

Blackbury Farm, Southleigh, East Devon

NGR (centred on) SY 1769792808

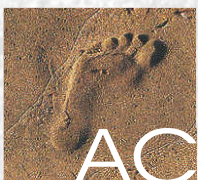
Results of an archaeological watching brief

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with contributions from
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On behalf of
Devon County Council

Document No: ACD137/1/0

Date: January 2010



AC archaeology

Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

Civil Parish & District: Southleigh, East Devon	National Grid Reference SY1769792808	Number:
Subject: An archaeological watching brief at Blackbury Farm, Southleigh		Photo attached: Plates 1 and 2
Planning Application no: 08/1348/FUL	Recipient museum: RAMM, Exeter	
OASIS ID: 70346	Museum Accession no: 18/2010	
Contractor's reference number/code: ACD134	Dates fieldwork undertaken: 4th to 11th January 2009	

Introduction

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by AC archaeology on land which is part of Blackbury Farm, Southleigh, Devon, during groundworks associated with the construction of agricultural buildings and an access track. The work was commissioned by Devon County Council.

The site is situated within a large triangular field approximately 1.2km to the northwest of Blackbury Farm (Fig. 1). It lies at around 200m OD and at the time of the work was under pasture. In the area around the site there is extensive evidence for prehistoric activity, including a large flint scatter in this field (DCHER ref. 59695) and a ring ditch cropmark indicating the presence of a barrow immediately to the west (10854). There are also a number of other sites of prehistoric date nearby, such as many more barrows, artefact scatters and cropmarks, while the Lovehayne Bronze Age bronze hoard (10773) was recovered from a barrow/cairn to the south in 1763.

Results

Groundworks comprised the removal of ploughsoil within the footprints of the access track, building complex/yard and mobile home areas (Fig. 1 and Plate 1). This was carried out using a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket and working under archaeological supervision. The trackway and building complex/yard footprints were stripped directly onto the top of the natural subsoil (context 101), which comprised a light brownish-yellow to mid red clay with occasional gravels. This was generally present at a depth of 0.3m below ploughsoil and turf (100). The area for the mobile home was excavated to a depth of 0.2m and natural subsoil was not exposed. A water pipe trench, located along the northwest and northeast perimeter of the building complex/yard footprint, was also machine-excavated. The trench was 0.6m wide, 0.8m deep and no archaeological features or deposits were present.

Two features were exposed cutting natural subsoil towards the southeast side of the building complex/yard area (F102 and F106 on Fig. 1). Based on their irregular plans and profiles (Fig. 2a-f, Plate 2), these are likely to be tree throws. Both features contained a basal fill of disturbed natural subsoil (103/107) overlain by dark organic-rich fills (104/108). Feature F102 also contained a final fill of redeposited natural subsoil (105). All fills contained frequent charcoal inclusions.

The flaked stone by Julian Richards

A total of 109 pieces of flaked stone was recovered from the ploughsoil. No other artefact types were present. The composition of the assemblage is set out in Table 1.

Table 1. Worked flint summary

Context	Cores			Flakes			Blades			Burnt	Tools			Chips	Comment	Total
	Flake	Blade	Frag	Whole	Broken	Ret	Whole	Broken	Ret		Wkd	Scraper	Other			
100	3		2	59	21	9	2			4	2	3	4	Other tools: 2 x notch 1 x naturally backed knife		
Total	3	0	2	59	21	9	2	0	0	4	2	3	4		109	

The condition of the flaked stone is fresh with little indication of mechanical damage. There is also little sign of chemical alteration of worked surfaces (patination/cortication). The raw material is mixed, including both flint (from more than one source) and small quantities of chert. There are a few pieces (4 flakes/broken flakes) which show signs of burning.

The cores/core fragments are unsystematic and represent flake rather than blade manufacture. The amount of cortex remaining on the flakes suggests that all stages of reduction (apart from the initial decortications of raw nodules) were taking place on site. There are only two deliberately produced blades (one of which was retouched to make a naturally backed knife), suggesting that this assemblage does not contain a significant Mesolithic/earlier Neolithic element. This is confirmed by the flake assemblage which shows little evidence of core preparation and therefore suggests a much later date (possibly well into the Bronze Age). With the exception of the naturally backed knife noted above, and one small neatly retouched thumbnail scraper, which is a type that commonly has Beaker associations, the tools and retouched flakes are not diagnostic.

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This unstratified assemblage indicates 'activity' in this location potentially from the later Neolithic until well into the Bronze Age. The absence of primary reduction debris, coupled with the small number of tools and burnt flints, suggests a domestic rather than industrial emphasis. However, in the absence of associated stratified material any further speculation is unwise.

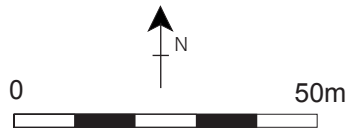
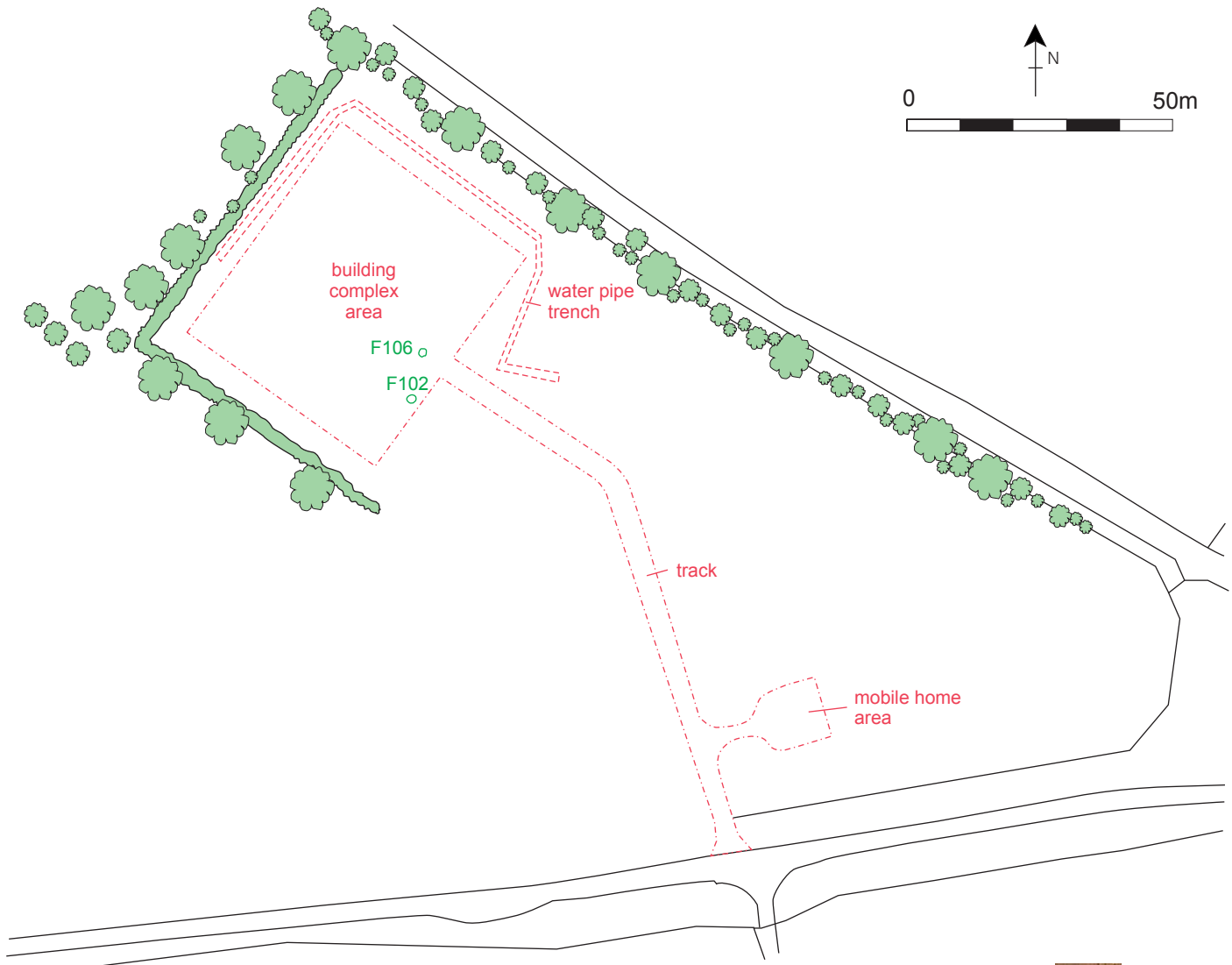
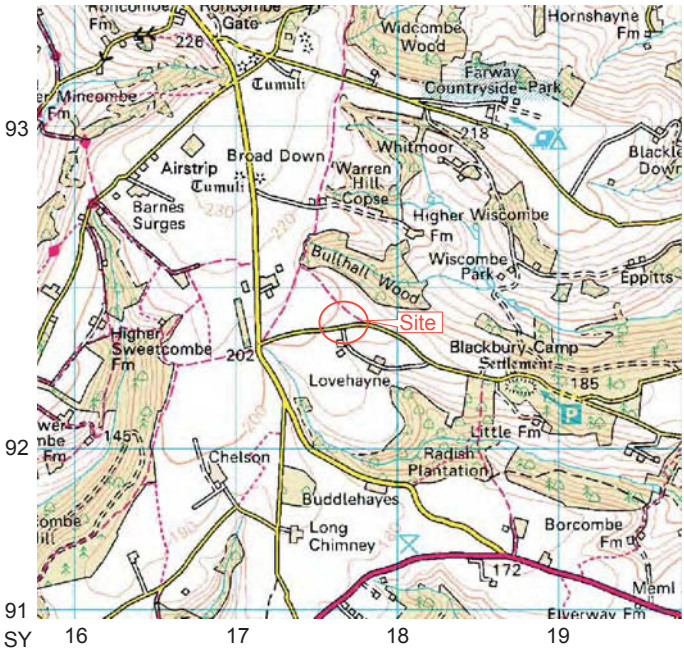
Comments

Across the majority of the site the topsoil strip was generally good and any archaeological features or deposits present would have been easily recognised. Two tree throws were, however, recorded and the presence of frequent charcoal within their fills suggests that the trees were burnt out, perhaps as part of deliberate clearance.

Although no *in situ* prehistoric features were present, the large quantity of worked flint recovered from the ploughsoil does indicate probable late Neolithic or Bronze Age domestic activity within close proximity.

Recorder: Simon Hughes, AC archaeology

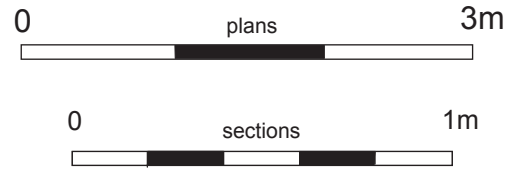
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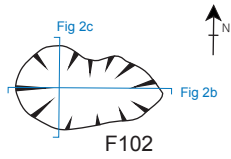
--- Area of archaeological monitoring

Fig. 1: Site location and areas monitored

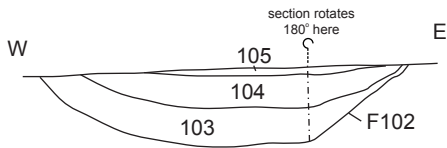
F102



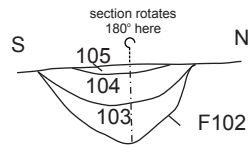
a) Plan



b) Section

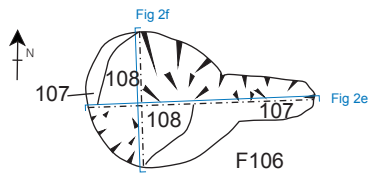


c) Section

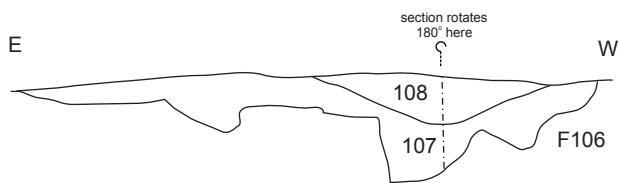


F106

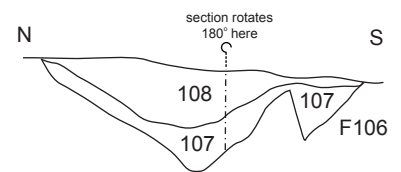
d) Plan



e) Section



f) Section



PROJECT

Blackbury Farm, Southleigh

TITLE

Fig. 2: Detailed plans and sections, F102 and F106



Plate 1: General view of building complex area and water pipe trench, looking south



Plate 2:
View of F106 looking west
(scale 0.3m)

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