

Land South of Oil Mill Lane, Clyst St Mary, East Devon

An archaeological field evaluation



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An Archaeological Field Evaluation

for

Mr. Tony Rowe

by



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Front cover image: Evaluation Trench 17 viewed from the east. © Context One Archaeological Services 2012

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Non-Technical Summary

Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an archaeological programme of works on an area of land to the South of Oil Mill Lane, Clyst St Mary, East Devon (centred on NGR SX 98306 90443) (hereafter referred to as the Site). The programme of works was commissioned Kensington Taylor Limited Architects on behalf of Mr. Tony Rowe.

The requirement for the archaeological works was made by the Local Planning Authority (East Devon District Council) on the advice of Mr Stephen Reed (Archaeological Officer, Devon County Historic Environment Service (HES)) in support of a planning application for the construction of rugby training pitches, a changing room and an educational building with associated access and car parking. A total of eleven evaluation trenches were excavated.

No archaeological evidence was found for Medieval or earlier activity within the boundaries of the Site. However, it became clear that the Grindle Brook, which defines the south east edge of the Site, was the source for a water powered mill which appears to have been built in 1722 and remained in use until 1912, despite a disastrous fire in 1888. The mill's tail race was discovered in one of the trenches.

Other trenches identified field boundaries which are shown in the Clyst St. Mary tithe map of 1839, as well as features formed naturally by water. Nothing was found to warrant either preservation or further archaeological work.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) undertook a desk based research and an archaeological field evaluation on an area of Land South of Oil Mill Lane, Clyst St Mary, East Devon (centred on NGR SX 98306 90443) (hereafter referred to as the Site). The programme of works has been commissioned and funded by Mr Tony Rowe.
- 1.2 The request for the archaeological works was made by Mr Stephen Reed (Archaeological Officer, Devon County Council Historic Environment Service (HES)) following a consultation request from the Local Planning Authority (LPA), in advance of granting planning permission for the development of three rugby training pitches, construction of a changing room and educational building with associated access and car parking. In a brief for archaeological evaluation undertaken in support of a planning application (dated 25th October 2011) Mr Reed states that:

'The proposed development site lies in an area of archaeological potential, the southern part of the site is crossed by the route of the tail-race from Oil Mill, the date of the origin of this mill is not recorded in the Historic Environment Record (HER) but the site is shown on the late 19th century OS map and may be of some antiquity.'

'The Grindle Brook is recorded in the HER as a possible Anglo-Saxon boundary. In addition, approximately 100m to the south of the application area the HER shows the presence of a prehistoric settlement or enclosure that has been identified through aerial photography. It is possible archaeological features or deposits associated with the known prehistoric and later human activity in the area is present within the application area and will be affected by groundworks associated with the construction of the new pitches, buildings and associated works.'

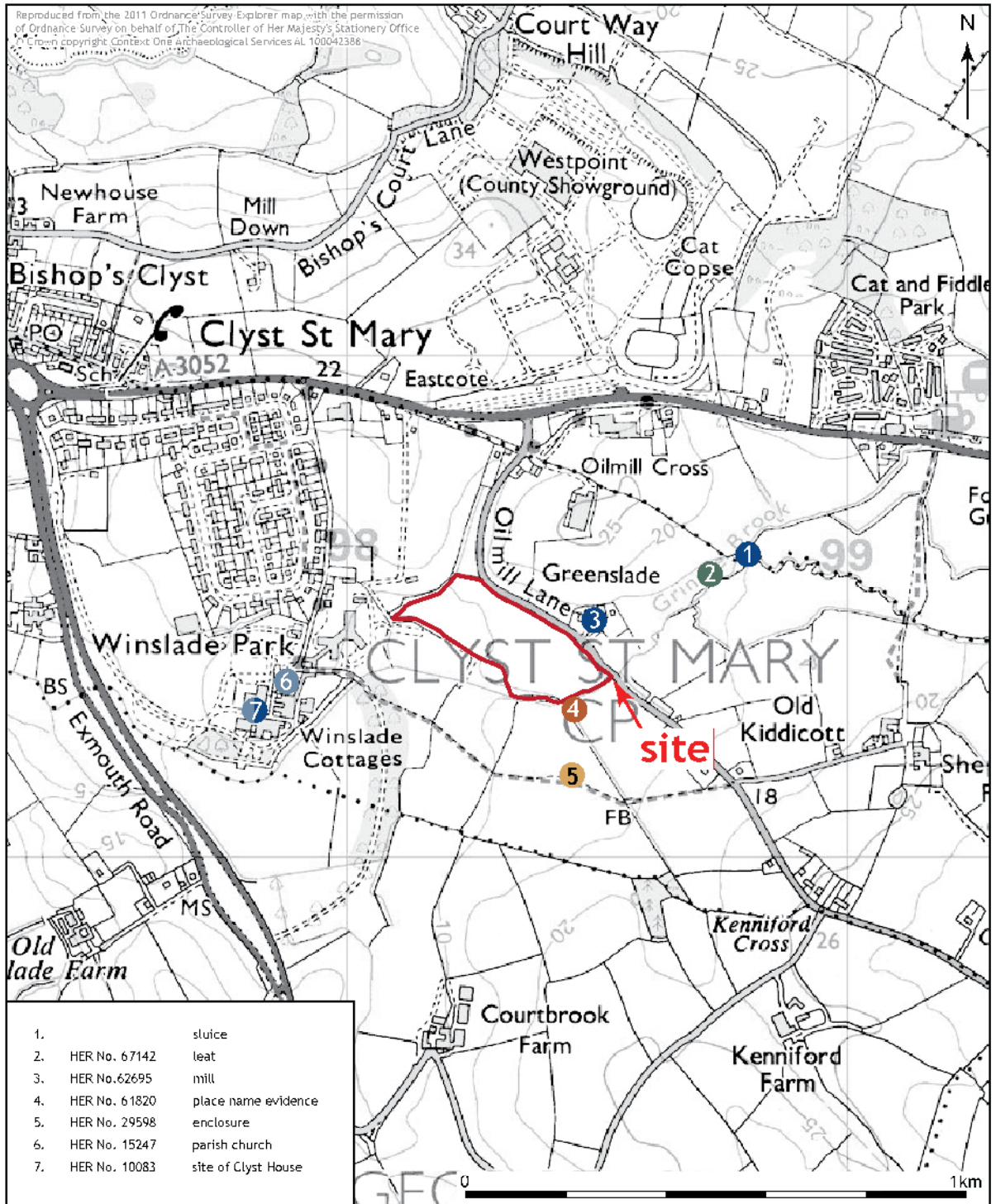
- 1.3 Given the recorded archaeological and historical data for the environs, it was considered that archaeological features or deposits could be present on the Site, and that these could be damaged or destroyed by development. However, as their nature or presence has not been proven on the basis of currently available information, it was determined that a reasonable archaeological response would be to carry out an archaeological field evaluation prior to the determination of a planning application.
- 1.4 The request for the archaeological work follows advice given by Central Government as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 1 (PPG1), General Policy and Principles (1997), Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (2010) and the Devon Structure Plan Policy CO8 (2004) and the East Devon District Council's Local Plan Policy on archaeology - Policy EN8

2. Site Location, Topography and Geology

- 2.1 Clyst St. Mary lies less than ca. 0.8km south west of the M5 where it by-passes the southwest of Exeter. The Site is situated 300m west of Winslade Park, which is south of Clyst St. Mary (Figure 1). Surrounded by hedging, the site is defined by Oil Mill Lane along its north east side (Figure 2). The Site falls from a height of ca. 11m above Ordinance Datum (aOD) at its north west end to ca.10m aOD at the south east, over a distance of ca. 360m, hence the ground is generally level.
- 2.2 Clyst St. Mary is set on an island Dawlish Sandstone Formation which is submerged beneath alluvium comprising clay, silt, sand and gravel in the area of the Site.

3. Desk-based Research

- 3.1 The desk-based research comprised exploration of the Tithe and subsequent Ordnance Survey maps and recourse to the Devon Historic Environment Record.



●	Prehistoric
●	Saxon
●	Medieval
●	Post-medieval
●	Modern

PROJECT TITLE		
Land South of Oil Mill Lane, Cyst St. Mary, East Devon		
FIGURE TITLE		
Site setting showing relevant historical landscape		
SCALE	PROJECT CODE	FIGURE NO.
as shown	C1/EVA/11/OML	1

- 3.2 The closest known possible prehistoric site is a ca. 60m by 40m enclosure identified from air photography ca. 180m south of the east end of the Site (Figure 1, 5). There is no known Romano-British activity within 200m.
- 3.3 The place-name evidence concerning the Grindle Brook, cited by Stephen Reed (above), make indicate the designation of places by a watercourse, as derived from the Saxon term 'grendel' (Figure 1, 4).#
- 3.4 There is no documentary evidence to show use of the brook prior to the modern period. The earliest record of the mill is of its ownership by Sir John Werden in 1722, when it was known as 'Ashmore Mills'. In 1837 they were advertised as grist and flour mills to be let to millers but very shortly afterwards they appear to have been used for the production of nut oil (Warham 2002), hence its marking as 'Oyl mill' (Figure 1, 3) by the time of the Tithe (Plate 1). The associated tail race is clearly marked on the map and apportionment plot 86 was known as 'Oil Mill Field'. The use of all the fields within the area of the Site (Plate 1, 119, 120, 86 and 87) is described as 'Mead. It was bounded by orchards on the east and south sides (Plate 1, 134 and 129) arable land to the north west (116).
- 3.5 The conversion to nut oil extraction proved temporary as newspaper reports refer to grain and oats when the mill buildings were destroyed by fire in 1888. Despite this setback milling appears to have continued to operate until 1912; indeed there was a brief attempt to revive the mill in 1921 (Warham 2002). Later maps show the buildings as 'Greenslade Farm' and there have been no further attempts to revive the old industry.



Plate 1. Tithe map for Clyst St. Mary (1839)

- 3.6 The history of the subdivided fields within the Site is one boundary removal, with the exception of a subdivision the west corner of plot 119, where a new boundary appears in 1889 but is has been removed by 1905, along with the old boundary between plots 119 and 120. The last boundary to be removed was that between plots 120 and 86, which was shown in the 1980 map but was absent by 1993.

- 3.7 The tail race (**Plate 1**; between 86 and 87) is marked on all Ordnance Survey maps up to the 1:10,000 of 1972, but absent at the same scale in 1980, when a footpath traces its route. The maps of 1889 and 1905 show a sluice across the brook north west of ‘Oil Mill (Corn)’ but by 1968 the sluice is absent and the mill buildings are marked as ‘Greenslade Farm’.
- 3.8 Whilst there is no known documentary evidence to show antecedents of the ‘Oyl Mill’ it would most certainly have been a suitable site during earlier periods, perhaps linked to the former Manor in Clyst St. Mary (**Figure 1, 7**).

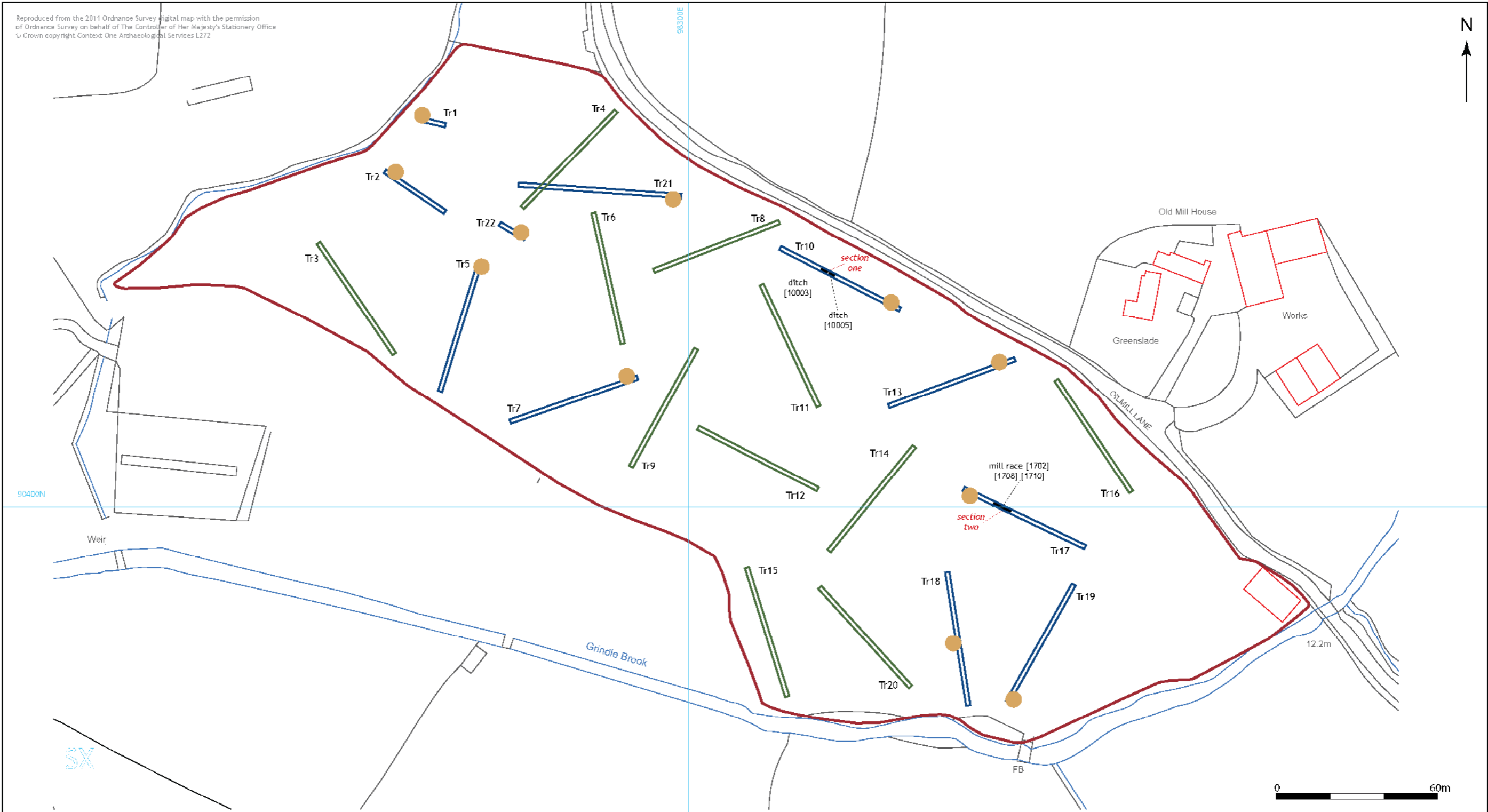
4. Methodology

- 4.1 The field evaluation was carried out in accordance with the *Standards and Guidance for archaeological evaluation* published by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) in 1995 (revised 1999). COAS adhered to the *Code of Conduct* issued by the IfA in 1985 (revised 2000), and *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology* (1990, revised September 2000), at all times during the course of the investigation. Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on Site.
- 4.2 Devon County HES were notified prior to commencement of groundworks and were kept informed of progress during works.

Field Evaluation

- 4.3 The field evaluation carried out over nine days between 13th December 2011 and 6th January 2012. The original evaluation plan agreed with Stephen Reed was for the excavation of 22 trenches. In the event this was modified at his instigation so that it comprised nine 50m by 1.8m, one 9.30m by 1.60m and one 10.50m by 1.6m trenches (**Figure 2**; represented by blue outlines). The trenches were laid out using a TopCon GRS-1 GPS unit pre-configured with co-ordinates to mark the corners of each trench.
- 4.4 A tracked 360⁰ machine equipped with a 1.6m wide toothless (grading) bucket was used to remove topsoil and subsoil under the supervision of COAS archaeological staff. Machine excavation continued to the top of archaeological features, or natural geology in sterile trenches. All trenches were cleaned using hand tools in order to understand the site stratigraphy and aid the identification of archaeological features.
- 4.5 All deposits were recorded using standard COAS pro-forma recording sheets and a “Harris-Winchester matrix” diagram. Soil colours were recorded using a Munsell soil colour chart. A representative profile of the general deposit sequence in each trench was recorded using standard COAS evaluation trench sheets. Archaeological features were recorded on COAS *pro forma* context sheets with plans drawn at a scale of 1:20 and sections at 1:10. A photographic record of the work was prepared and involved the sole use of digital images. This included photographs of each trench in plan, representative trench sections, archaeological features, and general working shots to illustrate the nature of the archaeological investigation.

Reproduced from the 2011 Ordnance Survey digital map with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office © Crown copyright Context One Archaeological Services L272



- site boundary
- excavated trenches
- unexcavated trenches
- profile location

PROJECT TITLE Land South of Oil Mill Lane, Clyst St Mary, Devon		
FIGURE TITLE Trench location plan		
SCALE as shown	PROJECT CODE C1/EVA/11/OML	FIGURE NO. 2

5. Results

- 5.1 In the text, context numbers for cuts appear in square brackets, e.g. [1004]; layer and fill numbers appear in standard brackets, e.g. (1002). Trench locations are indicated on Figure 2. The conditions on Site were difficult due to the high watertable, exacerbated by showery to heavy rain during six of the nine days of fieldwork. Although the number of trenches excavated was halved the numbering for the original planned trenches (Milby 2011) was retained. With the exception of Trench 17 all features identified were demonstrably modern or natural, the latter typically being alluvial meander channels.

Soil Sequence and Geology

- 5.2 The depth of the turf topsoil varied from 0.20m at the north west end of the site to nearly 0.50m to the south west and was dark brown clayey, sandy silt throughout. It gave way to similarly general subsoil, varying in thickness from 0.12 to 0.24m thickness. It was generally reddish brown, clayey, sandy silt with inclusions of sparse to moderate rounded grits, gravels and small small sandstones. This gave way to a presumed natural slightly reddish grey, clayey, sandy silt alluvium with similar gravelly inclusions.

Archaeology

- 5.3 In addition to features in Trench 17, two parallel ditches in Trench 10 which can be equated with a boundary on the Tithe map were excavated.
- 5.4 Trench 10: Two parallel ditches oriented from south south east to north north west were identified in towards the middle of the trench, extending across its full width. Both had been cut at the interface the topsoil (1000) and the uppermost subsoil (1001).
- 5.5 Ditch [1003] had a single fill (1004) of silty clay including rounded cobbles (**Figure 2, 1; Plates 2 and 3**). And iron pipe had been laid had been laid approximately 0.25m above the floor of the cut. There were no signs of recutting to allow this so it must be assumed that either it was placed on top of earlier silts or that was suspended over space prior to backfilling.
- 5.6 Ditch [1005] had a gravelly primary fill (1006) on its south east side only but its greater body of fill (1007) was very similar to the single fill of [1003] (**Figure 2, section 1; Plates 3 and 4**). A metal pipe had been laid at a slightly greater height. As neither pipe appears to have been discontinuous they cannot have functioned as field drains, although some form of drainage purpose seems probable.
- 5.7 Trench 17 (**Plate 5**): A single south west to north east linear ditch had been recut twice, all cuts at a level sealed by the subsoil (1701) and into the alluvium (1709) (**Figure 3, section 2; Plate 6**).
- 5.8 The earliest cut [1708] was filled by successive silts. The lowest (1706) comprised a dark grey sand silt (1706) including sparse lumps and flecks of charcoal, from which a sample was collected . It was sealed by a clean gravelly clayey silt (1707), itself sealed by a similar, slightly greyish silt. It seems likely that next cut in the sequence was [1710] since for the greater part it is within the edges of the first cut, although it tapers away beyond the south east edge. It was filled with greyish brown silt (1704) the lower part of which was particularly stoney and gravelly over the recut. A similar pattern was observed in the fill (1703) of recut [1702], although it was distinction from other fills by the inclusion of well-preserved leaves, samples of which were retained.

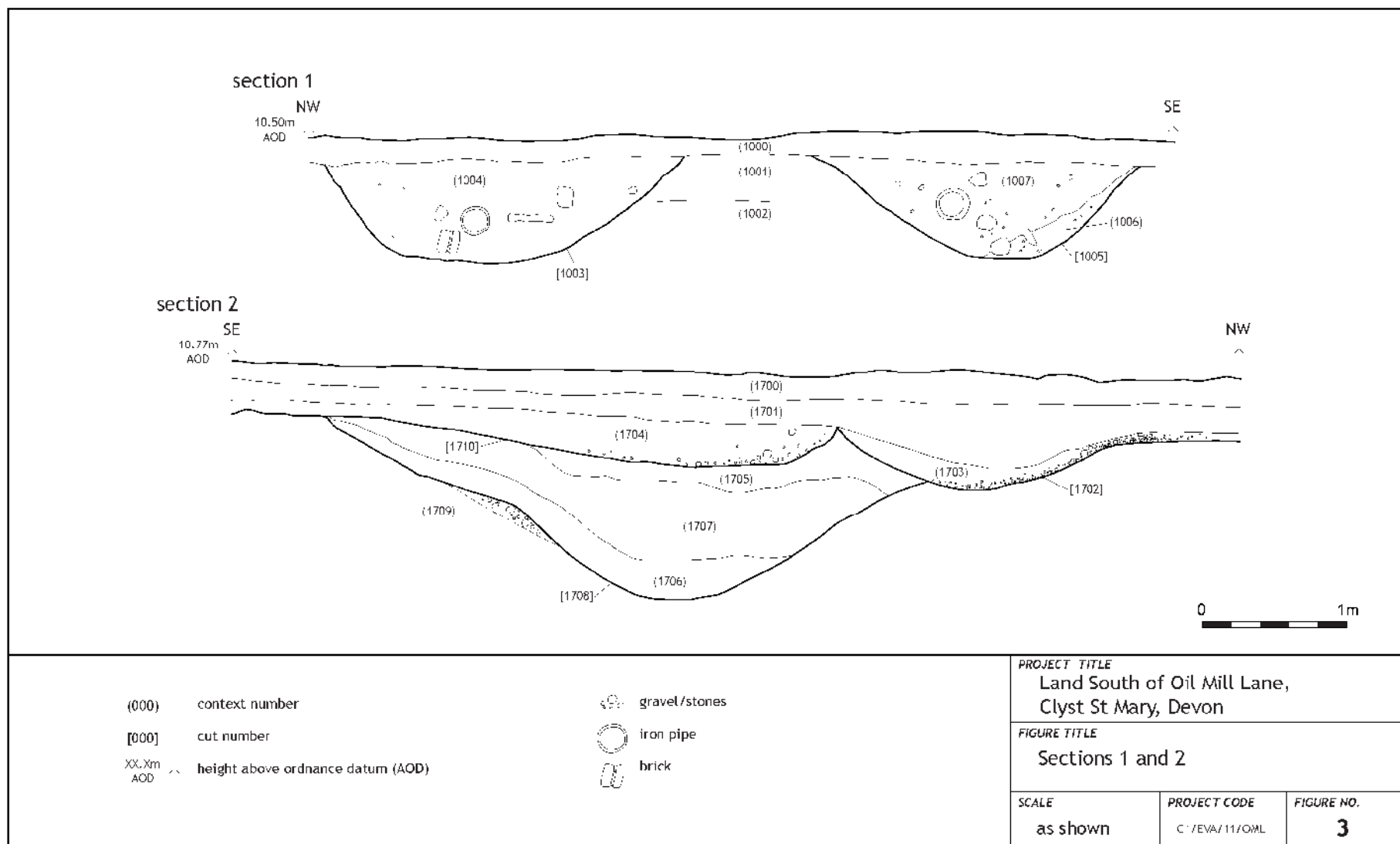




Plate 2. [1003] before excavation (from SW; 2m scale)



Plate 3. [1003] excavated, [1005] exposed (from W; 2m scale)



Plate 4. [1005] after excavation (from SW; 2m scale)



Plate 5. Trench 17 (from NW; 2m scales)



Plate 6. Trench 17, section through mill race [1708] (from N; 2m scale)

Environmental samples

- 5.9 The soil samples collected from the tail race fills (1706) and (1703) are unlikely to add to the understanding of the mill. They are not associated with any finds and although the presence of charcoal in the former would allow carbon dating the documentary evidence seems sufficiently strong to render that superfluous.

6. Discussion and Conclusions

- 6.1 Investigation of the archaeological background revealed very limited potential for activity within the Site from an undefined prehistoric period, through Saxon, Medieval, Post Medieval and Modern periods. However, use of the Grindle Brook emerged as a strong theme and this was reflected first in the probable Saxon placename evidence, then in the historically documented mill. It is clear that Trench 17 successfully bisected the mill tail race. The lack of finds render firm dating of the successive fills speculative but it seems reasonable to conclude that cut [1708] dates to what Warham (2002) has asserted was the mill's first period of use in 1722. It is possible that the poorly defined recut [1710] occurred following the fire of 1888 and the presence of well-preserved leaves in (1703) implies that this is the latest cut, perhaps supported by a slight realignments following the period of abandonment between 1912 and 1921. Despite the name of 'Oil Mill Lane', a span of less than five decades of nut oil production appears to have been bracketed by two periods of grain processing for most of its working life.
- 6.2 Remaining features, notably those from Trench 10, clearly relate to boundaries first identified on the Tithe map of 1839 or appear to be natural meanders within the alluvium. Nothing identified in the evaluation trenches warranted either preservation or further archaeological work.

7. Archive

- 7.1 The site archive is currently held at the offices of Context One Archaeological Services Ltd and consists of 164 digital images in .jpg format, two section drawing and one plan on stable drawing media, and the written paper record - including 11 evaluation trench sheets, 16 context sheets, a graphics register, photographic register, levels register, 1 groundwork methodology sheets and a day record. The archive will be prepared to comply with guidelines set out in *Standards in the Museums Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Galleries Commission 1992) / *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991). Arrangements will be made to deposit the archive with Somerset County Museums Service within 12 months following the submission of this report.
- 7.2 Copies of this report will be deposited in paper and electronic format with:

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Historic Environment Service
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8. Acknowledgements

- 8.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd would like to thank Mr Olive Salter (Challice Architects Ltd) for his kind assistance throughout the course of this investigation, Mr Graham Tait (Archaeologist, Devon County HES) and Mr Stephen Reed (Archaeologist, Devon County HES) for curatorial advice.

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Ordnance Survey, 1889	1" to 25" map. (Held at Devon Record Office)
Ordnance Survey, 1905	1" to 25" map. (Held at Devon Record Office)
Ordnance Survey, 1933	1" to 25" map. (Held at Devon Record Office)
Ordnance Survey, 1968	1" to 25" map. (Held at Devon Record Office)
Ordnance Survey, 1972	1:10,000 map. (Held at Devon Record Office)
Ordnance Survey, 1980	1:10,000 map. (Held at Devon Record Office)
Ordnance Survey, 1993	1:10,000 map. (Held at Devon Record Office)
Warham, S. 2002	Shepherds: All Manor of Mystery. A Brief History of Old Kiddicott, Old Mill House and Shepherds (Ashmore Manor), Clyst St. Mary. <i>Devon and Cornwall Notes and Queries</i> 39, 2, 33-38

Appendix 1: Context Table

Cont no.	Type	Description	Dimensions			Direct Stratigraphic relationships
			Length	Width/ Diameter	Thickness/ Depth	
1000	Layer	Topsoil: Reddish brown (2.5YR 4/4) soft silt including rare riverine pebbles <0.10m	50.00m	1.80m	0.40m-0.48m	Over (1004), (1007), (1002)
1001	Layer	Subsoil: Reddish brown (10 4/8) compacted silt including moderately frequent rounded gravels	50.00m	1.80m	0.40m-0.80m	Cut by [1003], [1005]; under (1000); over (1002)
1002	Layer	Natural: Reddish yellow (5YR 6/6) compacted clay including frequent rounded cobbles <0.20m	50.00m	1.80m	>0.75m	Under (1001)
1003	Cut	Boundary ditch cut (reused for pipe): NE to SW oriented, splayed 'U' profile linear	1.80m exc.	2.40m	0.70m	Filled by (1004); cuts (1001), (1002)
1004	Fill	Ditch fill: Reddish brown (2.5YR 4/1) soft silty clay including frequent rounded cobbles <0.30m and <i>in situ</i> metal pipeline	1.80m exc.	2.40m	0.70m	Under (1000); fills [1003]; butts (1001)
1005	Cut	Boundary ditch cut (reused for pipe): NE to SW oriented, splayed 'U' profile linear	1.80m exc.	2.20m	0.68m	Filled by (1007), (1006); cuts (1001), (1002)
1006	Fill	Primary ditch fill: Reddish brown (2.5YR 4/8) soft silty clay including frequent angular gravels <0.10m	1.80m exc.	0.20m	1.10m	Under (1007); fills [1005]; butts (10001), (1002)
1007	Fill	Ditch fill: Reddish brown (2.5YR 4/1) soft silty clay including frequent rounded cobbles <0.30m and <i>in situ</i> metal pipeline	1.80m exc.	2.20m	0.68m	Filled by (1007), (1006); cuts (1001), (1002)
1700	Layer	Topsoil: Reddish brown (2.5YR 4/1) soft silty clay including frequent rounded riverine gravels <0.20m	50.00m	1.80m	0.25m	Over (1701)
1701	Layer	Subsoil: : Reddish brown (10 4/8) compacted silt including moderately frequent rounded gravels	50.00m	1.80m	<0.48m	Under (1700); over (1703), (1704)
1702	Cut	Tail race recut cut: Splayed 'U' profile SE to NW oriented linear	50.00m	1.80m	<0.85m	Filled by (1703); cuts (1705), [1708], (1709)
1703	Fill	Tail race fill: Reddish grey soft clayey silt including sparse gritty to gravelly sandstones and leaf remains	1.80m exc.	1.80m	<0.85m	Under (1701); fills [1703]; butts (1705), (1709)
1704	Fill	Tail race fill: Greyish brown soft silt including sparse to moderate subangular gritty to small sandstones	1.80m exc.	4.15m exc.	0.66m	Under (1701); fill of [1706]; over (1705), (1707)
1705	Fill	Tail race fill: Slightly greyish reddish brown firm clayey silt including sparse gritty to gravelly subangular sandstone	1.80m exc.	2.65m	0.89m	Cut by [1702], [1710]; over (1707); fills [1708]; butts (1709)
1706	Fill	Tail race fill: Dark grey sandy silt including sparse lumps and flecks of charcoal	1.80m exc.	3.15m	1.55m	Under (1707); fills [1708]; butts (1709)
1707	Fill	Tail race fill: Red, firm clayey silt including sparse to moderate gritty to small subangular sandstone	1.80m exc.	3.80m	1.28m	Under (1705); over (1706); fills [1708]; butts (1709)

Cont no.	Type	Description	Dimensions			Direct Stratigraphic relationships
			Length	Width/ Diameter	Thickness/ Depth	
1708	Cut	Tail race cut: Splayed 'U' profile SE to NW oriented linear	1.80m exc.	4.20m	1.55m	Filled by (1706), (1707), (1705); cut by [1710], [1702]; cuts (1709)
1709	Layer	Natural: Reddish yellow (5YR 6/6) compacted clay including frequent rounded cobbles <0.20m	1.80m exc.	1.80m	>0.79m	Cut by [1708], [1702], [1710]; under (1701)
1710	Cut	Tail race recut cut: Broad, shallow, SE to NW oriented linear. South east edge not identified	1.80m exc.	4.15m exc.	0.66m	Filled by (1704); cuts (1705), (1707), (1709)