

Plymouth City Airport Enhancement, Infrastructure Works

NGR SX5045660567

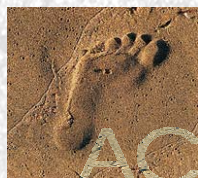
Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

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On behalf of:
Plymouth City Airport Ltd

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archaeology

PLYMOUTH CITY AIRPORT ENHANCEMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE WORKS

CENTRED ON NGR SX5045660567

RESULTS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL TRENCH EVALUATION

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation, carried out as a condition of planning permission for infrastructure works, on land at Plymouth City Airport (NGR SX50046024), was undertaken by AC archaeology during October 2009. The site is within the boundaries of the airport and is situated on largely grass-covered land adjacent to the runways. A separate evaluation has been undertaken on the residential part of the site.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of 12 trenches, each 1.6m wide and totalling 150m in length, with these positioned in areas to be affected by groundworks for the infrastructure works. Across large parts of the site negative results were recorded, although two parallel ditches and a further single ditch were present towards the southwest, which are likely to relate to agricultural field division and drainage pre-dating the establishment of the airport.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 An archaeological trench evaluation on land at Plymouth City Airport, Plymouth, Devon, was undertaken by AC archaeology during October 2009. The work was commissioned by Plymouth City Airport Ltd and was undertaken as a condition (52) of detailed planning permission (ref. Plymouth City Council 08/01968/FUL for the infrastructure works of the Plymouth City Airport Enhancement Scheme. The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.2 The site is located within the boundaries of the airport and occupies generally level grass-covered areas adjacent to the runways (Plate 1). It lies at around 143m OD and the underlying solid geology comprises shales and slates of the Upper Devonian Period (Geological Survey of Great Britain 1977).
- 1.3 This infrastructure works within the airport comprise the following:
 - A new link road to connect Tavistock Road with Plymbridge Lane;
 - a new engine testing bay;
 - a new earth noise bund adjacent the main runway; and,
 - installation of acoustic and security fencing.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 An archaeology and cultural heritage chapter for an Environmental Statement was prepared in support of the planning application (Peter Brett Associates 2008). There is only limited evidence for archaeological activity within this area and there is nothing recorded in the areas to be affected by the infrastructure works. Recorded sites nearby include a Neolithic stone axe found to the northeast of the site (HER ref. SX56SW/334) and possibly two circular enclosures visible on historic aerial photographs to the south (SX56SW/052). These latter features might, however, be recognition markers associated with the airfield.
- 2.2 The airport site itself was first used in 1923 for passenger flights, but was requisitioned in 1939 for naval flying, then in 1940 by the RAF. A series of WWII former defensive positions have been identified around the airfield.

3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aim of the evaluation was to establish the presence or absence, extent, depth, character and date of any archaeological features, deposits or finds within the site. The results of the work as set out in this report will be reviewed and used to inform the need for any subsequent mitigation as a second stage.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a method statement prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2009), submitted to and approved by the Plymouth City Council Historic Environment Officer prior to commencement on site. It comprised the machine-excavation of 12 trenches totalling 150m in length, with each trench 1.6m wide. This represented an approximate 2% sample of the total area affected by the infrastructure works. Trench positions (Fig. 1) were located in areas to be affected by development, but in some instances (Trenches 6 – 9) were also positioned to establish the location and depth of existing buried services.
- 4.2 The site was recorded in accordance with the AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 1*. All levels have been related to Ordnance Datum.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

In the majority of the trenches largely negative results were recorded and consequently these are described in tabulated form only in Appendix 1. In trenches where archaeological deposits or features were found, these are described in more detail below. Relevant plans and sections are included on Fig. 2.

The layer sequence generally comprised topsoil directly overlying weathered slate natural subsoil, but in some instances (Trenches 6 and 7) modern infilling deposits were present, while in other trenches (8 and 9) an interface layer was recorded between the topsoil and natural subsoil.

5.2 Trench 11 (Detailed plan Fig. 2a and sections 2b to 2d; Plate 2)

This trench was excavated through a mid brown clay silt topsoil (context 1100) to a general depth of 0.25m onto weathered slate and reddish-brown silty clay natural subsoil (1105). Two approximately northeast to southwest aligned parallel linear features (F1102 and F1104) were located towards the centre of the trench.

Probable ditches F1102 and F1104 were a maximum of 0.65m wide and 0.03m deep, with each having shallow, gradually sloping irregular sides and concave bases. Ditch F1102 petered out towards the northeast. Both contained similar mid brown clayey silt fills (1101 and 1103). A fragment of modern window glass was recovered from fill 1103.

5.3 Trench 12 (Detailed plan Fig. 2e and section 2f; Plates 3 and 4)

This trench was excavated to a depth of 0.23m onto weathered slate and mid brownish-red sandy clay natural subsoil (1203). This was below a layer of mid brown clay silt topsoil (1200). A linear feature (F1202) was located towards the northeast end of the trench, which was 0.4m wide and 0.09m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a concave base. A single mid brown clayey silt fill (1201) was present and no finds were recovered.

6. COMMENTS

- 6.1 The linear features exposed in Trenches 11 and 12 are probably agricultural ditches and boundaries. Parallel linear features F1102 and F1104 in Trench 11 are likely to represent ditches either side of a former hedge boundary, dated by the fragment of window glass to the 19th or 20th century. Ditch F1202 is likely to be a similarly dated small drainage ditch or boundary. These features probably relate to agricultural land-use pre-dating the construction of the airport in 1923.
- 6.2 In the majority of trenches, however, no evidence for pre-modern archaeological activity was recorded. In Trenches 6 and 7 the modern infilling layers below topsoil are likely to represent the levelling of certain areas of the site as part of the construction of the airfield.
- 6.3 Based on the general absence of pre-modern features, deposits and finds, it is considered unlikely that any significant archaeological remains are present elsewhere in the areas of proposed infrastructure works.

7. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

- 7.1 The archive is currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. It will be deposited at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, Plymouth.
- 7.2 The OASIS (Online Access to the Index of archaeological InvestigationS) number for this project is 66923.

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

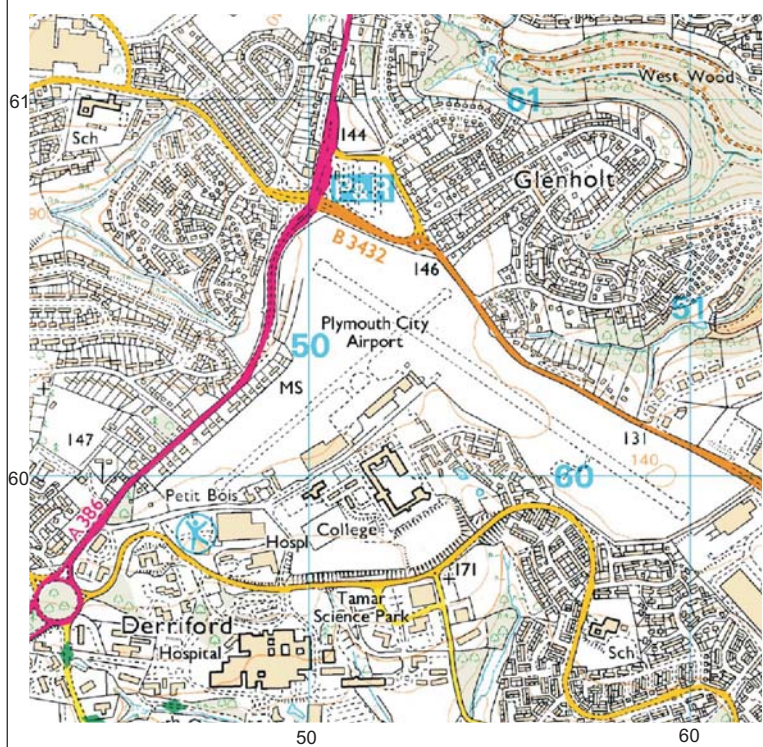
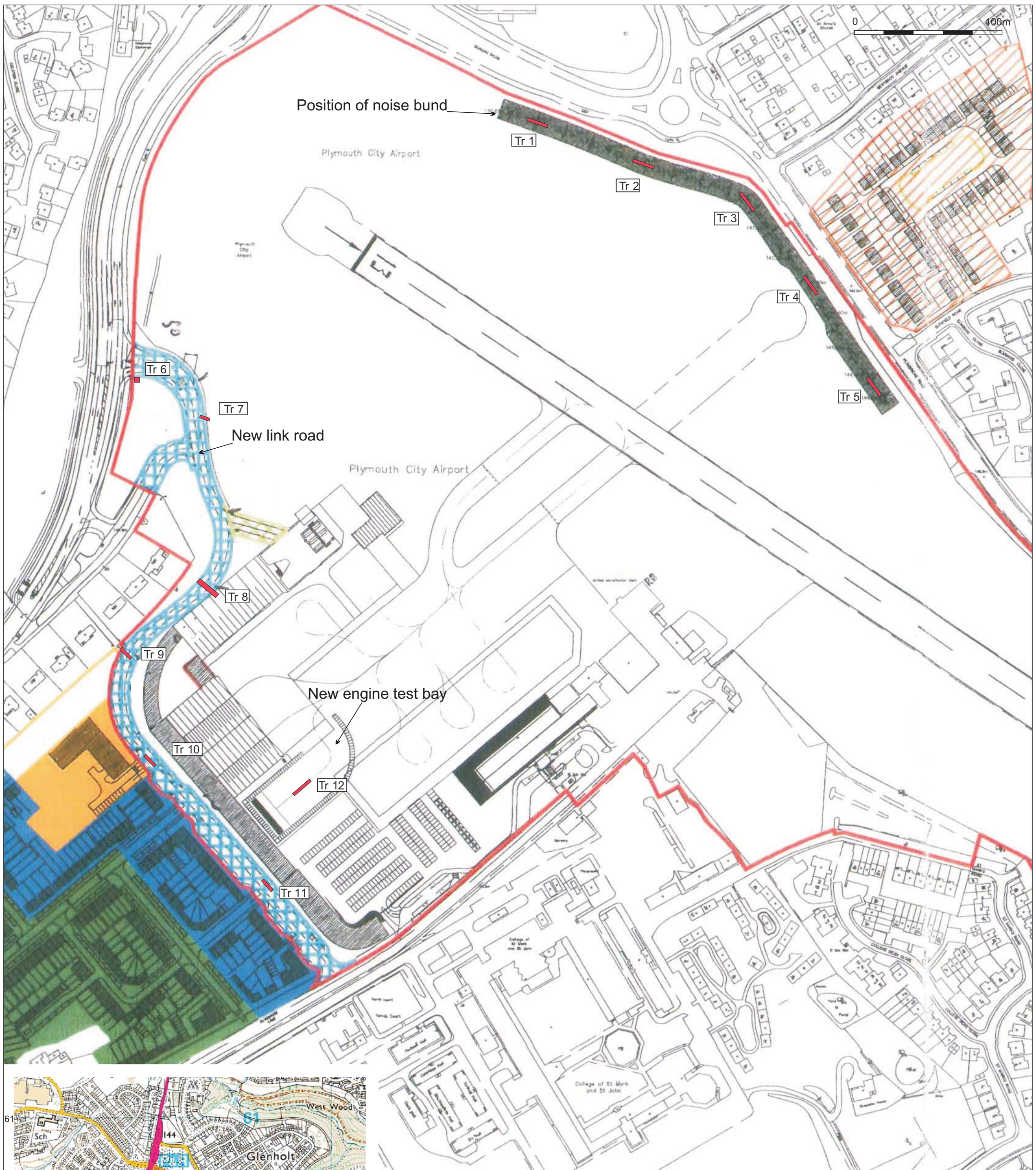
- 8.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Plymouth City Airport Ltd. The site trial-trenching was carried out by Simon Hughes, Kerry Dean and Richard Sims and the illustrations for this report were prepared by Sarah Cottam. The advice and collaboration of John Salvatore, Plymouth City Council Historic Environment Officer, is duly acknowledged.

9. REFERENCES

Geological Survey of Great Britain, 1977, 1:50,000 Series (England and Wales) Drift Edition Sheet 348 (Plymouth).

Peter Brett Associates, 2008, 'Archaeology and Cultural Heritage', in *Plymouth City Airport Enhancement Programme Environmental Statement, Volume 1, Main Report*. Doc Ref: R01/rev01

Valentin, J., 2009, *Plymouth City Airport Enhancement, Infrastructure Works: Method statement for an archaeological trench evaluation*. Unpublished AC archaeology document ref. ACD105/1/1



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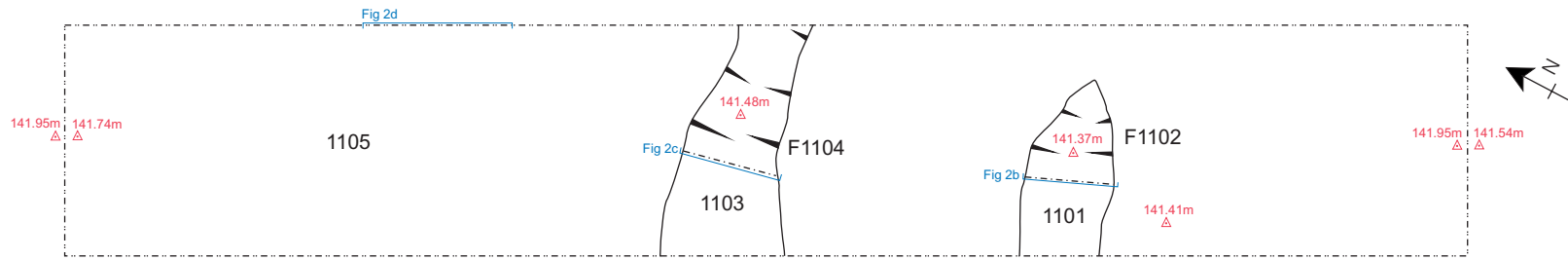
Plymouth Airport

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site and trench locations

Trench 11

a) Plan



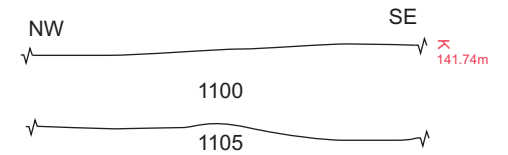
b) Section, F1102



c) Section, F1104

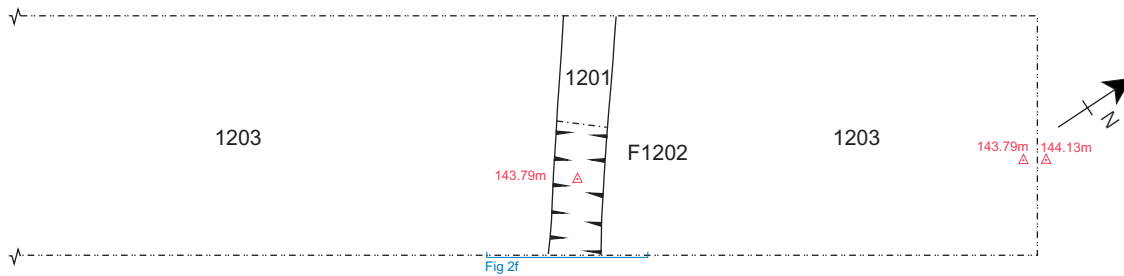


d) Representative section

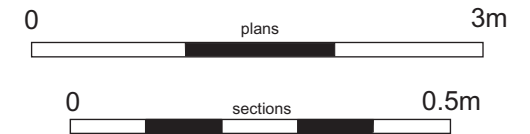
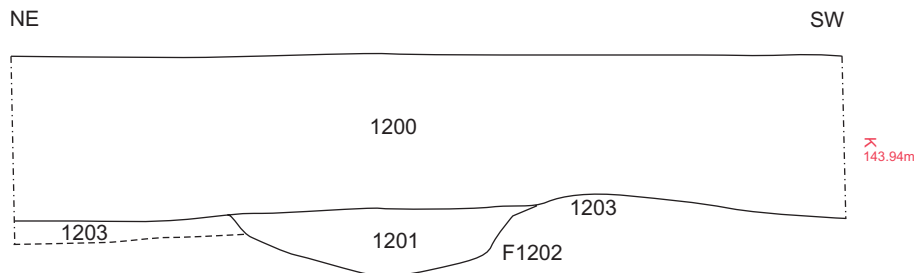


Trench 12

e) Plan



f) Section, F1202



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Fig. 2:
Plans and sections,
Trenches 11 and 12





Plate 1:
General view of site with Trench 1
in the foreground.
Looking southeast (scale 1m)



Plate 2:
General view of Trench 11.
Looking northwest (scale 1m)



Plate 3: General view of site with Trench 12 in the foreground. Looking northeast



Plate 4: Trench 12, ditch F1202. View to the southeast (scale 0.3m)

APPENDIX 1: Descriptions of negative trenches

Trench 1			Length 15m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
100	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragments	0m-0.22m	Topsoil		
101	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brown red silt clay	0.22m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 2			Length 15m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
200	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragments	0m-0.25m	Topsoil		
201	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.25m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 3			Length 15m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
300	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragments	0m-0.2m	Topsoil		
301	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.2m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 4			Length 15m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
400	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragments	0m-0.25m	Topsoil		
401	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.25m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 5			Length 15m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
500	Mid greyish-brown friable silt with common weathered slate fragments	0m-0.2m	Topsoil		
501	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.2m+	Natural subsoil		
502	Rectangular cut feature	0.2m+	Modern probable geotechnical pit		

Trench 6			Length 2m	Width 1.6m	Alignment E-W
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
600	Dark brown friable silt	0m-0.18m	Topsoil		
601	Slate rubble with mortar inclusions	0.18m-0.43m	Modern rubble infilling		
602	Mid to light brownish-red weathered slate	0.43m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 7			Length 8m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
700	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragment inclusions.	0m-0.23m	Topsoil		
701	Dark brownish-grey friable clay silt with common charcoal, plastic and slate fragments	0.23m-0.37m	Dumped modern soil layer		
702	Mid brownish-grey friable silty clay with abundant weathered slate fragments and occasional plastic	0.37m-0.73m	Dumped modern layer of re-deposited natural subsoil		
703	Mid brown friable clay silt with moderate slate fragments	0.73m-0.9m	Buried topsoil		
704	Mid to light brownish-red clay silt with abundant weathered slate fragments	0.9m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 8			Length 17m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
800	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragments	0m-0.25m	Topsoil		
801	Mid reddish-brown friable silty clay with common slate fragments	0.25m-0.3m	Interface layer		
802	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.3m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 9			Length 8m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
900	Mid brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragments	0m-0.19m	Topsoil		
901	Mid reddish-brown friable silty clay with common slate fragments	0.19m-0.24m	Interface layer		
902	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.24m+	Natural subsoil		

Trench 10			Length 15m	Width 1.6m	Alignment NW-SE
Context	Description	Depth	Interpretation		
1000	Mid greyish-brown friable clay silt with common weathered slate fragments	0m-0.25m	Topsoil		
1001	Mid brownish-grey weathered slate with mid brownish-red silty clay	0.25m+	Natural subsoil		

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