

# Otterton Bridge, Otterton, Devon

NGR SY 0791285265

## Results of an archaeological watching brief

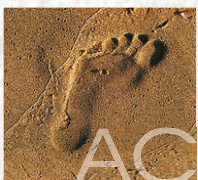
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Prepared by  
Peter Weddell

On behalf of:  
Engineering Design Group,  
Devon County Council

Document No: ACD165/2/0

Date: January 2011

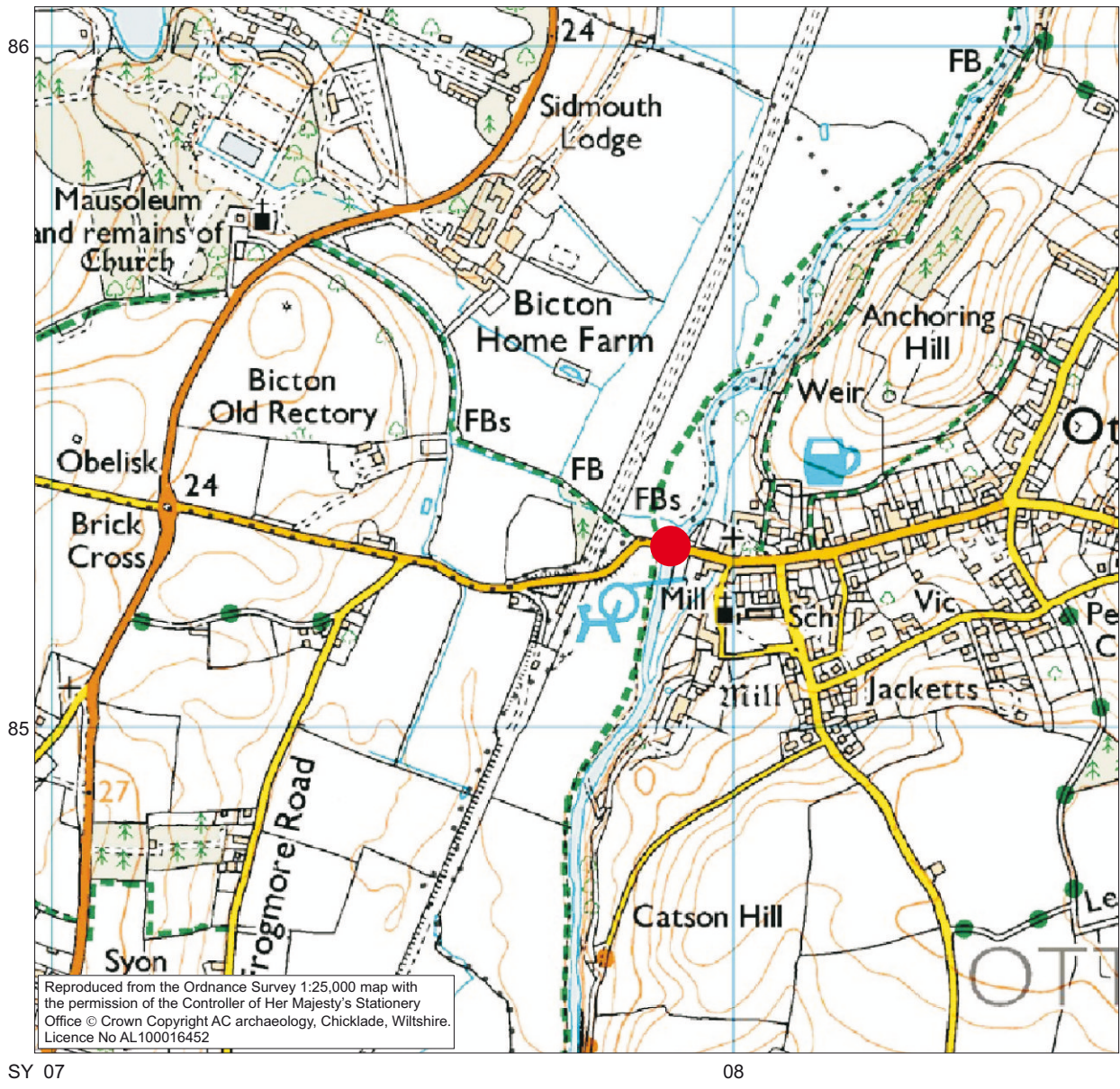


archaeology

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# Devon County Council Historic Environment Record

<b>Civil Parish &amp; District:</b> Otterton, East Devon	<b>National Grid Reference:</b> SY 0791285265	<b>Number:</b>															
<b>Subject:</b> An archaeological watching brief at Otterton Bridge, Devon		<b>Photo attached:</b> Plates 2-4															
<b>Planning Application no:</b> 10/0505/CM	<b>Recipient museum:</b> Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter																
<b>OASIS ID:</b> 92026	<b>Museum Accession no:</b> 111/2010																
<b>Contractor's reference number/code:</b> ACD165	<b>Date fieldwork undertaken:</b> 18-19 May/4 June/10 July 2010																
<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by AC archaeology during groundworks associated with the construction of a concrete invert slab and sheet piling at Otterton Bridge, Devon (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Devon County Council Engineering Design Group. The bridge is Grade II listed, dating to c. 1840, but may overlie remains of earlier bridges, the site being documented in 1430. A print of 1825 shows a bridge with substantial abutments and a much taller span than the present one. The watching brief requirements included observations during the excavations in the riverbed and any topsoil stripping.</p> <p><b>Results</b></p> <p>Part of the compound was already stripped and stoned on arrival; the engineer confirmed that a compound had been in use already so no strip was required. Elsewhere the topsoil strip was very shallow (Fig. 2), c. 5cms and no features were located.</p> <p>Initially the bed of the river was dredged from about 50m downstream of the bridge to increase flow and lower water level. Gravel was stockpiled on the banks. This material was shingle/gravel with occasional medium to large water-worn cobbles. This material was then transferred by dumper to upstream of the bridge, partly to make an access ramp into the river and partly to create a dam in front of Arch C. The same process was followed immediately downstream of the bridge. Dredging continued up towards the bridge. Bed level was reduced by c.1.2m under Arches B and C (Plate 1), but no structural remains associated with earlier bridges were noted. Five timber stakes were recovered during dredging. These were not embedded <i>in situ</i> in the riverbed as the points were not damaged during removal, they must have generally been lying flat within the gravels and were therefore re-deposited. Several fragments of (hand-made) water-worn brick were noted.</p> <p>Upstream of the bridge on the east bank a section of timber revetment was recorded, with stake points visible in places as the water level was lowered (Plate 2). Sheet piling operations required the bank to be cut back by about 1m here where it abutted the bridge (Plate 3). Large chert stone fragments were observed behind the timber revetment which was set in a dark grey gravelly matrix towards the base. This material directly abutted the stonework of the bridge which was well-faced and originally the stonework must have been exposed. The timber revetment must therefore date to after c.1840 when this bridge was constructed. The cut for the sheet piling on the west bank was not observed as this area appeared to be filled with relatively recent concrete and stone blocks.</p> <p>A further visit was made to observe metal detector operations on exposed surfaces. Four copper alloy objects were recovered, all from topsoil. These comprise:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Special find no.</th> <th>Description</th> <th>Date</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>Cu alloy book clasp</td> <td>16th-17th century</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2</td> <td>Cu alloy farthing of George IV, second issue</td> <td>1825-30</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3</td> <td>Cu alloy halfpenny of George III, fourth issue</td> <td>1806/1807</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4</td> <td>Cu alloy button component</td> <td>19th century</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>In conclusion, no remains of earlier bridges were recorded during the groundwork operations which were observed. The timber revetment immediately upstream was shown to date to after 1840. The unstratified stakes were found in gravel deposited on the river bed and these could potentially have been washed down from some distance upstream. These were not retained, but were measured and photographed (see Plate 4 and Appendix 1). The water-worn bricks are likely to have been derived from a brickworks of c. 1800 date identified about 600m upstream on the River Otter during a watching brief on a water pipeline (Exeter Archaeology report <b>90.21</b>).</p>			Special find no.	Description	Date	1	Cu alloy book clasp	16th-17th century	2	Cu alloy farthing of George IV, second issue	1825-30	3	Cu alloy halfpenny of George III, fourth issue	1806/1807	4	Cu alloy button component	19th century
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<b>Recorder:</b> Peter Weddell, AC archaeology		<b>Date sent to HER:</b> 26 January 2011															



PROJECT




Otterton Bridge, Otterton, Devon

TITLE

Fig 1. Location of site





-  Extent of Site
-  Areas monitored
-  Special Find Number



PROJECT  
Otterton Bridge, Otterton, Devon

TITLE

Fig 2. Location of areas monitored





Plate 1: Dredging beneath Arch B, view to northwest



Plate 2: *In situ* timber stakes on east bank, view to east (exposed scale 1m)



Plate 3: The removal of part of the east bank for sheet piling, view to southeast



Plate 4: Detail of recovered timber stakes (Scale 1m)

APPENDIX 1

**OTTERTON BRIDGE ACD165**

**MEASUREMENTS of STAKES**

SEE PLATE 4 TO IDENTIFY STAKES

<b>STAKE</b>	<b>LENGTH (cm)</b>	<b>WIDTH (cm)</b>	<b>CIRCUMFERENCE (cm)</b>	<b>COMMENTS</b>
A	135	4.5 -8	-	squared
B	90	5 - 9	24	split
C	111	5.5 - 6	4	V sharp point
D	137	6 - 7	19	split
E	110	11 - 12	4 thick	Fairly flat, plank, top broken off
F	96	9 - 10	24	Burnt at top end

NB. Stake E recovered from post-1840 revettment.

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