

# Land adjoining Ashill Village Hall, Ashill, Ilminster, Somerset:

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

NGR 332405 117416

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Prepared by:  
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On behalf of:  
Mr J Speke

Document No: ACW1083/2/0

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archaeology

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# LAND ADJOINING ASHILL VILLAGE HALL, ASHILL, ILMINSTER, SOMERSET:

NGR 332405 117416

## RESULTS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRENCH EVALUATION

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### SUMMARY

*An archaeological evaluation, consisting of three machine-excavated trenches, was undertaken by AC archaeology on land adjoining Ashill Village Hall, Ashill, Ilminster (NGR: 332405 117416) during February 2018. The investigation was undertaken in support of a planning application for three new dwellings on the site. Two undated subsoil features were revealed in the trenches and comprised probable boundary ditches. In addition, a prominent earthwork was noted, aligned north-west to south-east, towards the west end of Trench 3. No dating evidence was recovered during the investigation.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation relating to land adjoining Ashill Village Hall, Ashill, Ilminster, Somerset (NGR: 332405 117416). The evaluation was commissioned by Mr. J Speke in support of a planning application following consultation with the South West Heritage Trust Senior Historic Environment Officer (SWHTSHEO).
- 1.2 The site area, comprising approximately 0.33ha, is situated on the north-east side of Ashill, which is approximately 4km north-west of Ilminster. The site location is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.3 The solid geology across the site consists of Charmouth Mudstone Formation which is a sedimentary bedrock formed approximately 183 to 199 million years ago (BGS online). There are no recorded details regarding superficial deposits.

### 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Somerset Historic Environment Record (SHER) has been consulted on-line. Records indicate that the village of Ashill has medieval origins, with St Mary's Church, a Grade II\* listed building located approximately 300m to the south-west of the site area (SHER 53510). The church has Norman north and south doorways and late 13th century and Perpendicular details. The Old Rectory (SHER 56490) has some 16th century features, but was extensively remodelled in the 1800s.
- 2.2 A deer park is thought to have been located on land south of Radigan Farm, which is about 1km north of the site area (SHER 53514). Place-names, such as Park Barn Lane and Parkland (which includes the application site) suggest that the area may have been within land that was emparked in 1411, when Henry IV gave Sir Thomas Beauchamp 250 acres in

his manor of Ashill. According to the HER, there are earthworks in the area that could represent former park pales.

- 2.3 There is also evidence for later medieval / post medieval field boundaries close to the application site. Indeed, boundary SHER 38460 runs through the evaluation area. Approximately 100m north-east of the site is a possible rectangular cropmark enclosure (SHER 13957). This is aligned on current field boundaries and may be the result of relatively recent agricultural practices.
- 2.4 Further evidence for post-medieval land-use is recorded in the general site area. SHER 38458 is a possible quarry pit located approximately 400m to the north-west. This consists of an oval shaped pit measuring 55m by 45m with a slight earthwork bank. Possible tree-planting banks dating from the post-medieval to the 19th century are also recorded in this same area (SHER38457).
- 2.5 During the construction of the Ashill bypass in 1995, fragments of medieval and post-medieval pottery were found during a watching brief (SHER 55460). Unfortunately, no further information is available on-line. An archaeological evaluation in the form of seven trial trenches were excavated to the north of Ashill church and approximately 300m west of the site. This work was undertaken in advance of a housing planning application. Nothing of archaeological significance was found during this programme of fieldwork.

### **3. OBJECTIVES**

- 3.1 The evaluation was undertaken to determine, as far as reasonably possible, the location, extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present on the site, as dictated by current best practice.

### **4. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

- 4.1 The investigation was undertaken in advance of the determination of a planning application, following advice from the SWHTSHEO, and in accordance with a project design prepared by AC archaeology (Clark 2018). The project design was approved prior to commencement by the SWHTSHEO.
- 4.2 The investigations comprised the excavation of three trenches, totalling 45m in length, each 15m in length and 1.6m wide. The trenches were positioned on the ground using a Leica Viva GPS (Fig. 1). All site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.
- 4.3 All soil removal was undertaken under the control and direction of the Site Archaeologist. Topsoil was removed by a tracked 7.5t excavator, using a wide toothless bucket, and stored alongside each trench, separated from any subsoil as necessary. Mechanical excavation ceased at the level at which archaeological deposits or natural geology was exposed.
- 4.4 All trenches were recorded using the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system.
- 4.5 The archive has been prepared using the site code ACW1083 and is currently stored at the offices of AC archaeology (Wiltshire).

## 5. RESULTS

### Introduction

- 5.1 Two of the three trenches excavated revealed evidence for subsoil features, comprising linear features believed to be former field boundaries or other enclosures. The linear feature recorded in Trench 3 may be associated with the extant earthwork which is broadly on a similar alignment and relates to a former historic hedge bank boundary.
- 5.2 A selection of photographs is included as plates 1 to 4, while relevant drawn plans and sections are included as fig. 2.

### Trench 1

- 5.3 This trench was aligned approximately east to west and was positioned on ground sloping down very gently to the east. A maximum depth of 700mm was excavated through topsoil and subsoil before revealing natural substratum. No archaeological deposits were observed or recorded in this trench. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 1.

**Table 1: Trench 1 general depositional sequence**

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
100	0 – 250mm	Mid grey-brown silty clay. Soft with rare stones	Turf and topsoil
101	250 – 600mm	Light to mid-brown, with grey hues, of silty clay. Common stones and gravels	Subsoil
102	600mm +	Mid yellow-brown clay with silt with abundant stones and gravels	Natural geology

### Trench 2 (plan Fig. 2a; section Fig. 2b)

- 5.4 This trench was aligned north to south, and was positioned on ground sloping down very gently to the east. A maximum depth of 700mm was excavated through topsoil and subsoil before a single feature, comprising a linear ditch, was exposed cutting through the natural substratum. The linear feature may relate to a historic field boundary or land division. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 2.

**Table 2: Trench 2 general depositional sequence**

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
200	0 – 300mm	Mid grey-brown silty clay. Soft with rare stones	Turf and topsoil
201	300 – 550mm	Light to mid-brown, with grey hues, of silty clay. Common stones and gravels	Subsoil
202	550mm +	Mid yellow-brown clay with silt with abundant stones and gravels	Natural geology

*Feature F203 (plate 1)*

- 5.5** This feature was linear in plan on an east to west alignment. It was 0.75m wide and had steep, concave edges and a flat base recorded to a depth of 0.25m. It contained a single fill (204), composed of mid grey-brown silty clay containing occasional sub angular and sub rounded stones and flint gravels. No finds were recovered from the fill of this feature. Feature F203 may represent the remnants of a field boundary or a form of land division. In addition, the profile and composition of F203 is comparable to feature F302, located in Trench 3 to the east, and together they may represent some form of land division or enclosure.

**Trench 3** (plan Fig. 2c; sections Fig. 2d-e, plate 2)

- 5.6** This trench was aligned east to west, and was positioned on fairly flat ground, albeit with a very gentle slope to the east. Towards its western end the trench dissected an extant linear earthwork bank. A maximum depth of 700mm was excavated through topsoil and subsoil before a single linear feature was exposed cutting through the natural substratum. The recorded layer sequence is summarised in Table 3.

**Table 3: Trench 3 general depositional sequence**

Context	Depth b.g.s.	Description	Interpretation
300	0 – 170mm	Mid grey-brown silty clay. Soft	Turf and topsoil
301	170mm – 600mm	Dark yellow-brown clay-silt with occasional, poorly sorted gravels	Subsoil
304	600m +	Mid yellow-brown clay with silt with common gravels and stones	Natural geology

*Feature F303 (plate 3)*

- 5.7** This feature was linear in plan, on a north-west to south-east alignment, located approximately 6m from the western extent of the trench. It had a recorded width of between 0.65 and 0.80m with steep, concave edges and a flat base recorded to a depth of 0.25m. It contained a single fill (302), comprising a mid-brown silty clay. No finds were recovered from the fill of this feature. This feature represents the base of a field or hedge bank boundary and is possibly associated with the similarly aligned extent earthwork; evident at ground level. Its profile and composition suggests it may be contemporaneous with F202 in Trench 2, and thus, form part of a historic field enclosure.

*Extant Earthwork (plate 4)*

- 5.8** A transect 7.0m in length was positioned c. 2.50m north of Trench 3. Levels were then noted at 0.50m intervals so as to create a profile of the bank material which is visible as an earthwork in this portion of the site. The earthwork is on a clear north-west to south-east alignment and stands to height of approximately 0.60m. Aerial photographic analysis suggests this constitutes a continuation of a hedge bank boundary that formerly divided this land parcel (HER ref 38460). Historic mapping as far back as the 1880s continually show a

single land parcel, and thus, it may have formed an earlier boundary, possibly related to the emarked land discussed in the archaeological background above.

## **6. FINDS**

- 6.1** A single fragment of pottery (55g) was recovered from the topsoil (200) of Trench 2. It comprised an earthenware rim dated to the post-medieval period. It was not retained for any further analysis.

## **7. COMMENT**

- 7.1** The trench evaluation has provided some evidence for archaeological activity on the site, comprising ditches located in Trenches 2 and 3. These features likely relate to former field systems or enclosure, possibly of medieval or later date. Feature F203 does not align with any known local field boundaries nor does it appear to correspond with any known earthwork, and thus, it may represent an earlier form of demarcation. The ditch sampled in Trench 3 (F302) appears on a similar alignment to the extant earthwork and is likely to be related to the former hedge bank, which continues c. 70m to the north-west. The heritage significance of these deposits is considered to be low.
- 7.2** The earthwork survives in a moderate state of preservation; to a height of at least 0.6m. It does not appear to have been subject to intensive ploughing.

## **8. REFERENCES**

British Geological Survey Online Viewer. Accessed February 2018.

Clark, R., 2018, *Land adjoining Ashill Village Hall, Ashill, Ilminster, Somerset: Project Design for an archaeological evaluation*. Unpublished document by AC archaeology Ltd. Ref. No. ACW1083/1/0, Feb 2018.

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**Photographic Plates**



**Plate 1: Trench 2, view of east-facing section of F203. View from the northeast, Scale 0.5m**



**Plate 2: General view of Trench 3 with the village hall in the background. View from the east, scale 1m**

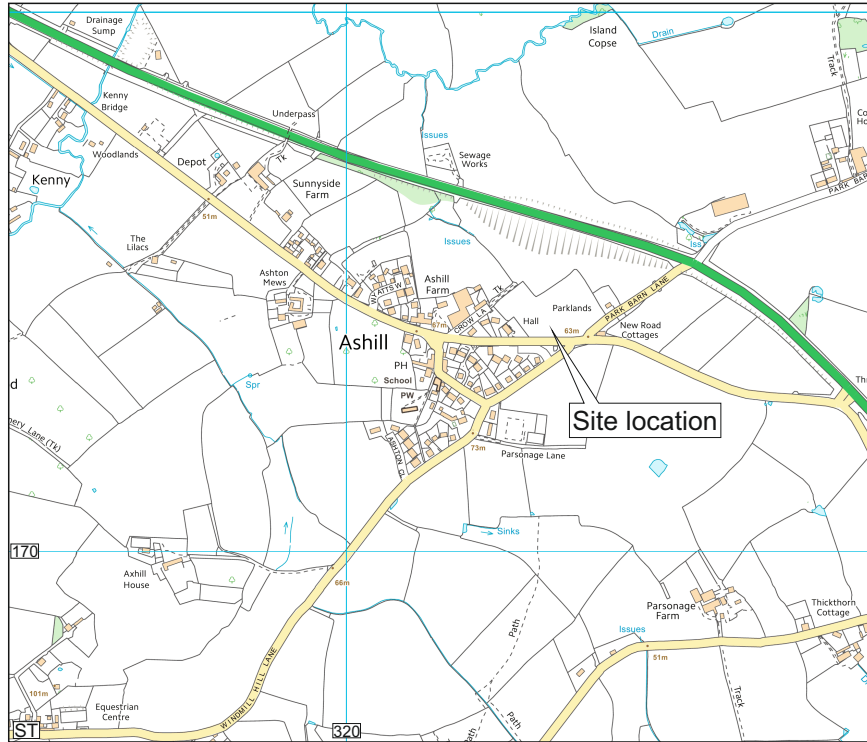


**Plate 3: Trench 3, slot through linear feature F302. View from the northeast, scale 1m**

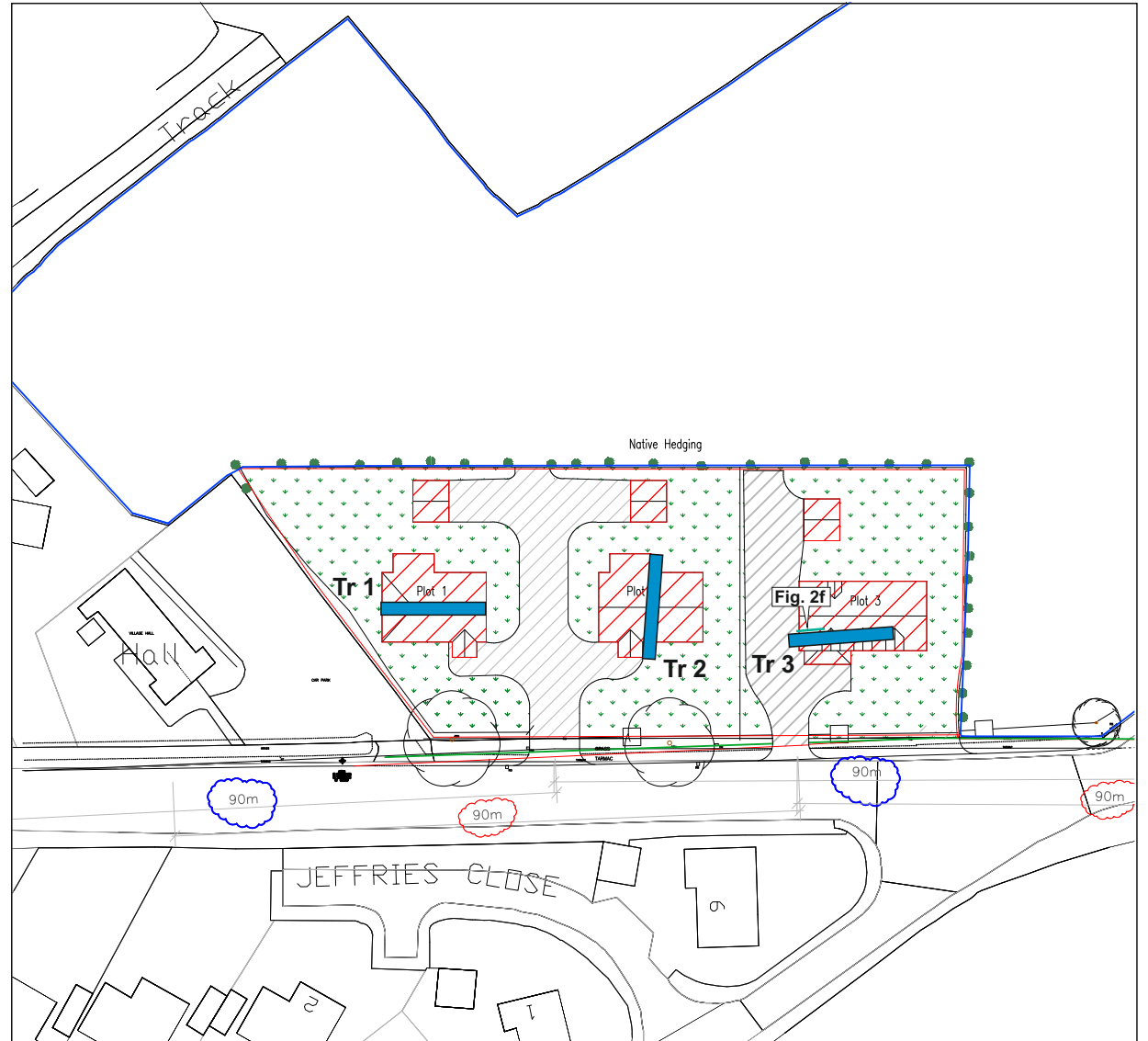


**Plate 4: View of earthwork looking toward extant hedgerow. View from the southeast**

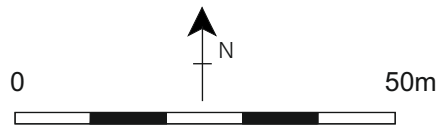




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Archaeological trench



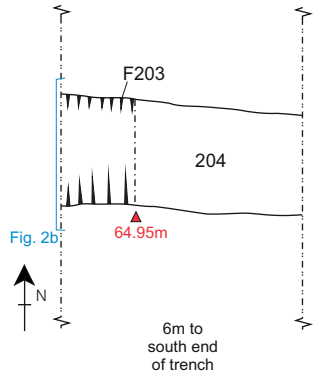
PROJECT

Land adjacent to Ashill Village Hall

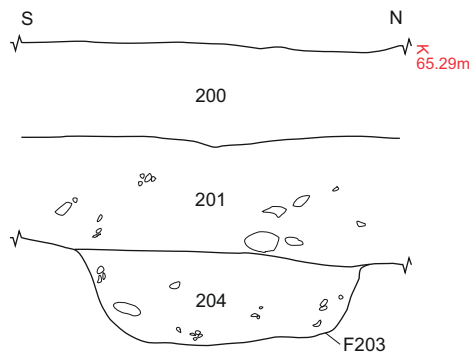
TITLE

Fig. 1: Site and trench locations

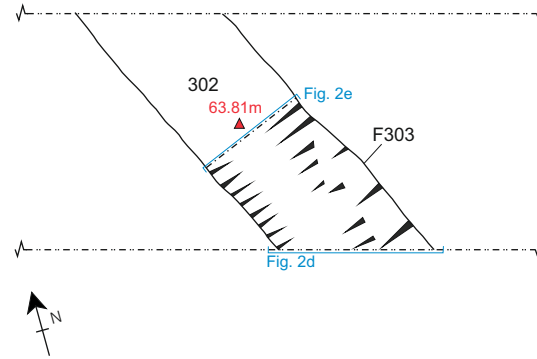
Trench 2  
a) Plan



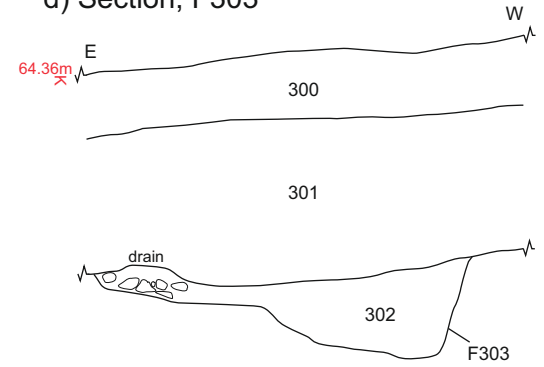
b) Section, F203



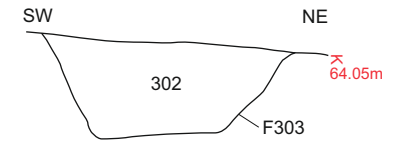
Trench 3  
c) Plan



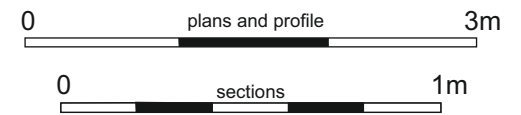
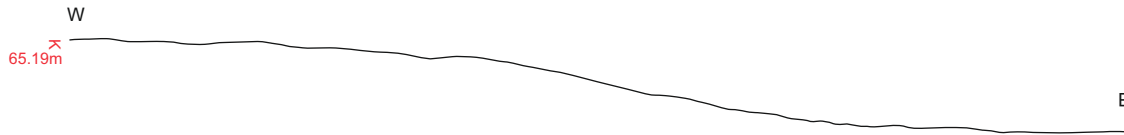
d) Section, F303



e) Section, F303



f) Profile across earthwork



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