

LAND AT LUCOTT FARM, LUCCOMBE, EXMOOR, SOMERSET

(Centred on NGR SS 8656 4510)

Results of Archaeological Investigations

Exmoor National Park Authority Planning Reference
6/19/19/101 (Condition 4)

Prepared by:
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On behalf of:
The Landowner

Report No: ACD2224/2/0

Date: May 2020



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 investigations were undertaken by AC archaeology during April 2020 on land at Lucott Farm, Luccombe, Exmoor, Somerset (NGR SS 8656 4510). The work comprised the machine excavation of four trial trenches totalling 35m in length, with each 1.2m wide. The section through a hedgebank breach was also recorded. The main archaeological interest in the site is that it lies in a farming landscape thought to be of medieval origin.

No archaeological features or deposits were exposed in the trenches and no finds were recovered. The hedgebank section revealed a simple construction comprising of a soil core with a stone facing on one side.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Archaeological investigations associated with the construction of a proposed new agricultural building on land at Lucott Farm, Luccombe, Exmoor, Somerset (SS 8656 4510) were undertaken by AC archaeology during April 2020. The work was required as condition 4 of planning consent, reference 6/19/19/101, granted by the Exmoor National Park Authority, following consultation with the Exmoor National Park Authority Conservation Officer (Historic Environment).
- 1.2 Lucott Farm lies within Exmoor National Park approximately 4.5km to the west of Luccombe on elevated ground above East Lucott and Hawkcombe Woods to the north (Fig. 1). The site of the proposed new agricultural building occupies part of a wider agricultural field immediately to the north of the existing farm complex (Plate 1). It is situated at 301m aOD (above Ordnance Datum) on ground that slopes down to the north. The underlying solid geology consists of Middle Devonian interbedded sandstone and conglomerate (British Geological Survey 2020).
- 1.3 The archaeological investigations comprised a trial trench evaluation and recording of a hedgebank breach.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site lies in a farming landscape thought to be of medieval origin (Exmoor National Park Authority Historic Environment Record reference MMO1849). This is based on the remains of earthworks representing ridge and furrow cultivation, which have been interpreted from a series of infra-red aerial photographs. Lucott Farm itself was historically comprised of East and West Lucott, with parts of the existing buildings retaining 17th to 18th century fabric (MEM23215 and MEM23217). To the northwest of the site and within the wider plot in which it is located lies a circular hollow that is considered to represent a quarry pit of probable post-medieval date (MMO1848).
- 2.2 Earlier activity in the vicinity of the site is principally represented by Berry Castle, a scheduled prehistoric enclosure (National Heritage List for England ref. 1006204). This lies approximately 600m to the west and comprises a rectangular univallate hillslope enclosure positioned between two coombes and is thought to be of Iron Age date.

3. AIMS

- 3.1** The aim of the archaeological monitoring and recording is to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during groundworks associated with the scheme. This is with reference for the potential for remains associated with medieval activity to be present

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The investigations were undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' guidelines, *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* (revised 2014) and in relation to an approved Project Design (Hughes 2020). It comprised the machine-excavation of four trenches totalling 35m in length, with each 1.2m wide, positioned to provide a sample coverage of the areas to be affected by the development.
- 4.2** 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).

5. RESULTS: TRENCH EVALUATION (Fig. 1a; Plates 2-6)

- 5.1** No features or deposits of archaeological interest were exposed in the trenches and no finds were observed. Tabulated context descriptions by trench are provided in Appendix 1.
- 5.2** The natural subsoil, composed of yellowish-brown silty sand and gravel, was exposed at a depth that ranged between 0.4m and 0.5m below existing ground levels. The natural subsoil was overlain by subsoil and ploughsoil.

6. RESULTS: HEDGEBANK RECORDING (Section Fig. 1b; Plates 7-8)

- 6.1** The recorded hedgebank was located at the north extent of the development area. An approximately 25m long section of the hedgebank was removed to the level of the existing ground surface.
- 6.2** The hedgebank measured 1.4m high and was 2.2m wide at the base. It was constructed of light brown sandy silt (context 501), with inclusions of very abundant angular, subangular and occasionally tabular sandstone gravel, cobbles and boulders. It had a facing wall on the southeast side only and this was constructed in a diagonal pattern (502). The bank material was heavily root disturbed and no evidence for a buried soil within the exposed profile was present.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The archaeological investigations involved two components: a trench evaluation and the recording of an exposed hedgebank section.

7.2 Trench evaluation

The trench evaluation was consistent in finding no evidence for archaeological features, deposits or finds. This hilltop site has had a long history of ploughing from the medieval period to the present day and this may have truncated any buried archaeological remains. Having said this, a general lack of finds in the overlying soils may suggest that medieval settlement was not present in this area.

7.3 Hedgebank

The hedgebank was found to be of simple construction with an earth and stone core and facing stones set in a diagonal pattern on one side. This boundary forms part of a rectilinear field system and continues in a straight line for a distance of approximately 500m to the southwest following the top of a ridgeline. The field pattern of rectilinear fields and with long and straight stretches of hedgebanks is typical of post-medieval enclosure of common land which took place in the 18th and 19th centuries on Exmoor (see Hegarty 2014). This process often resulted in the destruction of archaeological sites where the stone was robbed to be used for the facing of the banks (Riley and Wilson-North 2001, 43). There were no finds associated with the hedgebank, but its morphology and position within the pattern of fields indicates that it is of probable late post-medieval date.

8. CONCLUSIONS

8.1 The trench evaluation has established that there is no evidence for archaeological features, deposits or finds on the site. A section through part of a breached standing hedgebank of probable post-medieval date was recorded.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

9.1 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 **ACD2224**. It will be held until the completion of all work for the project.

9.2 An online OASIS entry has been completed using the unique identifier **392121**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

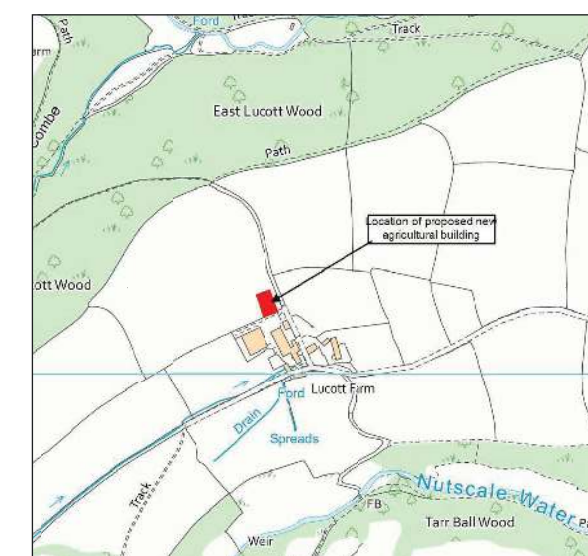
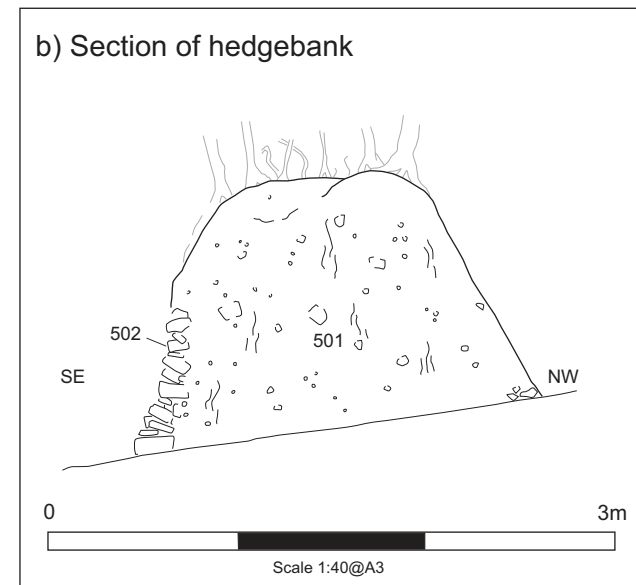
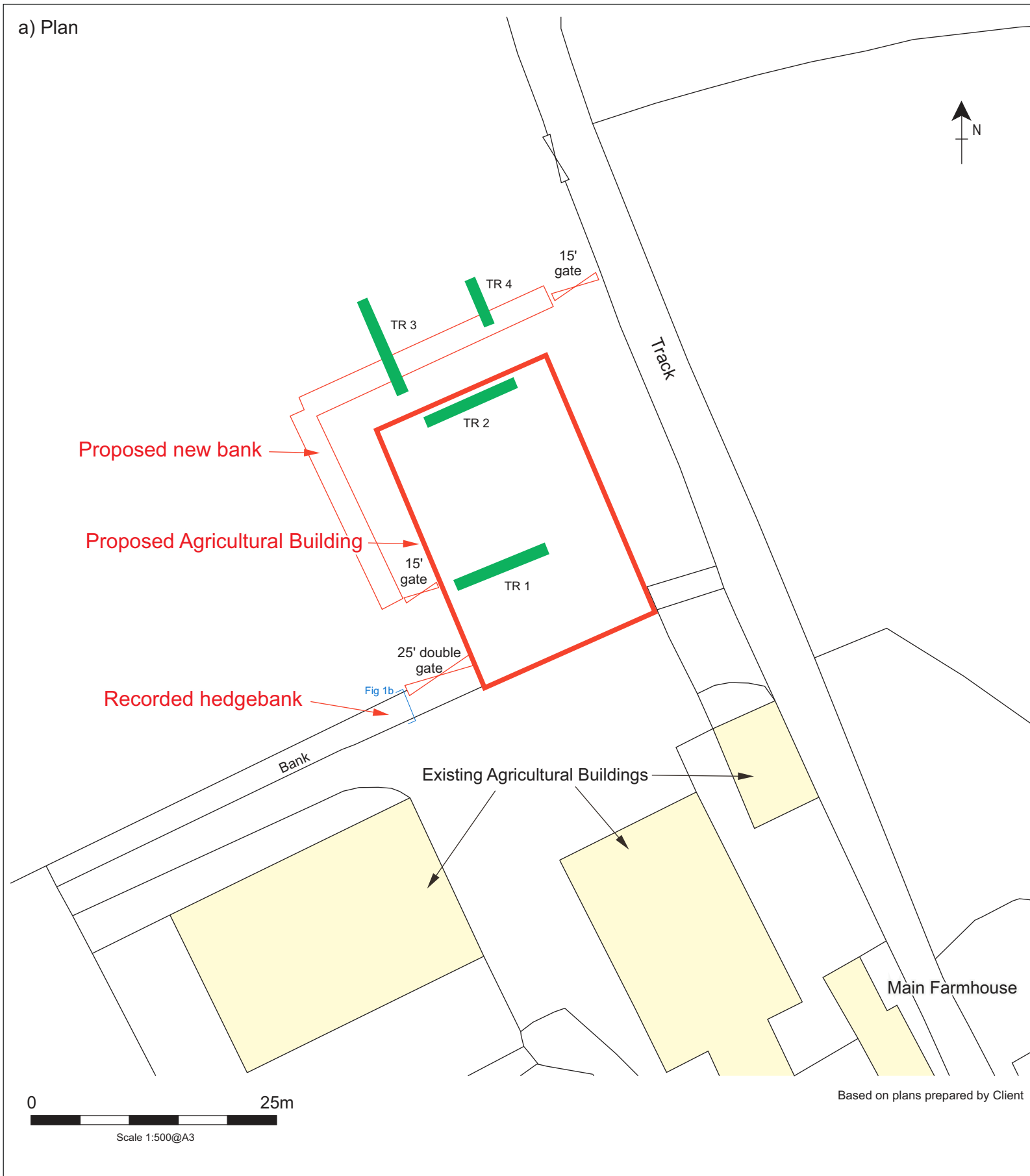
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PROJECT
Land at Lucott Farm, Luscombe,
Exmoor, Somerset

TITLE
Fig. 1: Location of site, trenches and
hedgebank section



Plate 1: General view of the site with Trench 1 in the foreground, looking northwest



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



Plate 3: Trench 1, representative section (1m scale)



Plate 4: Trench 2, looking northeast (1m scale)



Plate 5: Trench 3, looking northwest (1m scale)



Plate 6: Trench 4, looking southeast (1m and 1m scales)



Plate 7: Showing section of hedgebank, view to southwest (1m and 1m scales)



Plate 8: Detailed view of hedgebank facing 502, looking northwest (0.5m scale)

Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trench



APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

Trench 1		Length 10m	Width 1.2m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
100	Light greyish-brown sandy silt loam	0-0.3m	Ploughsoil	
101	Mid reddish and yellowish-brown sandy silt loam	0.3m-0.5m	Subsoil	
102	Light yellowish-brown silty sand and gravel	0.5m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 2		Length 10m	Width 1.2m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
200	Light greyish-brown sandy silt loam	0-0.3m	Ploughsoil	
201	Mid reddish and yellowish-brown sandy silt loam	0.3m-0.4m	Subsoil	
202	Light yellowish-brown silty sand and gravel	0.4m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 3		Length 10m	Width 1.2m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
300	Light greyish-brown sandy silt loam	0-0.3m	Ploughsoil	
301	Mid reddish and yellowish-brown sandy silt loam	0.3m-0.4m	Subsoil	
302	Light yellowish-brown silty sand and gravel	0.4m+	Natural subsoil	

Trench 4		Length 5m	Width 1.2m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
400	Light greyish-brown sandy silt loam	0-0.3m	Ploughsoil	
401	Mid reddish and yellowish-brown sandy silt loam	0.3m-0.4m	Subsoil	
402	Light yellowish-brown silty sand and gravel	0.4m+	Natural subsoil	

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