# WHITEHILL PHASE II, NEWTON ABBOT, DEVON

(Centred on NGR SX 85063 72351)

# Results of an Archaeological Trench Evaluation

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With contributions from: Charlotte Coles and Naomi Payne

On behalf of: Bramley Homes (South West) Ltd

Report No: ACD2813/2/0

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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

An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during January 2024 on land at Whitehill, Newton Abbot, Devon (centred SX 85063 72351). The evaluation comprised the machine excavation of seven trenches totaling 175m in length with each 1.6m wide. These were positioned to target anomalies identified by a previous geophysical survey and to provide representative coverage of the proposed development area.

The only archaeological feature exposed was a probable clay extraction pit of late 18th to early 19th century date in the northern part of the site and recorded as a wider shallow negative earthwork extending beyond the trench. Some of the linear anomalies interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey were demonstrated to correspond to gravel-filled land drains. The extraction pit is one of a number of similar features of function and date recorded nearby.

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation was undertaken by AC archaeology during January 2024 on land at Whitehill, Newton Abbot, Devon (centred on SX 85063 72351). The evaluation was undertaken to provide supporting information for a revised forthcoming planning application to Teignbridge District Council for residential development, following consultation with the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCCHET). This follows a previously refused planning application for the site under the reference 22/01291/MAJ.
- 1.2 The site lies at the current northern extent of Newton Abbot on land to the north of Whitehill Road (Fig. 1). It covers 1.4 hectares, occupying a plot of agricultural land in the south of the site and parts of two wider fields to the north. The site is bounded by Whitehill Road to the south, residential properties to the southeast and southwest and elsewhere by agricultural land. It is situated on ground with a general trend of sloping down to the north, between 53m and 29m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying solid geology comprises Devonian and Carboniferous slate, lava and tuff of the Gurrington Slate Formation; there are no superficial deposits recorded on the site (British Geological Survey 2024).

#### 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 As part of the previous application, the site was the subject of a Historic Significance Statement (Metcalfe 2022) and a geophysical survey (Edwards and Trick 2022). The historic significance statement established the site lies within historically agricultural land, recorded on the Highweek Parish Tithe map and apportionment as 'pasture', located to the northeast of Highweek. This manor and village, now a suburb of Newton Abbot, was formerly known 'Teyngewike' and was first recorded in c.1200, although the suffix of 'wike' or wick, suggests a Saxon origin (Metcalfe 2022). Following the Norman conquest, a motte and bailey castle (National Heritage List of England ref. 1002492) was constructed approximately 500m southwest of the site. Located approximately 150m south of the site is the Grade I Listed All Saints Parish Church (1257209), which was originally constructed during the 15th century as a chapel of ease for Kingsteignton Church. Adjacent and to the east of the site are the grounds and buildings of the Grade II Listed early 19th century Whitehill House (1256772).

- 2.2 The geophysical survey identified a number of anomalies within the site. These were mainly located in the northern field and comprised a cluster of large irregular-shaped anomalies, interpreted as possibly representing pits containing ferrous material, and a series of intercutting linear anomalies, interpreted as representing enclosures of uncertain date. The southern field contains a linear anomaly that bisects the field and corresponds to a former field boundary that is present on the 1842 parish tithe map, as well as a series of parallel anomalies likely representing past cultivation traces of uncertain date.
- 2.3 To the east of the site a programme of archaeological works, comprising an archaeological trench evaluation and subsequent open area excavations, was undertaken by AC archaeology between June 2018 and May 2019 (Randall and Hughes 2020). The work recorded archaeological activity dated to the prehistoric, Romano-British and post-medieval periods. Prehistoric activity was most notably represented by a Middle Bronze Age ditch that contained a Middle Bronze Age Trevisker potter vessel. The Romano-British occupation comprised evidence for industrial processing in the form of a pit containing iron working slag and hammerscale and a lime kiln. This lime kiln was well-preserved and consisted of a stone lined chamber and draw-hole linking to a working terrace. Within the working terrace area was a grave containing an adult female skeleton, which likely dates to during or soon after the kiln's use and then sealed by the structural collapse. Post-medieval activity is mainly related to either quarrying or former field boundaries.

#### 3. AIMS

3.1 The main aim of the archaeological trench evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, date, and significance of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site, with particular reference to testing the anomalies identified by the geophysical survey. The results of the work will be reviewed and used if necessary to inform any subsequent mitigation that may be required as a condition should planning consent be obtained.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design prepared by AC archaeology (Vinnels 2024), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation (revised 2023) and the DCCHET document Specification for Field Evaluation. It comprised the machine excavation of seven trenches totaling 175m in length, with each being 1.60m wide and positioned to target anomalies identified by a previous geophysical survey, as well as in what were thought to be blank areas (Fig. 1).
- **4.2** All trenches were located with a Leica Netrover GPS accurate to 1cm. The removal of overlying 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, 1:20 or 1:50, while all site levels relate to Ordnance Datum.

#### 5. RESULTS

#### 5.1 Introduction

An archaeological feature was present in only one of the seven trenches (Trench 3). This is described in detail below, while tabulated context descriptions for all trenches are provided in Appendix 1. Context numbers are prefixed by the relevant trench number (e.g. 100 for Trench 1, 200 for Trench 2 etc.).

**5.2** Natural subsoil, which mainly comprised light greyish yellow clay and mid brownish red silty clay, was exposed in all trenches at a depth of between 0.35m and 0.56m below the ground surface, and was overlain by agricultural subsoil then topsoil. Modern gravel-filled land drains were present in trenches in the northern land parcel in the position of linear geophysical anomalies..

#### **5.3** Trench 3 (Detailed plan Fig. 2a and section Fig. 2b; Plate 2-3)

This was located in the northern field and was approximately northwest to southeast aligned. It was positioned to target three irregular-shaped anomalies interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey. The layer sequence consisted of topsoil (context 300) above the natural subsoil (301), which was present at a depth of 0.35m below ground surface. The trench contained a large probable clay extraction pit F302, which was located in the area of the irregular-shaped anomalies identified from the results of the geophysical survey and corresponded to an extant earthwork recorded beyond the trench.

#### Clay extraction pit F302

This was broadly circular sub-circular in plan measuring 21.25m wide by 0.50m deep, with irregular shallow sloping sides onto an irregular base. It had a single dark reddish brown silty clay loam fill (303), which contained post-medieval finds consisting of two sherds of pottery and one piece of glass.

#### 6. THE FINDS by Naomi Payne and Charlotte Coles

#### 6.1 Introduction

All finds recovered on site during the evaluation 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. Small quantities of post-medieval to modern finds were hand-excavated from four of the seven evaluation trenches. These are of low significance. This is a Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' Level 1 type (descriptive) report as per their online guidance *Toolkit for Specialist Reporting*.

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

Context	Context Description	Feature no.	Spot date	Post-medieval pottery		Glass	
				No.	Wt	No.	Wt
100	Trench 1 topsoil			1	8		
200	Trench 2 topsoil			2	12		
303	Fill of clay extraction pit F302	302	C19	2	6	1	68
700	Trench 7 topsoil			1	74		
Totals				6	100	1	68

#### 6.2 Post-medieval/modern pottery

Six sherds (100g) of post-medieval to modern pottery were recovered from Trenches 1, 2, 3 and 7, mostly from topsoil contexts. The pottery comprises a creamware base sherd from Trench 1 topsoil (100), a partial rim/neck of industrial whiteware with moulded decoration and a body sherd of white salt-glazed stoneware from Trench 2 topsoil (200), two sherds of industrial whiteware (a body sherd with blue transfer-printed floral decoration and a plate rim) from pit F302 (303) and a body sherd of internally-glazed redware from Trench 7 topsoil (700).

#### 6.3 Glass

A single shard of glass weighing 68g was recovered from clay extraction pit F302. This is a base fragment from a cylindrical green glass wine bottle of late 18th or early 19th century date.

#### 7. DISCUSSION

- 7.1 The trench evaluation returned low level results. The only archaeological feature exposed was the clay extraction pit in Trench 3 to the north, which was located in the area of the irregular-shaped anomalies identified from the results of the geophysical survey. In Trenches 1 and 2, the targeted linear anomalies corresponded to gravel-filled land drains.
- 7.2 The clay extraction pit exposed in Trench 3 corresponded to a wider extant shallow negative earthwork extending beyond the trench (Fig. 1). Finds recovered from the infilling soil comprise pottery and glass, indicating the feature is likely of late 18th or early 19th century in date. An extraction pit of these dates would correspond to previously recorded features within the immediate vicinity of the site.
- 7.3 To the northeast and east of the site are archaeological records of two post-medieval extraction pits. The one to the northeast is a sand extraction pit (Devon County Council Historic Environment Record ref. MDV21203), which is depicted on the 1847 parish tithe map, but is not shown on the 1890 First Edition Ordnance Survey 25-inch map suggesting the pit had gone out of use by this time (Green 2014). To the east is a former extraction pit which was initially mapped using LiDAR (MDV125387). The visible earthwork does not correspond to any pit depicted on the 19th century maps, suggesting that it had passed out of use by the early 19th century (Hegarty et. al. 2019).
- 7.4 The previous archaeological investigation to the east of the site, undertaken by AC archaeology between 2018 and 2019, exposed further evidence for extraction in the form of a number of quarry pits. These have also been dated to around the 18th to 19th century based on a fragment of tile recovered from one of the pits (Randall and Hughes 2020).

#### 8. CONCLUSION

8.1 The linear anomalies interpreted from the results of the geophysical survey, and targeted in Trenches 1 and 2, were demonstrated to correspond to gravel-filled land drains. A single clay extraction pit of late 18th to early 19th century date was exposed in Trench 3 in the northern part of the site and was recorded as a shallow negative earthwork extending beyond the trench. This is one of a number of similar features of function and date recorded nearby. No evidence for early occupation was identified during the work in the form of archaeological features or finds.

#### 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 ACD2813 and under a temporary reference number RAMM: 23/55 from the Royal Albert Memorial Museum (RAMM), Exeter. It will be held until it is known if any further archaeological work on the site is required.
- **9.2** An online OASIS entry has been completed using the unique identifier **521737**, which includes a digital copy of this report.

#### 10. SOURCES CONSULTED

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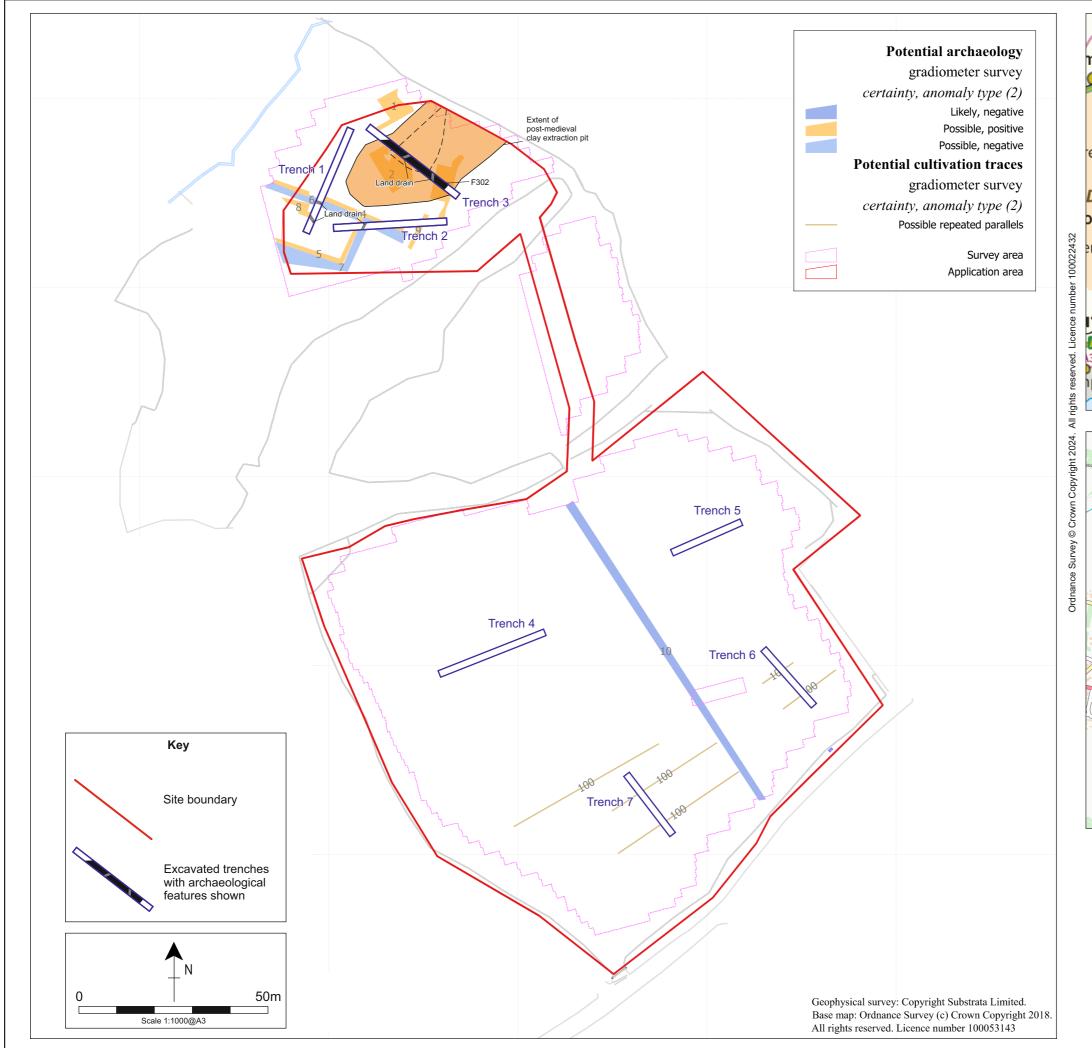
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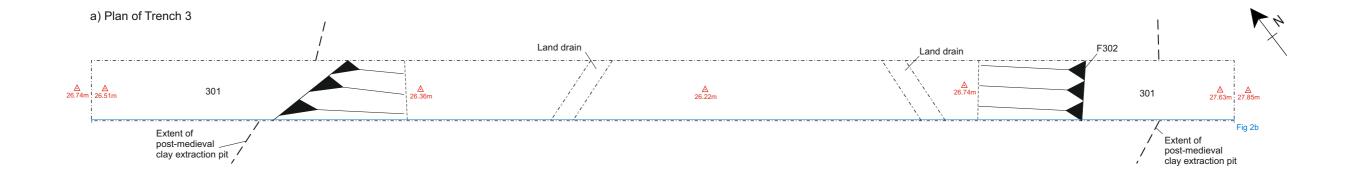


Whitehall Phase II, Newton Abbot, Devon

TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of site and trenches, showing archaeological features in relation to the geophysical survey interpretation





## b) Section of clay extraction pit F302



Whitehall Phase II, Newton Abbot, Devon

πτιε Fig. 2: Trench 3, plan and section







Plate 1: General view of site, looking northeast

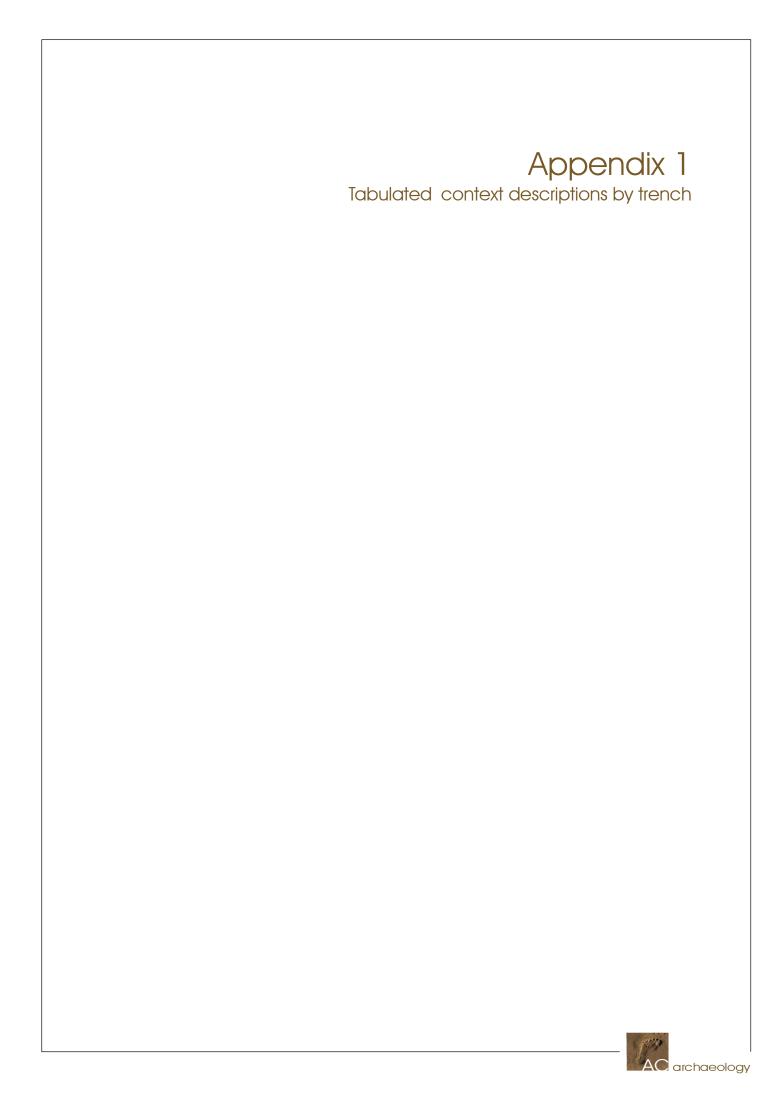


Plate 2: Trench 3, oblique view of clay extraction pit F302, looking north (1m scale)



Plate 3: General view of extant earthwork for clay extraction pit F302, looking southwest

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

Trench 1		<b>Length</b> 30m	Width 1.60m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s		Interpretation
100	Mid greyish Brown silty clay loam with rare sub- angular mudstone gravel	0-0.30m	Topsoil	
101	Dark grey silty clay loam with rare sub-angular mudstone gravel	0.30-0.40m	Agricultu	ural subsoil
102	Light greyish yellow clay with occasional mudstone gravel	0.40m+	Natural	subsoil

Trench 2		<b>Length</b> 25m	Width 1.60m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s		Interpretation
200	Mid greyish brown silt clay loam with rare sub-angular mudstone gravel	0-0.26m	Topsoil	
201	Mid grey silty clay with rare sub-angular mudstone gravel	0.26-0.36m	Agricult	ural subsoil
202	Light greyish yellow clay with rare manganese flecking	0.36m+	Natural	subsoil

Trench 3		<b>Length</b> 30m	Width 1.60m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s		Interpretation
300	Dark greyish brown silty clay loam with occasional sub-angular mudstone gravel	0m-0.35m	Topsoil	
301	Light grey silty clay with Abundant sub-angular mudstone gravel	0.35m+	Natural	subsoil
F302	Incomplete feature measuring 21.25m wide and 0.50m deep with irregular shallow sloping sides and irregular base	0.35-0.85m	Clay ex	traction Pit
303	Dark reddish brown silty clay loam with occasional sub- angular mudstone gravel	0.35-0.85m	Fill of cl	lay extraction pit F302

Trench 4		<b>Length</b> 30m	Width 1.60m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s		Interpretation
400	Mid greyish brown silty clay loam with occasional sub- angular mudstone gravel	0m-0.45m	Topsoil	
401	Mid reddish brown silty clay with occasional sub- angular mudstone gravel	0.45-0.54m	Agricult	ural subsoil
402	Mid brownish red silty clay with common sub-angular mudstone gravel and pebbles	0.54m+	Natural	subsoil

Trench 5		<b>Length</b> 20m	Width 1.60m	Alignment NE-SW
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s		Interpretation
500	Mid greyish brown silty clay loam with Occasional sub- angular mudstone gravel	0-0.38m	Topsoil	
501	Mid reddish brown silty clay loam with rare sub-angular mudstone gravel	0.38-0.56m	Agricult	ural subsoil
502	Mid brownish red silty clay with common sub-angular mudstone gravel and pebbles	0.56m+	Natural	subsoil

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

Trench 6		Length 20m	Width 1.60m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	I	nterpretation
600	Mid greyish brown silt loam with occasional sub- angular mudstone gravel	0-0.40m	Topsoil	
601	Mid reddish brown silty clay loam with rare sub- angular mudstone gravel	0.40-0.52m	Agricultu	ral subsoil
602	Light brownish red silty clay with common sub-angular mudstone gravel and pebbles	0.52m+	Natural s	ubsoil

Trench 7		<b>Length</b> 20m	Width Alignment 1.60m NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth b.g.s	Interpretation
700	Mid greyish brown silty clay loam with rare sub- angular mudstone gravel	0-0.36m	Topsoil
701	Dark reddish brown silty clay with common sub-angular mudstone gravel	0.36-0.50m	Agricultural subsoil
702	Light reddish brown silty clay with common sub-angular mudstone gravel	0.50m+	Natural subsoil

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