 4)

Trench 3 was excavated onto natural subsoil (context 301), which was present at a depth of 0.34m below existing levels. It was overlain by a garden soil and lawn (300). The trench contained a partially exposed northwest to southeast aligned linear feature (F302). It contained a dark greyish brown silty-loam fill (303), which had large stone inclusions. Some plastic debris was found pressed into the top of the feature.

### **6. THE FINDS** by Naomi Payne

- 6.1** The evaluation produced a small quantity of finds from topsoil contexts including six sherds (252g) of post-medieval pottery, two fragments (8g) of clay pigeon and a modern brick fragment (151g). The pottery includes two fragments of South Somerset-

type earthenware, three sherds of transfer-printed table ware and a single body sherd of Staffordshire white ware. The South Somerset sherds include a rim and handle sherd from a slipware chamber pot similar to 27/19 from Donyatt (Coleman-Smith and Pearson 1988, 310-11). This example dates from the mid-18th century. The other South Somerset sherd is an undiagnostic handle fragment.

## 7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The evaluation exposed the natural subsoil beneath deep cultivation soils in Trenches 1 and 2. These trenches were positioned in the portion of site that may have corresponded with the projected southern extent of the possible cropmark enclosure. No archaeological features or deposits were exposed that could be associated with the potential enclosure and no finds were recovered that corresponded with the assumed late prehistoric to Romano-British date of occupation. It is therefore likely that the extent of the southern portion of the enclosure is contained within the plot to the north of the site.
- 7.2 The position of the partially exposed northwest to southeast aligned linear feature exposed in Trench 3 corresponded with a former farm track that was present until between 2006 and 2010 (Google Earth 2020). This feature was likely to represent part of a rough surface and infilling of wheel ruts associated with the former track that was then covered during subsequent landscaping associated with the current garden.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The results from the trial trenching were largely negative, with no evidence for a continuation of the probable late prehistoric to Romano-British triple-ditched enclosure extending into the current site. It is therefore likely that the projected southern portion of the enclosure is present only within the plot immediately to the north.

## 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 **ACD2202**. 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 the temporary ref no. **RAMM: 20/03**, but if they are unable to accept this, then it will be dealt with under their current accession policy. 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 **379592** which includes a digital copy of this report.

## 10. REFERENCES

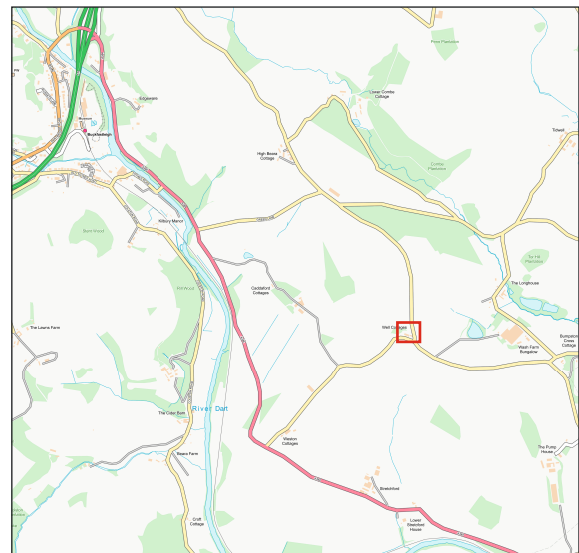
British Geological Survey online viewer [www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)

Coleman-Smith, R. & Pearson, T. (1988) *Excavations in the Donyatt Potteries*. Chichester: Phillimore.

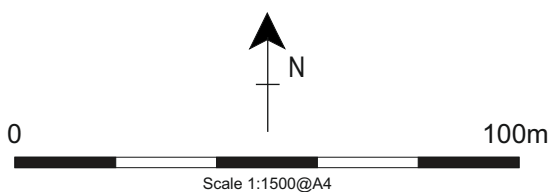
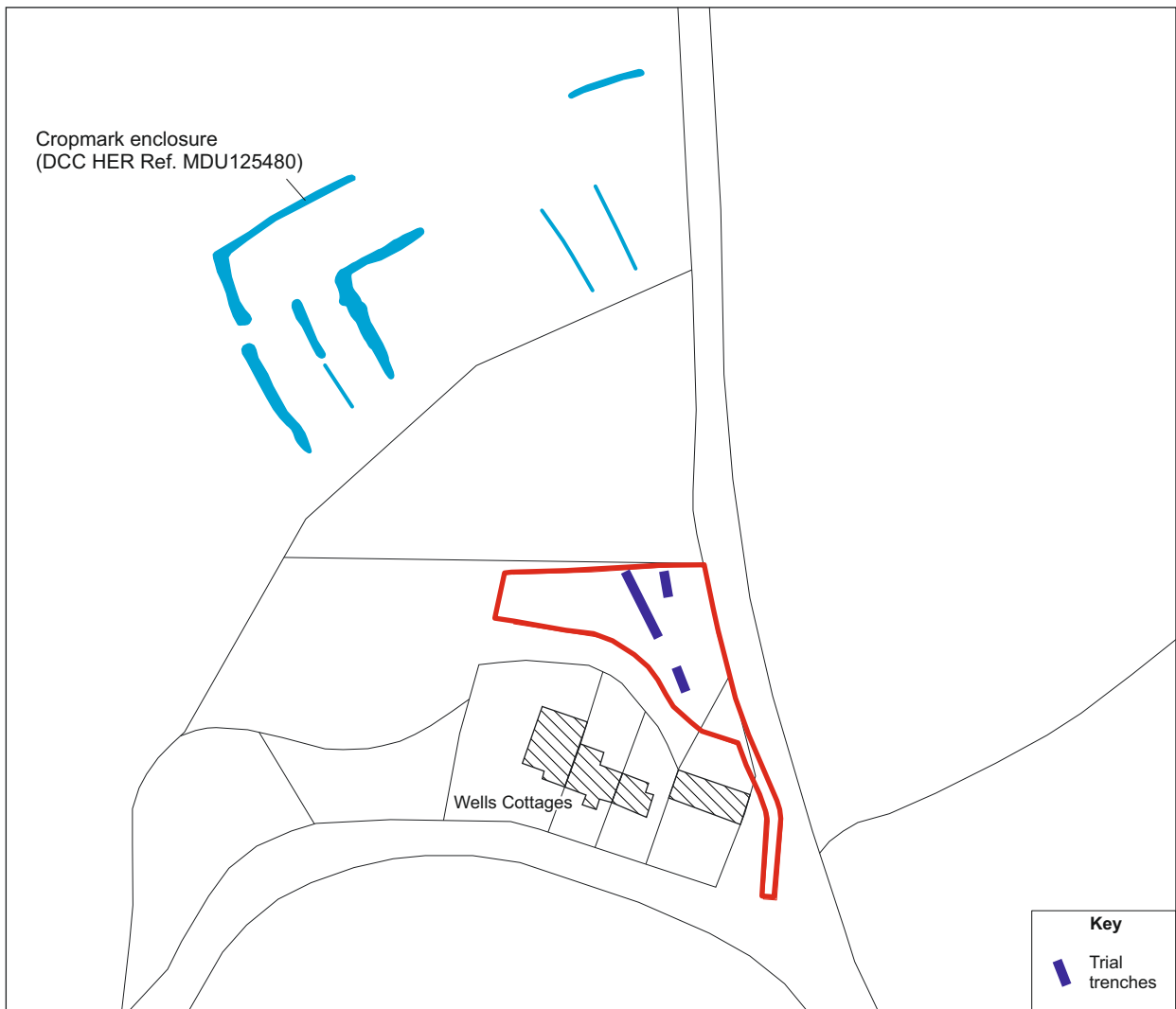
Devon County Council Environment Viewer <http://map.devon.gov.uk/dccviewer/>

Google Earth, 2020, Well Cottages. 20°28'25.38"N and 3°44'38.73"W. 6 January 2006 [Accessed: 20 January 2020].

Hughes, S. (2020) *Land at 2 Well Cottages, Buckfastleigh, Devon. Project Design for an archaeological trench evaluation*. Unpublished in-house AC archaeology document.



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PROJECT

2 Well Cottages, Buckfastleigh, Devon

TITLE

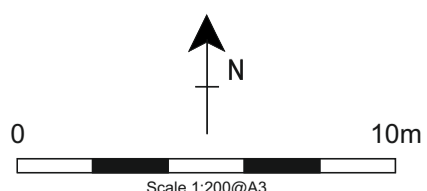
Fig. 1: Location of site and trial trenches in relation to transcribed cropmark







Based on drawing prepared by Will Hoare Architect



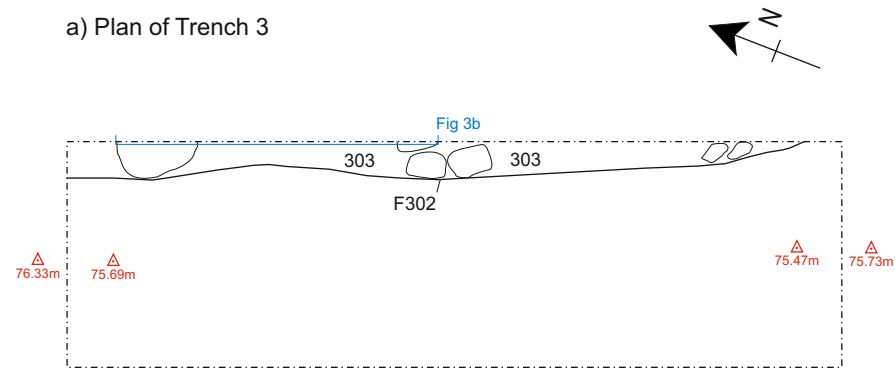
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- Trial trenches with archaeological features shown
- Existing gas main and buffer
- Existing buried electricity cable



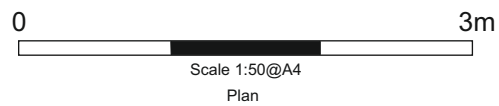
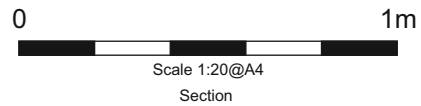
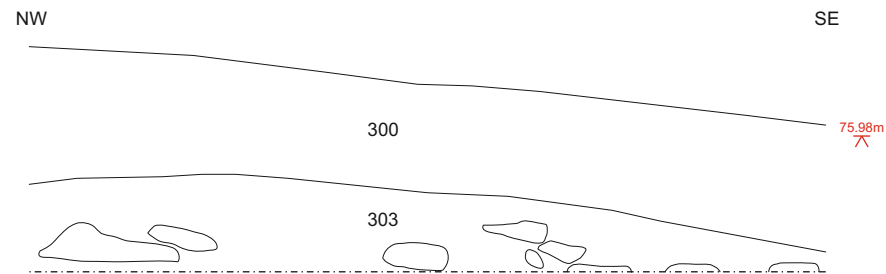
PROJECT  
2 Well Cottages, Buckfastleigh, Devon

TITLE  
Fig. 1: Location and existing site plan with proposed building and trial trenches shown

a) Plan of Trench 3



b) Section of Trench 4



PROJECT

2 Well Cottages, Buckfastleigh,  
Devon

TITLE

Fig. 3: Trench 3 plan and section





Plate 1: General view of site looking south



Plate 2: General working view of site, looking west with Trench 2 in foreground (scale 2m)



Plate 3: Trench 1, view to southeast (scale 1m)



Plate 4: Trench 4, view to southeast (scale 1m)

# Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trench



## APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

| Trench 1 |  | Length<br>5m  | Width<br>1.2m     | Alignment<br>NW - SE |
|----------|--|---------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Context  | Description  | Depth (b.g.s) | Interpretation    |                      |
| 100      | Mid yellowish-brown clay silt                                | 0 – 0.44m     | Topsoil           |                      |
| 101      | Mid brownish yellow clayey silt                              | 0.44 – 0.94m  | Subsoil           |                      |
| 102      | Weathered slate in a light brownish yellow silty clay matrix | 0.94m+        | Weathered bedrock |                      |

| Trench 2 |  | Length<br>15m | Width<br>1.2m     | Alignment<br>N - S |
|----------|--|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Context  | Description  | Depth (b.g.s) | Interpretation    |                    |
| 200      | Mid yellowish-brown clay silt                                | 0 – 0.44m     | Topsoil           |                    |
| 201      | Mid brownish yellow clayey silt                              | 0.44 – 0.95m  | Subsoil           |                    |
| 201      | Weathered slate in a light brownish yellow silty clay matrix | 0.95m+        | Weathered bedrock |                    |

| Trench 3 |  | Length<br>5m  | Width<br>1.2m              | Alignment<br>NW - SE |
|----------|--|---------------|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Context  | Description  | Depth (b.g.s) | Interpretation             |                      |
| 300      | Mid yellowish-brown clay silt                                    | 0 – 0.34m     | Topsoil                    |                      |
| 301      | Weathered slate in a light brownish yellow silty clay matrix     | 0.34m+        | Weathered bedrock          |                      |
| F302     | Linear, NW-SE cut (unexcavated)                                  | 0.34m+        | Cut of probable farm track |                      |
| 303      | Dark greyish brown silty loam with common large stone inclusions | 0.34m+        | Fill of F302               |                      |

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