

The Former Showground Site, Holsworthy, Devon

NGR SS 3410 0454

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

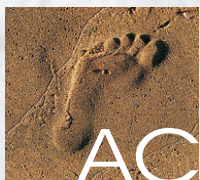
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AC archaeology

THE FORMER SHOWGROUND SITE, HOLSWORTHY, DEVON (CENTRED ON SS34100454)

Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

Planning ref. Torridge District Council 1/0606/2009/OUTM

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Summary

An archaeological trench evaluation, on the site of a proposed new residential development at the former Holsworthy Showground site, Holsworthy, Devon (NGR SS34100454), was undertaken by AC archaeology during August 2010. The site occupies an area of approximately 7.12 hectares and is situated to the north of the historic core of the town. There are no previously recorded archaeological sites or monuments on the site itself, but it is located in area considered to have potential for prehistoric settlement and funerary remains.

The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of 33 trenches totalling 990m in length, with each trench 1.6m wide. The work identified parts of two former hedgebank boundaries shown on 19th century maps, as well as a number of modern drainage gullies/ditches. No in situ remains pre-dating the late post-medieval period were present. Two small and abraded sherds of 16th/17th century pottery were recovered from one of the former field boundary ditches, but 19th century artefacts were also recovered from this.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report sets out the results of an archaeological trench evaluation carried out on land at the former Holsworthy Showground, Trewyn Road, Holsworthy, Devon (SS34100454). The work was carried out as the first stage in a programme of archaeological works as a condition of outline planning consent for residential development (ref. 1/0606/2009/OUTM) and was required by Torridge District Council, as advised by Devon County Historic Environment Service (hereafter DCHES).
- 1.2 The evaluation was carried out by AC archaeology during late August 2010 and was commissioned by CgMs Consulting Ltd on behalf of Redrow Homes (South West).
- 1.3 The site is located to the north of the historic core of Holsworthy and lies to the east of Trewyn Road (Fig. 1). It occupies an area of approximately 7.12 hectares and is situated at around 140m OD, on ground sloping gently down to both the north and south. The site is mainly grass-covered (Plate 1), with the exception of the numerous trackways present, which consist of compacted chippings.
- 1.4 The underlying solid geology comprises sandstone of the Bude Formation, which is overlain by soils of the Neath and Holsworthy series and Tedburn/Brickfield series along the northern edge of site (Exeter Archaeology 2008, 1).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 An archaeological assessment carried out for the site (Exeter Archaeology 2008) established that there has been little in the way of previous archaeological investigations undertaken within the area. Evidence for prehistoric activity in the locality comprises a small collection of lithic material, a polished greenstone axe and a group of eight round barrows, all of which lie beyond the vicinity of the site. Historic evidence is equally sparse and suggests that the site, until recently, has remained undeveloped and most likely used for meadow and pasture, having probably been enclosed from rough grazing land during the 18th century. Historic maps from the 19th century show the site to be then divided into five smaller enclosed fields. These boundaries were removed during the 20th century.

2.2 The more recent use of the site as part of the former Holsworthy showground is widely evident, and consists of numerous cattle stalls to the northwest, concrete foundation bases of now demolished buildings along the central edge and concrete tanks within the northeast corner, all interconnected with a network of trackways.

3. AIMS

3.1 The main aim was 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. 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 of archaeological works.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a specification prepared by CgMs Consulting Ltd (Pugh 2010), submitted to and approved by the DCHES Archaeology Officer prior to commencement on site. It comprised the machine-excavation of 33 trenches with a combined length of 990m, with each trench 30m long and 1.6m wide. The trenches were broadly NE-SW or NW-SE orientated, with the exception of Trench 33, which was repositioned on a N-S alignment. The location of trenches as excavated is shown on Fig. 2.

4.2 The site was recorded in accordance with the AC archaeology pro-forma recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and with reference to AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 1*. All plans were drawn at a scale of 1:50 and sections at 1:10 or 1:20, as appropriate. All levels have been related to Ordnance Datum. All spoil heaps were scanned for displaced finds.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Archaeological features were present in a number of trenches, with these comprising linear ditches and gullies, with some depicted on 19th and early 20th-century historic maps, while others are likely to be more recent and relate to 20th century drainage of the site when it was used as a showground.

5.2 The general recorded layer sequence comprised between 0.10-0.44m of dark brown clay silt topsoil, over 0.15-0.40m of mid brown silt clay subsoil onto a mixed light yellow brown, grey and orange clay and stone natural subsoil (see Fig. 3g-f). The presence of modern made ground of rubble and stone, up to 0.45m in depth, was additionally recorded in the northeast corner of site, within Trenches 1-3. The results on a trench by trench basis are presented in tabulated form in Appendix 1, with relevant plans and sections included as Fig. 3. Trenches which contained the principal features are also summarised below.

5.3 Trenches 7, 21 and 33

These trenches all contained parts of the same two approximately NW-SE aligned parallel linear features. These features were hand-excavated in Trench 21 only, with F2102 and F2104 (Fig.3a-c; Plates 2-3), present at a depth of 0.44m below ground level. Feature 2102 was 2.6m wide and 0.42m deep with shallow sloping sides and flattish base. It contained a mid-dark grey brown firm silt clay fill (2103) with common sub-angular stones <0.20m. A small quantity of

post-medieval pottery and tile was recovered. Parallel linear feature F2104 was 0.48m wide and 0.16m deep, with rounded sides and a concave base. It contained a dark brown soft silt clay fill (2105), containing rare small-medium sub-angular stones <0.05m. No finds were recovered.

5.4 Trenches 4 and 28

These trenches both contained two parallel and adjacent approximately N-S aligned linear features. In Trench 28, F2802 and F2804 (Fig. 3d-e; Plate 4) were present at a depth of 0.34m below ground surface. Feature F2802 was 1.77m wide and 0.28m deep, with gradually sloping sides and a flattish base. It contained a soft dark brown clay silt fill (2801), with occasional-moderate sub-angular stones <0.05m. A fragment of window glass was recovered. Parallel linear feature F2804 was 1.60m wide and 0.12m deep, with moderately sloping sides and an undulating base. It contained a soft dark brown clay silt fill (2803), with occasional medium-large sub-angular stones <0.10m. A single iron nail was recovered. Parallel linear ditches were also present in Trench 4 (F402, 404), which are likely to represent a continuation of these features. Only the most easterly linear feature (F402) was hand-excavated, with this 0.8m wide and 0.12m deep, with moderately sloping sides and a flat base. It was filled with a dark brown soft silt clay (403) and no finds were recovered.

5.5 Other linear features (Locations on Fig. 2)

The recorded features within the remaining trenches comprised a group of narrow, linear ditches/gullies that are likely to have exercised similar functions, probably drainage of the showground site. These measured between 0.35m-1.6m wide and contained a fill of either yellow brown or dark brown/grey silt clay. These were mostly orientated N-S, although other alignments were also recorded. A sample of these features in Trench 1 (F102 and F104) and Trench 26 (F2604) were hand-excavated and were shown to vary in depth from between 0.10-0.25m, with gentle-moderate sloping sides and concave bases. No finds were recovered.

6. THE FINDS

6.1 Introduction

All finds recovered on site have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. Finds were then quantified according to material type within each context. The assemblage was then scanned by context to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented.

Table 1: Finds summary (weight in grams; CBM = Ceramic Building Material)

Trench	Context	Context type	Early post-medieval pottery		Post-Medieval Pottery		CBM		Glass		Iron (Fe)	
			No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt
21	2103	Fill of linear ditch	2	4	6	29	1	56				
28	2801	Fill of linear ditch							1	154		
28	2803	Fill of linear ditch									1	14
	Total		2	4	6	29	1	56	1	154	1	14

6.2 The pottery

There are two small abraded sherds of late-medieval or early post medieval coarseware pottery. The six pieces of post-medieval pottery (29g) comprise four fragments of lead glazed red earthenware, one sherd of cream-ware and one scrap of porcelain, all of which probably date to the 19th century.

6.3 Other finds

These comprise modern tile and window glass, as well as a single iron nail.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 The positions of field boundaries sub-dividing the site as shown on historic maps dating to between 1843 and 1905 are annotated on Fig. 2. The two parallel linear features crossing through Trenches 7, 21 and 33 certainly represent the location of one of these boundaries, with the features likely to represent drainage ditches either side of a now removed hedgebank. Finds recovered from the ditches are mainly later post-medieval/modern in date, although two small abraded 16th/17th century sherds were also present.

7.2 A similar double-ditched feature was also identified in Trenches 4 and 28, and there is also a field boundary in this location on the historic maps. These are also likely to have been ditches either side of a hedgebank, but they were noticeably absent in Trench 18 (see Fig. 2). The ditches, where excavated, were generally shallow, so it is possible that subsequent ploughing/disturbance may have removed all traces of these features in this location.

7.3 The remainder of the linear features present on the site are not shown on historic maps and, although no finds were recovered, many clearly represent part of a general practice of modern land drainage. The northern part of site, which lies within a low-lying level area, was particularly waterlogged at the time of investigation. Ground saturation is clearly an issue on the site and the presence of modern rubble and stone consolidation layers confirms this.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Based on the good trench coverage, the absence of early archaeological features and deposits and the general paucity of finds, it is considered unlikely that groundworks associated with the development will impact on any *in situ* buried remains pre-dating the later post-medieval period.

9. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. They will be deposited at The Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon under the accession code NDDMS 2010.43. The OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) number for this project is 82830.

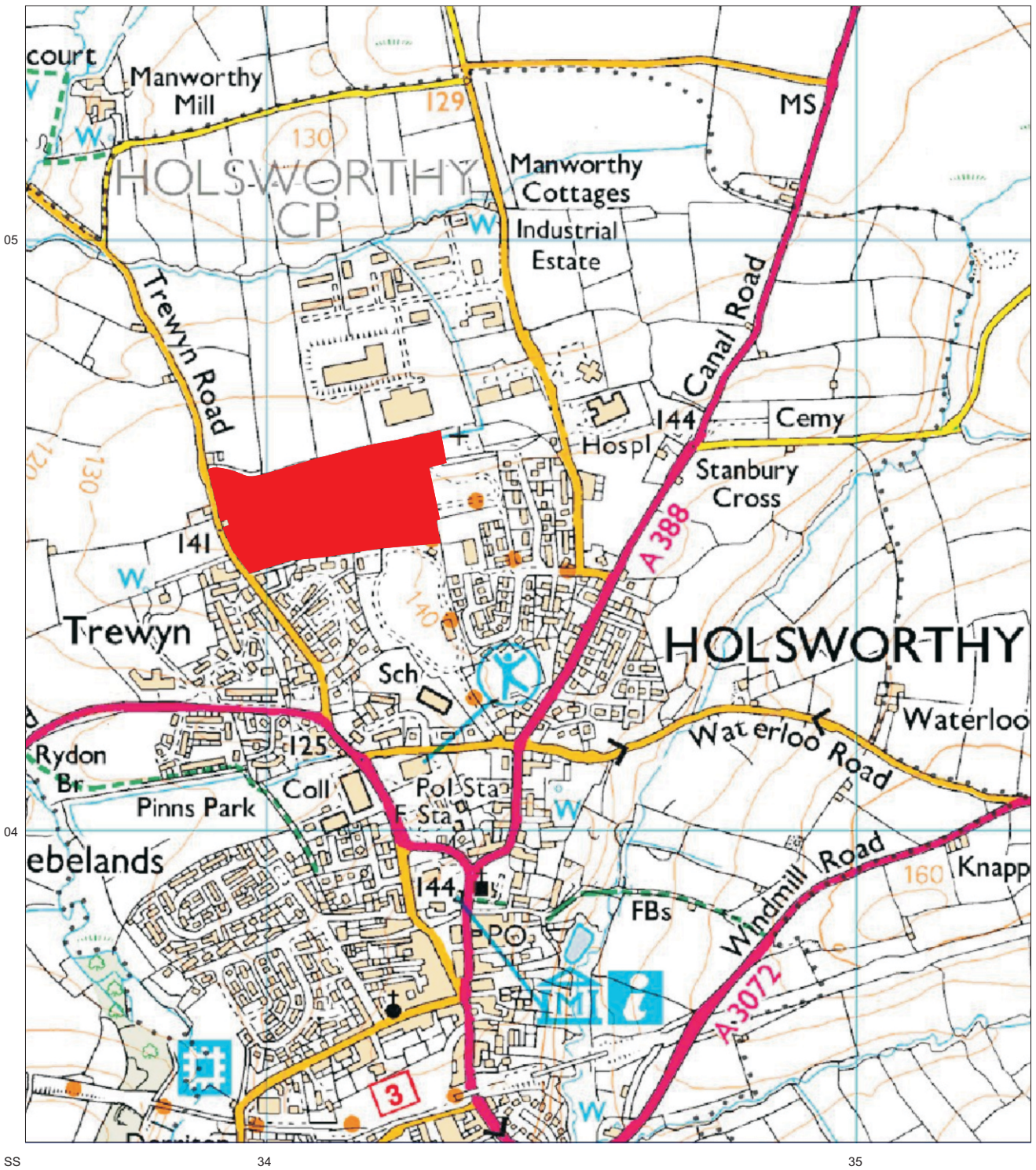
10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was commissioned on behalf of Redrow Homes by Greg Pugh of CgMs Consulting Ltd. The site trial trenching was carried out by Richard Sims, Marc Cox, Naomi Hughes and Kerry Tyler and the illustrations for this report were prepared by Cain Hegarty. The advice and collaboration of Ann Dick, Devon Archaeology Officer, is duly acknowledged.

11. REFERENCES

Exeter Archaeology, 2008, *Archaeological assessment of former Holsworthy Showground, Devon*. Unpublished client report

Pugh, G., 2010, *Specification for archaeological evaluation: Former Holsworthy Showground, Devon*. CgMs Consulting unpublished document for client

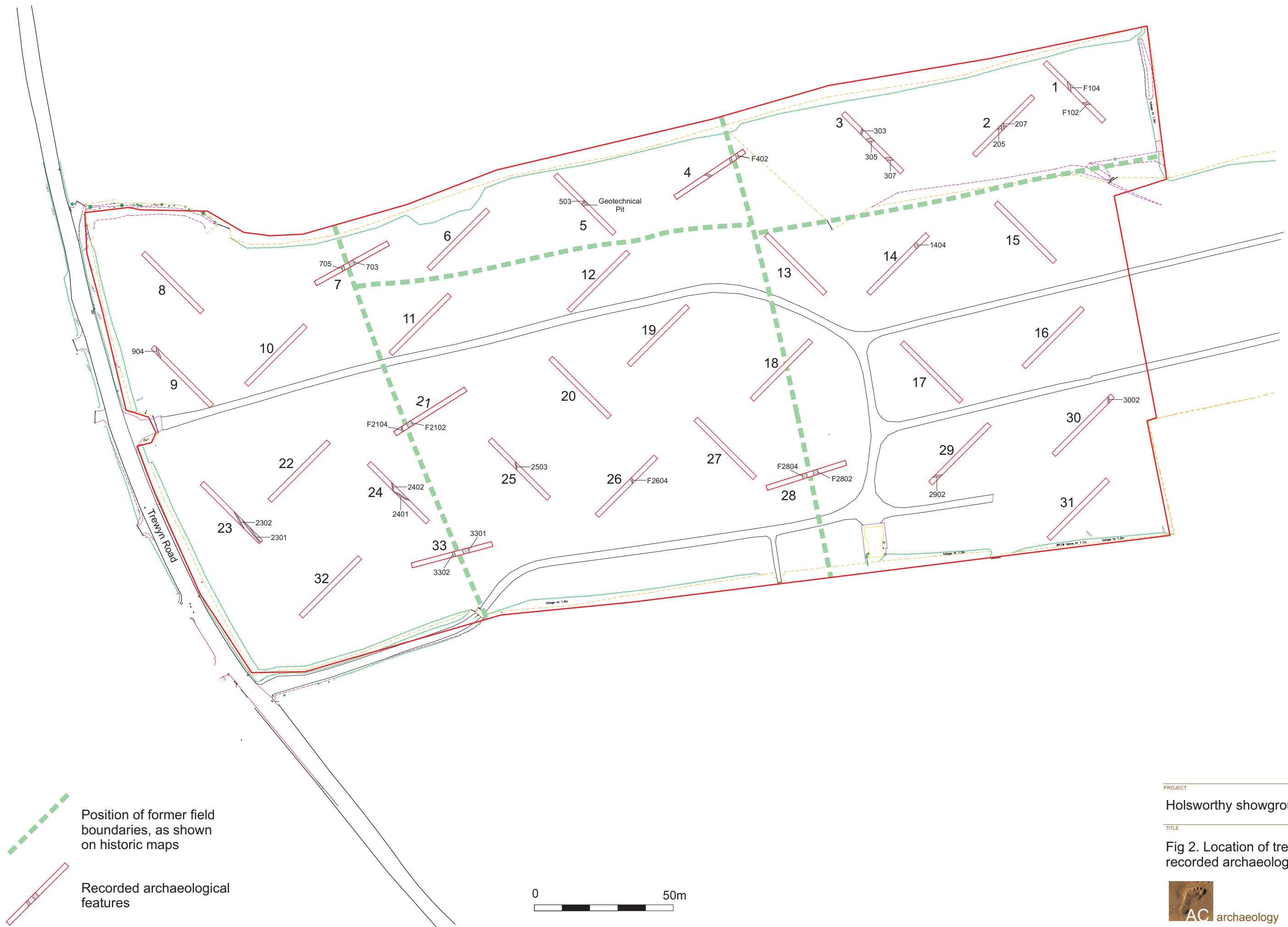



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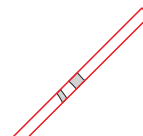


PROJECT
Holsworthy showground

TITLE
Fig 1. Site location



 Position of former field boundaries, as shown on historic maps

 Recorded archaeological features



PROJECT
Holsworthy showground

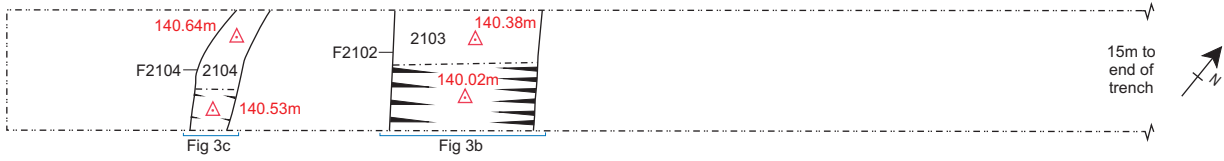
TITLE

Fig 2. Location of trenches and recorded archaeological features

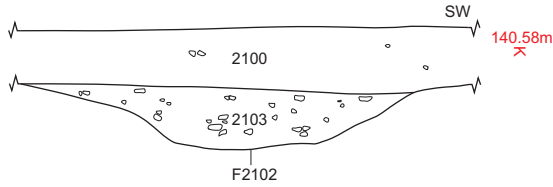


Trench 21

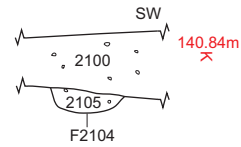
a) Plan



b) Section, F2102

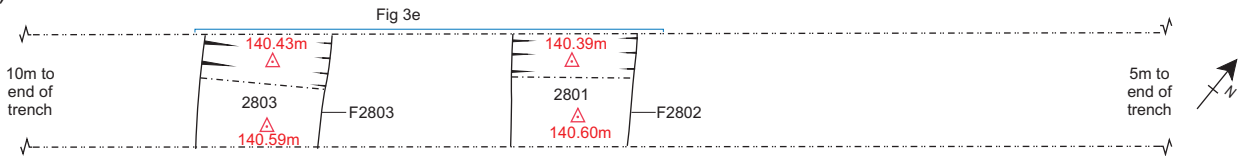


c) Section, F2104

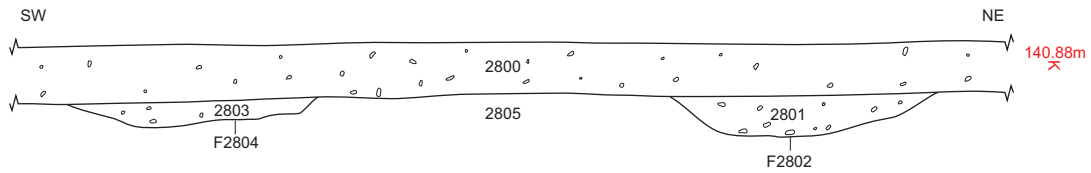


Trench 28

d) Plan

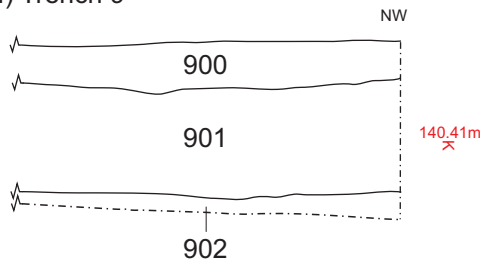


e) Section F2802 & F2804

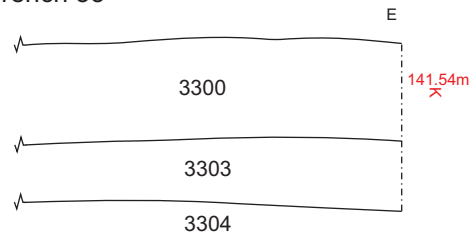


Representative Sections

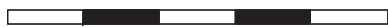
f) Trench 9



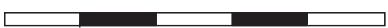
g) Trench 33



0 Sections 1m



0 Plans 5m



PROJECT

Holsworthy showground

TITLE

Fig 3. Plans and sections, trench 21, 28, 9 and 33



Plate 1. General view of site with Trench 17 in foreground, looking southeast (scales 2 x 1m)



Plate 2. General view of Trench 21, showing former boundary F2102, looking northeast (scale 1m)



Plate 3. Section of F2102, Trench 21, looking southeast (scale 1m)



Plate 3. Linear feature F2802, Trench 28, looking northeast (scale 1m)

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