# Land to the east of Secmaton Lane, Dawlish, Devon

## NGR SX96357780

## Results of an archaeological trench evaluation

## Planning ref. Teignbridge District Council 09/03794/MAJ

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On behalf of:
Cavanna Homes (South West) Ltd
and
Bovis Homes

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AC archaeology

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CONTENTS

**Summary**

*A stage 1 archaeological trench evaluation on land to the east of Secmaton Lane, Dawlish, Devon (SX96357780), was undertaken by AC archaeology during October 2010. The site comprises an irregular area of land that covers approximately 10.3 hectares on the northern edge of Dawlish. It is situated in an area where there is a general potential for later prehistoric remains to be present.*

*The evaluation comprised the machine-excavation of twelve trenches, totalling 620m in length, with these positioned to provide a sampled coverage of available areas. In the majority of trenches negative results were recorded. One trench positioned across a natural combe, exposed layers of colluvium containing small quantities of prehistoric, Romano-British and medieval artefacts. The only in situ remains present were two parallel and adjacent linear features, likely to represent the position of a former hedgebank boundary as depicted on 18th and 19th-century historic maps.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1** An archaeological trench evaluation on land to the east of Secmaton Lane, Dawlish, Devon, was undertaken by AC archaeology during October 2010. The work was commissioned by Cavanna Homes (South West) Ltd and Bovis Homes and was required by Teignbridge District Council as the first stage in a programme of archaeological works as a condition of planning permission for residential development, as advised by Devon County Council Historic Environment Service (hereafter DCHES).

**1.2** The site comprises an irregular area of land that covers approximately 10.3 hectares on the northern edge of Dawlish. There are three plots of land within the proposed development, comprising dense woodland on the south side, a small area of meadow grass to the southwest and a large triangular arable field to the north. The ground is higher in the south at around 40m OD, falling to around 20m OD to the north. A wide natural combe is present extending approximately northwest to southeast across the arable field (Plate 1). The geology of the area is Dawlish Sandstone, visible in the cliffs to the east.

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

**2.1** An archaeological desk-based assessment and site walkover have been previously undertaken (Collings and Valentin 2006). This established that the site is located in an area where only limited evidence for archaeological activity has previously been identified, although there was a general potential for prehistoric occupation, indicated for example, by an earlier discovery of a Bronze Age axe from *c*. 200m to the north.

**2.2** Approximately two thirds of the site is, or was, formerly woodland plantation. Landscaping and planting associated with the creation of these woodlands, as well as tree root activity, are likely to have caused significant damage to any buried archaeological deposits that might be present in these areas.

## 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 document will be reviewed and used to inform any subsequent archaeological mitigation as a second stage.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

**4.1** The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Project Design prepared by AC archaeology (Valentin 2010), submitted to and approved by DCHES prior to commencement on site.

**4.2** The work comprised the machine-excavation of 16 trenches totalling 620m in length and with each trench 2.1m wide. Trenches were positioned in the arable field on the north side only, as it was not possible to dig in the dense woodland area in the field to the south, nor the meadow field to the southwest due to wildlife constraints and probable previous disturbance. Overburden removal ceased at the level at which natural subsoil or archaeological deposits were exposed.

**4.3** All 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 1.* Detailed sections or plans were produced at a scale of 1:20 or 1:50. All site levels relate to Ordinance Datum.

## 5. RESULTS

**5.1** The majority of the trenches contained no evidence for archaeological features or deposits and are described in tabulated form in Appendix 1 only. Archaeological deposits were recorded in Trench 5 which is described in detail below. In general, however, where trenches were positioned on the higher ground the layer sequence was simple comprising ploughsoil directly above natural subsoil. In the lower-lying areas colluvial layers were also present of varying depth depending on topographic position. Relevant plans and detailed and representative sections are included as Figs 2-3 and photographs as Plates 1-4.

**5.2** **Trench 5** (Plan Fig. 2a, profile and section Fig. 3a & b; Plates 2-4)
This trench was positioned across the natural combe that extended approximately NW to SE through the field. Natural subsoil (context 502) was present at a maximum depth of 1.1m, which comprised a mixed red to yellowish-brown clayey sand with gravel inclusions. In the lower lying central part of the trench this had an undulating profile, and 'pockets' of colluvial soil had formed within these natural hollows, which was confirmed by hand excavation (context 507 on Fig. 3b and 503/504).

Overlying the natural subsoil towards either end of the trench were colluvial deposits of mid reddish-brown or mid reddish-yellow silty sands (514 and 515). Layer 514 was overlain by a further colluvial deposit of dark brown silty sand (501), which was directly above natural subsoil towards the centre of the trench. Finds recovered from layer 501 and equivalent deposits 503, 504 and 507 includes small quantities of prehistoric worked flint and pottery dating to the Romano-British and medieval periods.

Layers 501, 514 and 515 were overlain by upper colluvium (509) which was cut towards the NE end of the trench by two parallel approximately NW-SE aligned linear features (F510 and F512). F510 was 1.15m wide and 0.21m deep with gradual sloping sides and a shallow concave base, while F512 was 1.1m wide and 0.41m deep, with moderately steep sloping sides and a shallow concave base. Both features contained similar mid brown sandy loam fills (511 and 513) that were sealed by ploughsoil (500). A single small abraded sherd of medieval pottery was recovered from fill 513.

## 6. THE FINDS
**By Emma Firth**

### 6.1 Introduction
All finds recovered on site have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate, then quantified according to material type within each context. The assemblage has been scanned by context to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented, with this information briefly discussed below. Finds totals by material type are given in Table 1.

### 6.2 Worked flint
A total of six pieces of worked flint (31g) was recovered from contexts within Trench 5. From context 501, these comprise a flint flake, a flake (possibly a core rejuvenation), two chips (one from sieving) and a broken flake with secondary retouching along one edge. A small broken flake was also recovered from context 509. The flint can be broadly dated as later prehistoric, possibly Bronze Age.

### 6.3 Glass
A total of 2 pieces (16g) of modern glass were recovered, one from upper colluvial layer 509 in Trench 5 and the other from the ploughsoil in Trench 8.

### 6.4 Ceramic building material
A single piece of tile was recovered from the ploughsoil of Trench 8 and is of post-medieval date.

### 6.5 The pottery

<u>Romano-British</u>
A small sandy, reduced (black) coarseware, possibly a sherd of South Western Black Burnished ware (Exeter 40), was recovered from Trench 5 (503). The sherd is undiagnostic, although the fabric dates this to the 1st to mid 3rd centuries. A very small and abraded sherd in the same fabric was noted from context 507.

<u>Medieval</u>
A total of 10 sherds (41g) of medieval pottery was recovered, with four of these from sieving of bulk soil samples (see section 7 below). The pottery is mainly small and abraded and there are no diagnostic forms present. On the basis of recognised fabrics, the pottery has a potential date range from the 10th to 15th centuries. Three fabric types are present, with the first chert and flint-tempered identified as Exeter Fabric 20, produced in the Blackdown Hills. Sherds in this fabric have been found at Exeter and Totnes and the earliest date for this fabric is possibly the 10th century, although its use in Exeter continued until the early 15th century (Allan 2007). Two conjoining sherds (21g) in this fabric were recovered from context 501,Trench 5 and

have sooting on their external surface, suggesting that they derive from cooking vessels. Other fabrics include Totnes Type fabrics, of which two sherds (4g) were recovered from 509 and two sherds from context 501. A single small sherd is possibly a North Devon medieval coarseware and was recovered from context 513, but it is too small to confidently assign it to this fabric type. This fabric has a date range from the 13th to 14th centuries.

Post-medieval

A total of six sherds (68g) of post-medieval pottery was recovered from the ploughsoil in Trenches 2, 7 and 8. All are of 19th to 20th century date and includes a red earthenware jar, a base from a white-glazed stoneware jar and industrial whitewares.

Table 1. Finds quantification (weight is in grams)

| Trench | Context | Worked flint | | Burnt stone | | Glass | | Ceramic building material | | Medieval pottery | | Post Medieval pottery | | Romano-British pottery | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt | No | Wt |
| **2** | 200 | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 25 | | |
| **5** | 501 | 5 | 31 | | | | | | | 7 | 29 | | | | |
| | 503 | | | 2 | 10 | | | | | 1 | 7 | | | 1 | 8 |
| | 507 | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| | 509 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 5 | | | 2 | 4 | | | | |
| | 513 | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | | | | |
| **7** | 700 | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 12 | | |
| **8** | 800 | | | | | 1 | 11 | 1 | 41 | | | 4 | 31 | | |
| **Total** | | **6** | **31** | **2** | **10** | **2** | **16** | **1** | **41** | **11** | **41** | **6** | **68** | **2** | **9** |

## 7.1 BULK SOIL SAMPLES

**7.1** Bulk soil samples were collected from the lower colluvial layers within Trench 5. Processing was by flotation and the residues retained on 0.5mm mesh and residues fractioned into >5.6mm, >4mm and >0.5mm elements. The flots and residues have been sorted, with the results set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Results from bulk samples

| Sample | Context | Reason for sample | Sample volume | Processed volume | Charcoal | Flint chip | Seeds | Fired clay | Pottery | Nut shell |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 507 | Colluvial deposit within natural undulation | 40l | 20l | 34 (0.63g) | 1 (<0.01g) | 6 (<0.01g) | 2 (2.54g) | - | 1 (<0.01g) |
| 3 | 501 | Buried colluvial deposit | 40l | 20l | 40 (0.86g) | - | 10 (<0.01g) | - | 4 (8g) | - |

**7.2** Samples were mainly taken for finds retrieval, but as can be seen above charcoal and carbonised seeds are also present in small quantities. A hazelnut shell was also recovered. Artefacts recovered, with the exception of the featureless fired clay, have been integrated into the bulk finds totals and are therefore also included in Table 1 and described in section 6 above. Based on the presence of medieval pottery in the layers and the absence of *in situ* features, the unprocessed samples have no further archaeological value and will therefore be discarded.

## 8. DISCUSSION

**8.1** With the exception of artefacts recovered from colluvial layers and the two parallel and adjacent ditches in Trench 5, the evaluation has recorded largely negative results. There were no 'early' *in situ* features present and the number of artefacts recovered would be considered low. In most trenches, the soils were generally sterile and no finds at all were recovered.

**8.2** Trench 5 extended across most of the natural combe and has provided an interesting sequence of natural infilling of this feature. In this, successive layers of sandy colluvium have accumulated over an undulating sandy natural subsoil, with the lower colluvial levels containing prehistoric worked flint and Romano-British and medieval pottery. These artefacts might be present as a result of early manuring practices, perhaps indicating the site has been agricultural land for a long period of time.

**8.3** The parallel linear features recorded in Trench 5 (F510 and F512) are likely to represent double ditches either side of a former hedgebank, with their positions corresponding with the location of a former field boundary present on an estate map of 1747 and the Dawlish parish tithe map of 1840. This had been removed by 1888 (Collings and Valentin 2006).

## 9. CONCLUSION

**9.1** Various constraints meant it was only possible to excavate trenches in one of three fields forming the residential development area. Based on the results of the trial trenching, it is considered unlikely that early *in situ* archaeological remains will be present in the evaliated field, but there is a possibility that remains might be present in the other two plots. However, one of these plots is a dense tree plantation, and landscaping associated with the creation of this, as well as tree root disturbance, is likely to have severely compromised any features or deposits that might be present. The remaining small plot is currently a meadow, with it northwest-facing aspect not considered conducive for early settlement.

## 10. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

**10.1** The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology Ltd, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. They will be deposited at The Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter under the accession number 207/2010 along with any archive generated by subsequent work on the site. The OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) number for this project is 84642.

## 11. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The evaluation was commissioned by Ian Pugsley Cavanna Homes (South West) Ltd. The site trial trenching was carried out by Simon Hughes, Naomi Hughes and Chris Caine and the illustrations for this report were prepared by Cain Hegarty. The advice and collaboration of Stephen Reed, Devon Archaeology Officer, is duly acknowledged.

## 12. REFERENCES

Allan, J., 2007, 'The Pottery' in T. Gent, The Re-excavation of a Deserted Medieval Longhouse at Hutholes, Widecombe-in-the-Moor, Dartmoor, *Proc. Devon Archaeol. Soc.* **65**, 47-82

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Valentin, J., 2010, *Land to the east of Secmaton Lane, Dawlish, Devon: Project design for a staged programme of archaeological works*. Unpublished AC archaeology report no. ACD146/1/0




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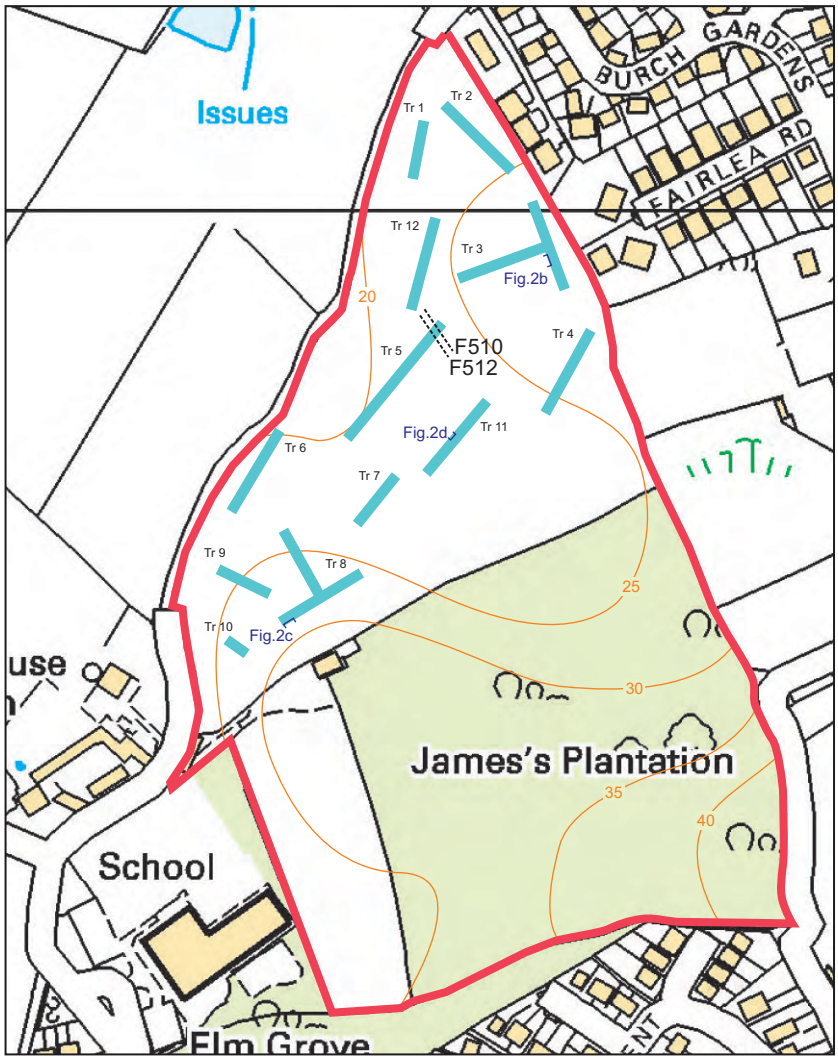


Extent of site

Archaeological trench

0 200m

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Fig. 1: Site and trench locations

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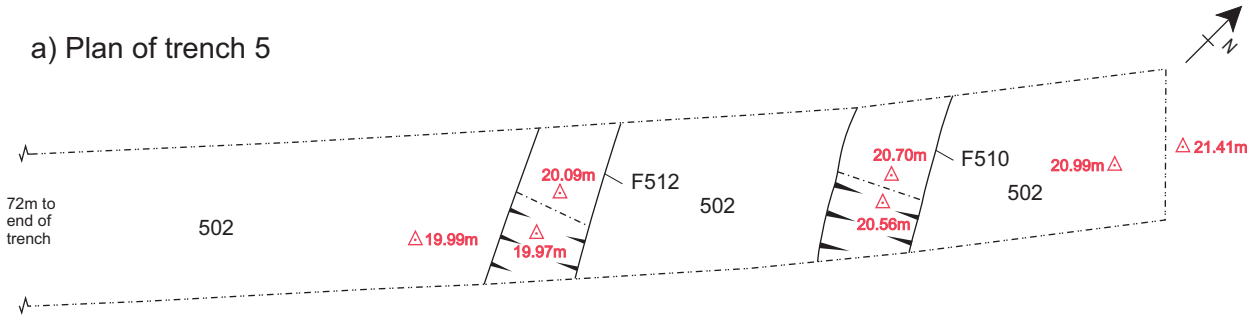
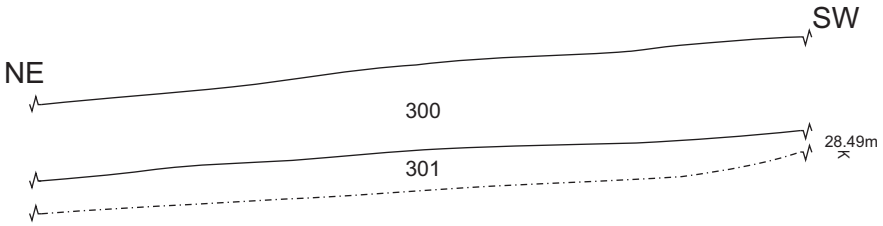
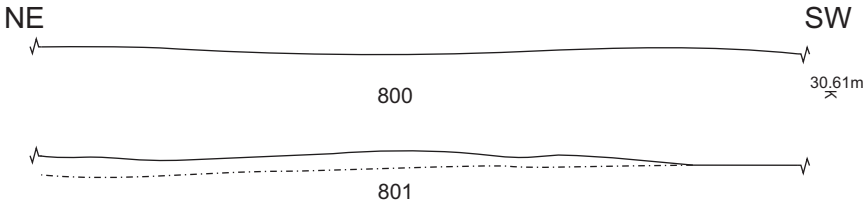
a) Plan of trench 5



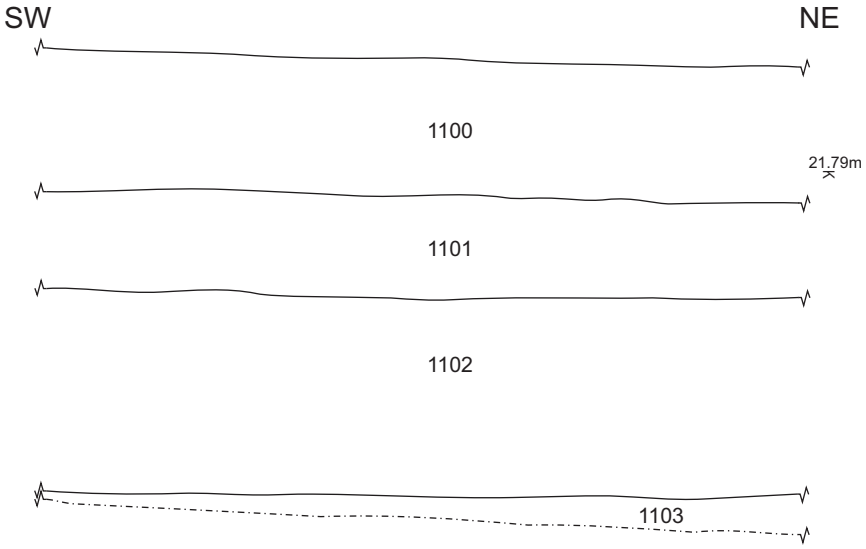

b) Representative section of Trench 3




c) Representative section of Trench 8




d) Representative section of Trench 11




0 Plan 5m

0 Sections 1m

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Fig. 2: Plan and sections

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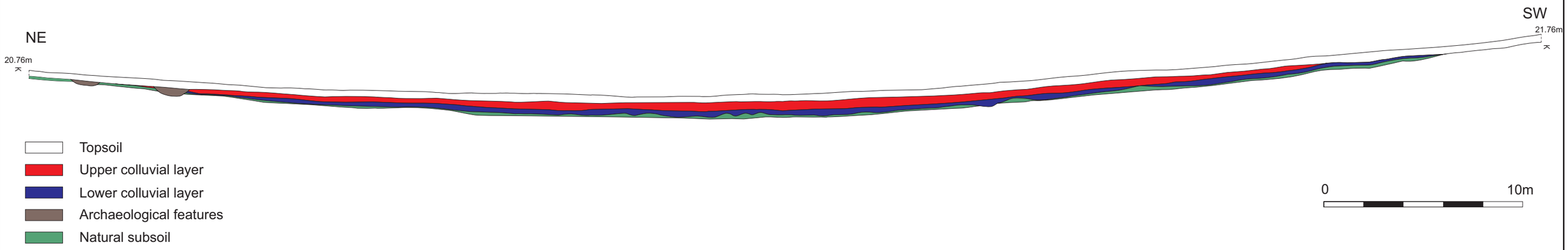
a) Profile




a) Detailed section

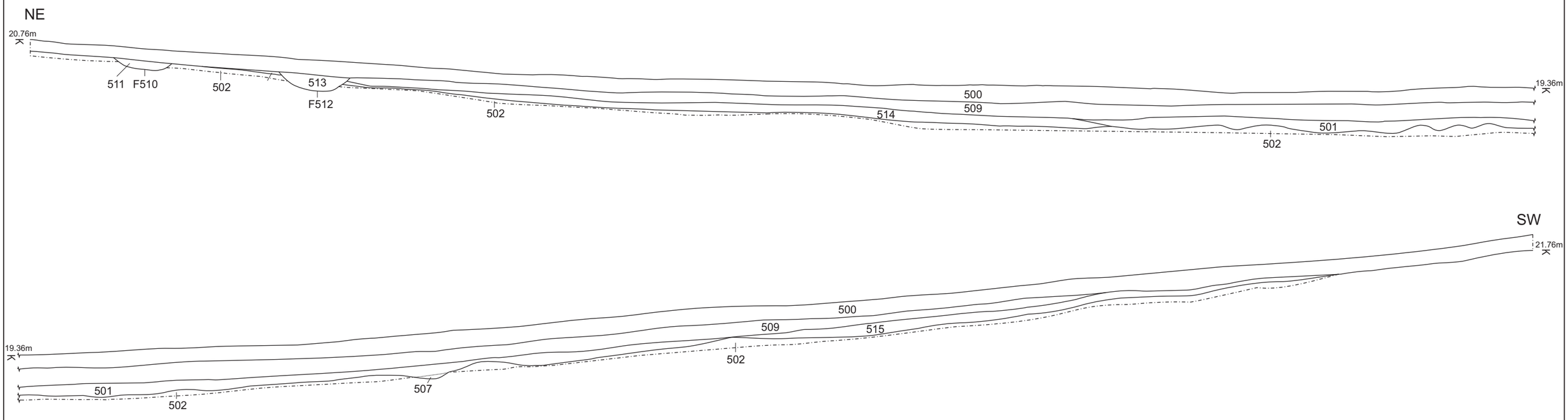



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Fig. 3: Trench 5 profile and detailed section

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Plate 1: General view of site from Trench 8. Looking north

Plate 2: Trench 5, northwest facing long-section. View to northeast (scale 1m)

Plate 3: General view of Trench 5. Looking northeast

Plate 4: Trench 5, ditches F512 and F510. View to northeast (scale 1m)

# Appendix 1: Descriptions of negative trenches

| **Trench 1** | | | **Length** 30m | **Width** 2.1m | **Alignment** NE-SW |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Context** | **Description** | **Depth** | **Interpretation** | | |
| 100 | Dark reddish-brown firm silty sand | 0-0.2m | Ploughsoil | | |
| 101 | Light to dark red and mid greyish-yellow clayey sand | 0.2m+ | Natural subsoil | | |

| **Trench 2** | | | **Length** 50m | **Width** 2.1m | **Alignment** NW-SE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Context** | **Description** | **Depth** | **Interpretation** | | |
| 200 | Dark reddish-brown firm silty sand | 0-0.18m | Ploughsoil | | |
| 201 | Light to dark red and mid greyish-yellow clayey sand | 0.18m+ | Natural subsoil | | |

| **Trench 3** | | | **Length** 100m | **Width** 2.1m | **Alignment** NW-SE, NE-SW |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Context** | **Description** | **Depth** | **Interpretation** | | |
| 300 | Dark reddish-brown firm silty sand | 0-0.2m | Ploughsoil | | |
| 301 | Light to dark red and mid greyish-yellow clayey sand | 0.2m+ | Natural subsoil | | |

| **Trench 4** | | | **Length** 50m | **Width** 2.1m | **Alignment** NE-SW |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Context** | **Description** | **Depth** | **Interpretation** | | |
| 400 | Dark reddish-brown firm silty sand | 0-0.35m | Ploughsoil | | |
| 401 | Light to dark red and mid greyish-yellow clayey sand | 0.35m+ | Natural subsoil | | |

| **Trench 6** | | | **Length** 50m | **Width** 2.1m | **Alignment** NE-SW |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Context** | **Description** | **Depth** | **Interpretation** | | |
| 600 | Dark reddish-brown firm silty sand | 0-0.3m | Ploughsoil | | |
| 601 | Light to dark red and mid greyish-yellow clayey sand | 0.3m+ | Natural subsoil | | |

| **Trench 7** | | | **Length** 30m | **Width** 2.1m | **Alignment** NE-SW |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Context** | **Description** | **Depth** | **Interpretation** | | |
| 700 | Dark reddish-brown firm silty sand | 0-0.3m | Ploughsoil | | |
| 701 | Light brown loose sandy loam | 0.3-05m | Colluvial subsoil | | |
| 702 | Light to dark red and mid greyish-yellow clayey sand | 0.5m+ | Natural subsoil | | |

| **Trench 8** | | | **Length** 90m | **Width** 2.1m | **Alignment** NE-SW, NW-SE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Context** | **Description** | **Depth** | **Interpretation** | | |
| 800 | Dark reddish-brown firm silty sand | 0-0.3m | Ploughsoil | | |
| 801 | Light brown loose sandy loam | 0.32-0.45m | Colluvial subsoil | | |
| 802 | Light to dark red and mid greyish-yellow clayeysand | 0.45m+ | Natural subsoil | | |

# Appendix 1: Descriptions of negative trenches

| **Trench 9** | | | **Length** 30m | **Width** 2.1m | **Alignment** NW-SE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Context** | **Description** | **Depth** | **Interpretation** | | |
| 900 | Dark reddish-brown firm silty sand | 0-0.3m | Ploughsoil | | |
| 901 | Light brown loose sandy loam | 0.32-0.4m | Colluvial subsoil | | |
| 902 | Light to dark red and mid greyish-yellow clayey sand | 0.4m+ | Natural subsoil | | |

| **Trench 10** | | | **Length** 10m | **Width** 2.1m | **Alignment** NW-SE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Context** | **Description** | **Depth** | **Interpretation** | | |
| 1000 | Dark reddish-brown firm silty sand | 0-0.3m | Ploughsoil | | |
| 1001 | Light brown loose sandy loam | 0.32-0.4m | Colluvial subsoil | | |
| 1002 | Light to dark red and mid greyish-yellow clayey sand | 0.4m+ | Natural subsoil | | |

| **Trench 11** | | | **Length** 50m | **Width** 2.1m | **Alignment** NE-SW |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Context** | **Description** | **Depth** | **Interpretation** | | |
| 1100 | Dark reddish-brown firm silty sand | 0-0.35m | Ploughsoil | | |
| 1101 | mid brown loose sandy loam | 0.35-0.63m | Colluvial subsoil | | |
| 1102 | mid brown loose sandy loam | 0.63-1.16m | Colluvium | | |
| 1103 | Light to dark red and mid greyish-yellow clayey sand | 1.16m+ | Natural subsoil | | |

| **Trench 12** | | | **Length** 50m | **Width** 2.1m | **Alignment** NE-SW |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Context** | **Description** | **Depth** | **Interpretation** | | |
| 1200 | Dark reddish-brown firm silty sand | 0-0.22m | Ploughsoil | | |
| 1201 | Light to dark red and mid greyish-yellow clayey sand | 0.22m+ | Natural subsoil | | |

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