

# LAND AT CENTERY LANE, BITTADON, NORTH DEVON

(NGR SS 54320 42568)

Results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation

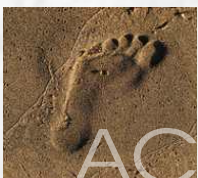
North Devon Council planning reference: 75487

---

Prepared by:  
Andrew Passmore

Document No: ACD2730/1/0

Date: September 2022



AC archaeology

---

# LAND AT CENTERY LANE, BITTADON, NORTH DEVON

(NGR SS 54320 42568)

## Results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation

North Devon Council planning reference: 75487

---

Client	Private Owners
Report Number	ACD2730/1/0
Date	21 September 2022
Status	Version 1
Report Author	Andrew Passmore
Contributions	-
Checked by	Paul Rainbird
Approved by	Andrew Passmore

### Acknowledgements

The evaluation was commissioned by Nigel Polkinghorne Architectural Services on behalf of the owners, and managed for them by Debbie Polkinghorne, and for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The site works were carried out by Simon Hughes and Jon Hall, with the illustrations for this report prepared by Sarnia Blackmore. The advice of Stephen Reed, Senior Historic Environment Officer, Devon County Council Historic Environment Team, is gratefully 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.

### Copyright

AC archaeology Ltd shall retain full copyright of any report under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved, excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the Client for the use of the report by the Client in all matters directly relating to the project. Any document produced to meet planning requirements may be freely copied for planning, development control, education and research purposes without recourse to the Copyright owner subject to all due and appropriate acknowledgements being provided.

## CONTENTS

	<i>Summary</i>	
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Archaeological background	2
3.	Aims	2
4.	Methodology	2
5.	Results	3
6.	Discussion	4
7.	Archive and OASIS	4
8.	Sources consulted	4

### **List of figures**

- Fig. 1: Location of application area and barrow cemetery  
Fig. 2: Location of site and trenches with features shown  
Fig. 3: Trench 4, plan and sections

### **List of plates**

- Plate 1. General working view of site, looking north towards Scheduled barrow with Trench 3 in foreground  
Plate 2. General view looking northwest towards barn and Trenches 4-6  
Plate 3. Trench 4, view to northwest (scale 1m)  
Plate 4. Trench 4, pit F402 and posthole F404, looking northwest (scale 0.4m)

### **Appendix 1: Tabulated context descriptions by trench**

## Summary

*An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology, on behalf of the private owners, during September 2022 to support a planning application (North Devon Council reference 75487) for a development on land at Centery Lane, Bittadon, North Devon (SS 54320 42568). The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of six trenches totalling 60m in length, with each measuring 1.60m wide. The site is located adjacent to a prehistoric barrow cemetery that is designated as a Scheduled Monument.*

*The evaluation returned low-level results that comprised three modern features – a pit and two postholes. These are associated with modern agricultural practices and are not considered to be non-designated heritage assets.*

*The evaluation also identified that land to the west and northwest of the barn has been disturbed by modern landscaping, and the ground level reduced (to below the level of natural) and then built up again. These areas have been curtilages of both the current barn and the previous late 20th-century barn, and used for storage.*

*No evidence for any earlier activity, including below-ground remains of any previously unknown barrows associated with the cemetery, was identified. The majority of the site has been disturbed by activity associated with construction of the barn, and it is concluded that the archaeological potential is very low, and restricted to the field to the south and east of the barn.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1; Plate 1)

- 1.1 An archaeological trial trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology on 9 September 2022 to support a planning application (North Devon Council reference 75487) for redevelopment of land at Centery Lane, Bittadon, North Devon (SS 54320 42568; Fig. 1; Plate 1). The archaeological investigation was commissioned by the private owners through their agent Nigel Polkinghorne Architectural Services, and was requested by the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team on their consultation response to the application. No formal brief for the investigation was provided.
- 1.2 The application area is located off Centery Lane, between Centery Farm and Hillcrest Farm, north of Bittadon. It comprises c.0.30ha of land situated on an upland plateau at 224m above Ordnance Datum, currently partially occupied by a barn and associated access hardstanding, and partially by the northern corner of an arable field. The application area is located c.20m south of a recorded barrow which forms part of the 'Round barrow cemetery 210m south west of Hillcrest, Centery Lane', designated as a Scheduled Monument (NHLE 1019252; Fig. 1).
- 1.3 The underlying geology comprises Devonian slate of the Morte Slates Formation, sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 359 to 383 million years ago. There are no overlying superficial deposits (British Geological Survey 2022).
- 1.4 The document forms one of two heritage documents – the other being a *Heritage Statement* (AC archaeology doc. no. ACD2730/2/0) – and the results of the evaluation described in this report have been used to inform the preparation of the *Heritage Statement*.

## **The scheme**

- 1.5** The proposed scheme comprises the redevelopment of the extant open fronted agricultural barn into two detached 2-storey residential dwellings. Gardens will be situated on their western sides with private amenity space in between the two dwellings. Access to the dwellings will be from Centery Lane to the west through the current gateway, with the existing access track remaining *in situ*. Car parking for Barn 1 will be situated on its north side, and car parking for Barn 2 will be situated on its south side, with a new driveway curving around the buildings to the east. A wildlife foraging area and reptile habitat will be created south of the barrow, with drainage systems provided to the north and south of the building. There will be no change to the wider landscape including hedgebanks to Centery Lane to the west and to an agricultural track within the fields to the east.

## **2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 1)**

- 2.1** The Bronze Age round barrow cemetery (National Heritage List for England entry 1019252 and Devon Historic Environment Record ref. MDV74473; Fig. 1) is designated as a Scheduled Monument and situated across a plateau and gently northwest-facing slope of the rolling hill landscape north of Bittadon. The monument comprises nine individual barrows, varying in size and condition, with surrounding quarry ditches (Devon HER refs MDV2174, MDV2184, MDV2185, MDV2186, MDV2187, MDV2188, MDV2189, MDV2190, and MDV2191). The application area is situated c.20m to the south of the cemetery.
- 2.2** Aerial photographs dating from 1999-2010 show an agricultural building within the application area and in the broad location of the current extant barn, south of the southeastern barrow within the cemetery. This is situated within a small yard area accessed from Centery Lane to the west. A track had been established along the other side of the field boundary to the east. The barrows are visible in the surrounding land as cropmarks, with the southeastern barrow surrounded by scrub (Google Earth 2010). By 2015, the building had been replaced with the present barn and by 2020 access into the yard had been created to its northwest (Devon Environment Viewer; Google Earth 2021).

## **3. AIMS**

- 3.1** The aims of the work were to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character, date and significance of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site, with particular reference to evidence for buried remains relating to the nearby prehistoric barrow cemetery.

## **4. METHODOLOGY (Plates 1 and 2)**

- 4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluation* (Revised 2020) and the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team document *Specification for Field Evaluation*. It comprised the machine excavation of six trenches totalling 60m in length, with each measuring 1.6m wide and positioned to provide representative coverage across the site as well as targeting landscaping and drainage associated with the development (Plates 1 and 2). The location of the trenches was approved by the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team.

**4.2** All trenches were located with a Leica Net rover GPS accurate to 1cm. The removal of overlying modern surfaces, turf and underlying soils and deposits 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 digitally and at scales of 1:10 and 1:20, while all site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

## **5. RESULTS** (Figs 2 and 3; Plates 3 and 4; Appendix 1)

### **Introduction**

**5.1** Features were present in one of the trenches (Trench 4) and these are described below. The results of all trenches are also summarised below, and tabulated context descriptions for all the trenches 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** Natural subsoil, which comprised light brownish- and reddish-yellow silty clay with common gravels was exposed at a depths of between 0.25m and 0.60m below the ground surface. It was overlain by various deposits, which are described below.

### **Trenches 1 and 3**

**5.3** In these trenches the natural was overlaid by deposits of modern dumped material to depths of between 0.25m and 0.60m below the current surface. The depth of the natural compared to other trenches indicates that the top of the natural has been truncated by the modern landscaping.

### **Trenches 2, 5 and 6**

**5.4** In these trenches the natural clay was exposed below agricultural soils; trenches 5 and 6 were located in the field south of the barn.

### **Trench 4** (Detailed plan Fig. 3a and sections Figs 3b and 3c; Plates 3 and 4)

**5.5** This trench was located to the east of the barn and aligned approximately east-west. The natural subsoil (401) was exposed at a depth of 0.30m below the ground surface, which was overlain by a ploughsoil (400). The trench contained one pit (F402) and two postholes (F404 and F406), cut into the natural 401, which are described in detail below.

### **Pit F402**

**5.6** This pit was circular in plan, and measured 1.90m in diameter by 0.36m deep. It had roughly 45° sides tapering into a wide flat base. The feature contained a single fill (403) of dark brown silty loam containing common gravel and moderate sub-angular stone fragments. Finds of two iron nails and a piece of plastic were noted within 403 but were not retained.

### **Posthole F404**

**5.7** This was circular in plan and measured 0.30m in diameter by 0.45m deep with vertical sides and a slightly pointed base. It had a single fill (405) of mid yellowish-brown clayey loam comprising mixed topsoil and redeposited natural along with wood fragments.

### **Posthole F406**

- 5.8 This feature was identified as of modern date containing an *in situ* decayed wooden post. It was not excavated.

## **6. DISCUSSION**

- 6.1 The evaluation returned low-level results with only three features identified, located to the east of the barn. All are of modern date and are associated with current agricultural practices within the field surrounding the building. The postholes are associated with former fences separating the barn and its curtilage from the field; they housed large timbers, other examples of which still survive nearby (see Plate 2). They are not considered to be non-designated heritage assets.
- 6.2 The evaluation also identified that land to the west and northwest of the barn has been disturbed by modern landscaping, and the ground level reduced (to below the level of natural observed elsewhere) and then built up again. The areas have been curtilages of both the current barn and the previous late 20th-century barn, and used for storage.
- 6.3 No evidence for any earlier activity, including below-ground remains of any previously unknown barrows associated with the cemetery, was identified. The majority of the site has been disturbed by activity associated with construction of the barn, and it is concluded that the archaeological potential is very low, and restricted to the field to the south and east of the barn.

## **7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS**

- 7.1 An online OASIS entry has been completed using the unique identifier **509511**, which will include a digital copy of the final report.
- 7.2 This report and the OASIS entry will represent the archive for the project.

## **8. SOURCES CONSULTED**

British Geological Survey Online Viewer:

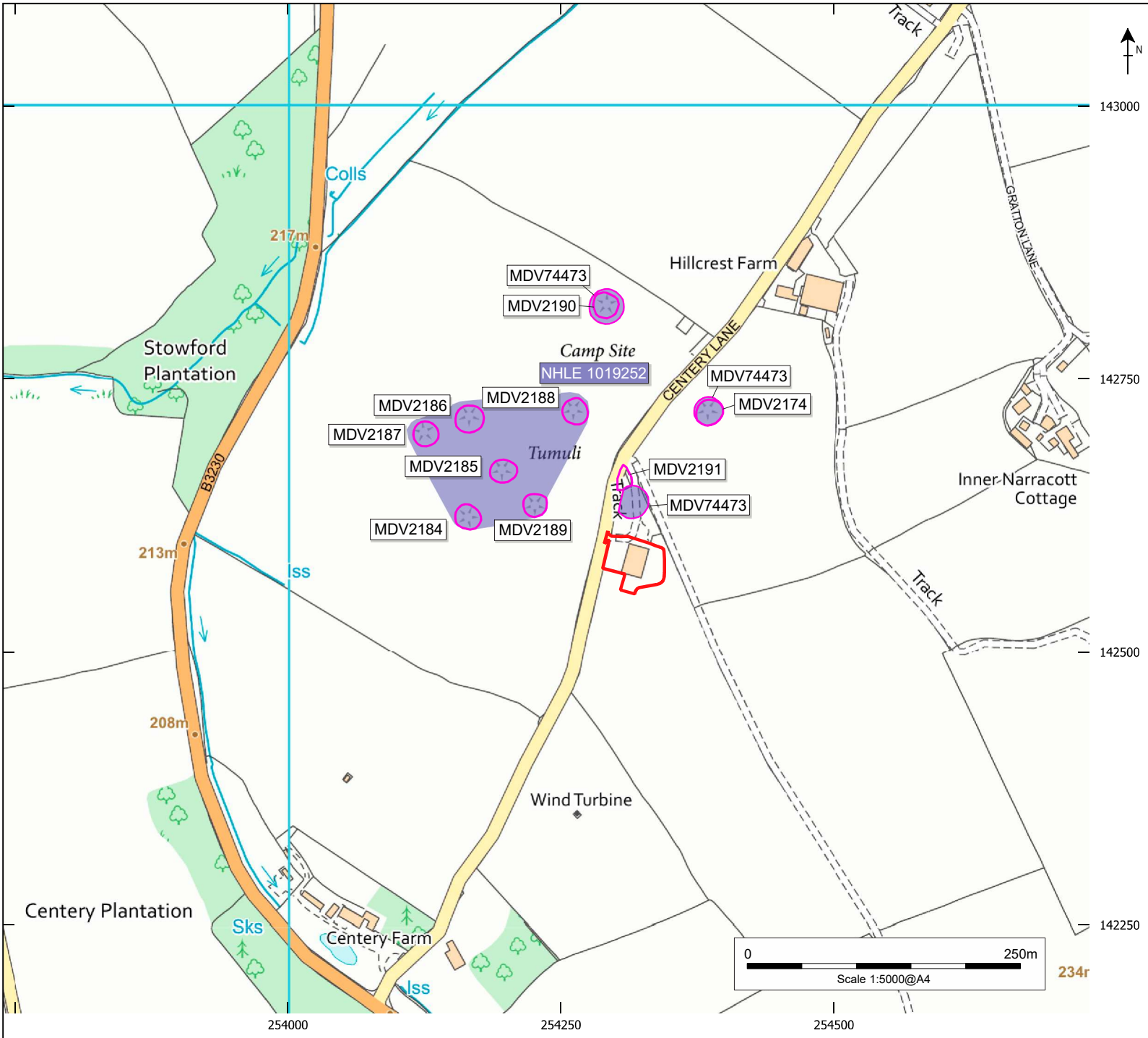
[www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)

Devon Environment Viewer:

<https://maptest.devon.gov.uk/portaldvl/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=82d17ce243be4ab28091ae1f15970924>

National Heritage List for England:

<http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list>



Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2022

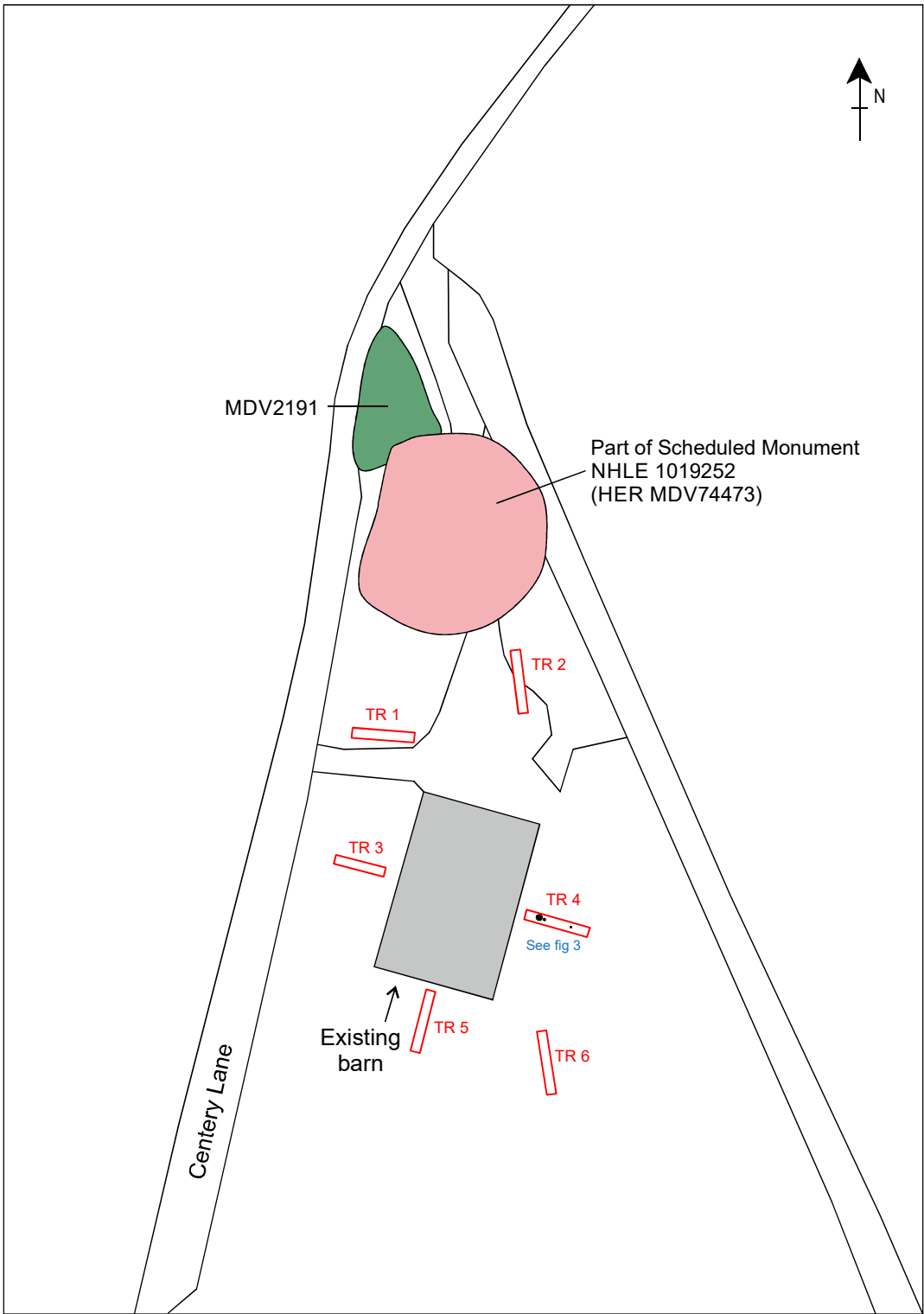
- Key**
- Application Area
  - Scheduled Monument
  - Historic Environment Data



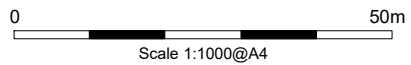
PROJECT  
**Land at Centery Lane, Bittadon,  
 North Devon**

TITLE  
**Fig. 1: Location of application area and  
 barrow cemetery**





- Scheduled monument
- HER record
- Trench with features



PROJECT

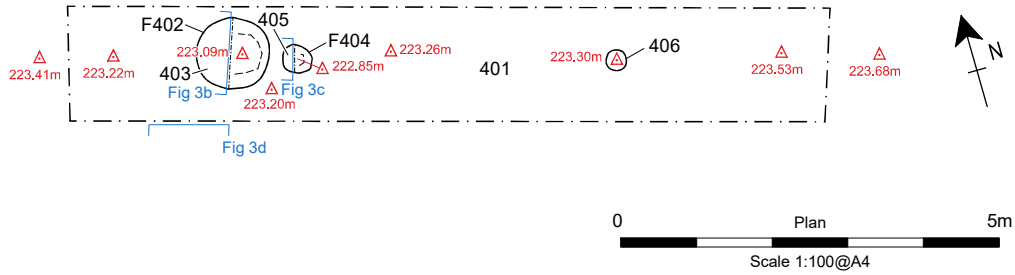
Land at Centery Lane, Bittadon, Devon

TITLE

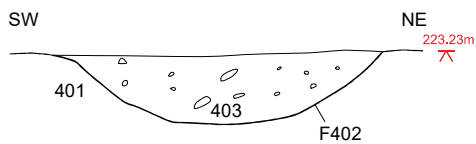
Fig. 2: Location of site and trenches with features shown



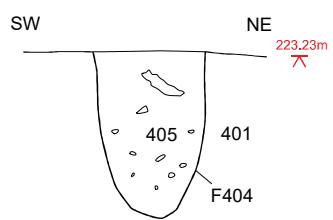
a) Plan of Trench 4



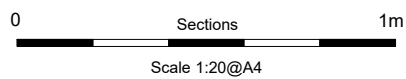
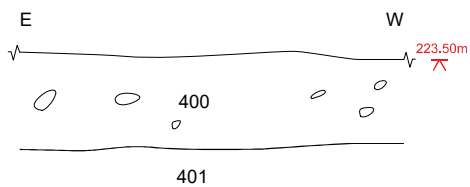
b) Section of pit F402



c) Section of posthole F404



d) Representative section



PROJECT

Land at Centery Lane, Bittadon, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 3: Trench 4, plan and sections





Plate 1: General working view of site, looking north towards Scheduled barrow with Trench 3 in background



Plate 2: General view looking northwest towards barn and Trenches 4-6



Plate 3: Trench 4, view to northwest  
(scale 1m)



Plate 4: Trench 4, pit F402 and  
posthole F404, looking northwest  
(scale 0.4m)

# Appendix 1

Tabulated Context Descriptions by Trench

## APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH

TRENCH 1		Length 10m	Width 1.60m	Alignment E-W
<b>Location</b> West: X - 254300.1, Y - 142608.4. East: X - 254310.7, Y - 142607.5				
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
100	Turf	0-0.1m	Turf	
101	Rubble	0.1-45m	Modern landscaping associated with a barn	
102	Light brownish-yellow and reddish-yellow silty clay with common gravel inclusions	0.45m+	Natural subsoil	

TRENCH 2		Length 10m	Width 1.60m	Alignment N-S
<b>Location</b> North: X - 254325.3, Y - 142621.3. South: X - 254326.6, Y - 142611.1				
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
200	Turf	0-0.05m	Turf	
201	Yellowish brown silty loam	0.05-0.30m	Lower layer of ploughsoil	
202	Light brownish-yellow and reddish-yellow silty clay with common gravel inclusions	0.30m+	Natural subsoil	

TRENCH 3		Length 10m	Width 1.60m	Alignment E-W
<b>Location</b> West: X - 254297.4, Y - 142589.1. East: X - 254305.7, Y - 142586.9				
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
300	Turf	0-0.05m	Turf	
301	Dark brown silty loam	0.05-0.30m	Modern topsoil	
302	Rubble	0.30-0.60m	Modern landscaping associated with a barn	
303	Light brownish-yellow and reddish-yellow silty clay with common gravel inclusions	0.60m+	Natural subsoil	

TRENCH 4		Length 10m	Width 1.60m	Alignment E-W
<b>Location</b> West: X - 254326.5, Y - 142580.6. East: X - 254336.9, Y - 142577.7				
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation	
400	Dark brown silty loam	0-0.30m	Ploughsoil	
401	Light brownish-yellow and reddish-yellow silty clay with common gravel inclusions	0.30m+	Natural subsoil	
402	Circular cut feature, measuring 1.90m diameter by 0.36m deep, with roughly 45° sides tapering into a wide flat base	0.30m-0.66m	Modern pit associated with current agricultural practices	
F403	Dark brown silty loam containing common gravel and moderate sub-angular stone fragment inclusions, and two iron nails and a piece of plastic	0.30m-0.66m	Fill of pit F402	
F404	Circular cur feature, measuring 0.30m diameter by 0.45m deep, with vertical sides and a slightly pointed base	0.30-0.75m	Modern posthole associated with current agricultural practices	
405	Mid yellowish-brown clayey loam comprising mixed topsoil and redeposited natural along with wood fragments	0.30-0.75m	Fill of posthole F404	
F406	Posthole – not excavated	0.30m+	Modern posthole associated with current agricultural practices	

**APPENDIX 1: TABULATED CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS BY TRENCH**

<b>TRENCH 5</b>		<b>Length</b> 10m	<b>Width</b> 1.60m	<b>Alignment</b> N-S
<b>Location</b> North: X - 254312.5, Y - 142569.2. South: X - 254309.9, Y - 142559				
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth b.g.s</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	
500	Dark brown silty loam	0-0.05m	Ploughsoil	
501	Yellowish-brown silty loam	0.05-0.35m	Lower layer of ploughsoil	
502	Light brownish-yellow and reddish-yellow silty clay with common gravel inclusions	0.35m+	Natural subsoil	

<b>TRENCH 6</b>		<b>Length</b> 10m	<b>Width</b> 1.60m	<b>Alignment</b> N-S
<b>Location</b> North: X - 254329.3, Y - 142563.1. South: X - 254331, Y - 142552.5				
<b>Context</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Depth b.g.s</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>	
600	Dark brown silty loam	0-0.25m	Ploughsoil	
601	Light brownish-yellow and reddish-yellow silty clay with common gravel inclusions	0.25m+	Natural subsoil	

b.g.s = below ground surface

### Devon Office

AC archaeology Ltd  
Unit 4, Halthaies Workshops  
Bradninch  
Nr Exeter  
Devon  
EX5 4LQ

Telephone/Fax: 01392 882410

### Wiltshire Office

AC archaeology Ltd  
Manor Farm Stables  
Chicklade  
Hindon  
Nr Salisbury  
Wiltshire  
SP3 5SU

Telephone: 01747 820581  
Fax: 01747 820440

[www.acarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.acarchaeology.co.uk)