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**12a CHURCHILLS RISE
HEMYOCK
DEVON
EX15 3AU**

PLANNING APPLICATION REF. MDDC 12/00796/FUL

SEPTEMBER 2012





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Summary

Observation of excavation of foundation trenches and associated ground reduction for a new dwelling at 12a Churchills Rise, Hemyock was conducted by Arrowhead Archaeology in July 2012.

The exercise showed that the original ground level had fallen towards the north. Minor pitting was present above and on the break of slope, with backfill dated to c. AD 1500. Finds comprised principally iron slag and Hemyock pottery, including probable wasters, of the same type already known from excavations to the immediate south by Exeter Archaeology in 2008, and encountered by AC Archaeology in an evaluation of the same plot in 2009.

The pits are interpreted as clay extraction pits for use in the local kilns, backfilled with material including probable kiln structure remains. The main focus of activity appears to have been to the south of the sampled area.

1 Background

This report describes the results of a watching brief on groundwork for a new dwelling with attached garage undertaken at 12a Churchills Rise, Hemyock, mid Devon by the writer on 30-31 July 2012.

The work was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed by Steve Reed, archaeologist with Devon County Council, to fulfil a planning Condition placed on advice by Mr Reed on the Consent for application number 12/00796/ful. The area of development (hereafter known as 'the plot') is a plot in an area of recent development for housing to the south of the church; the surrounding new dwellings had already been constructed by the time of this work.

The plot had previously been sampled by AC Archaeology in September 2009 (Hughes, S., 2009) by means of two evaluation trenches (positions shown on Figs 1-2). The eastern foundation trench for the house was cut along the published position of the southern part of AC Trench 1 (ibid. Fig. 2).

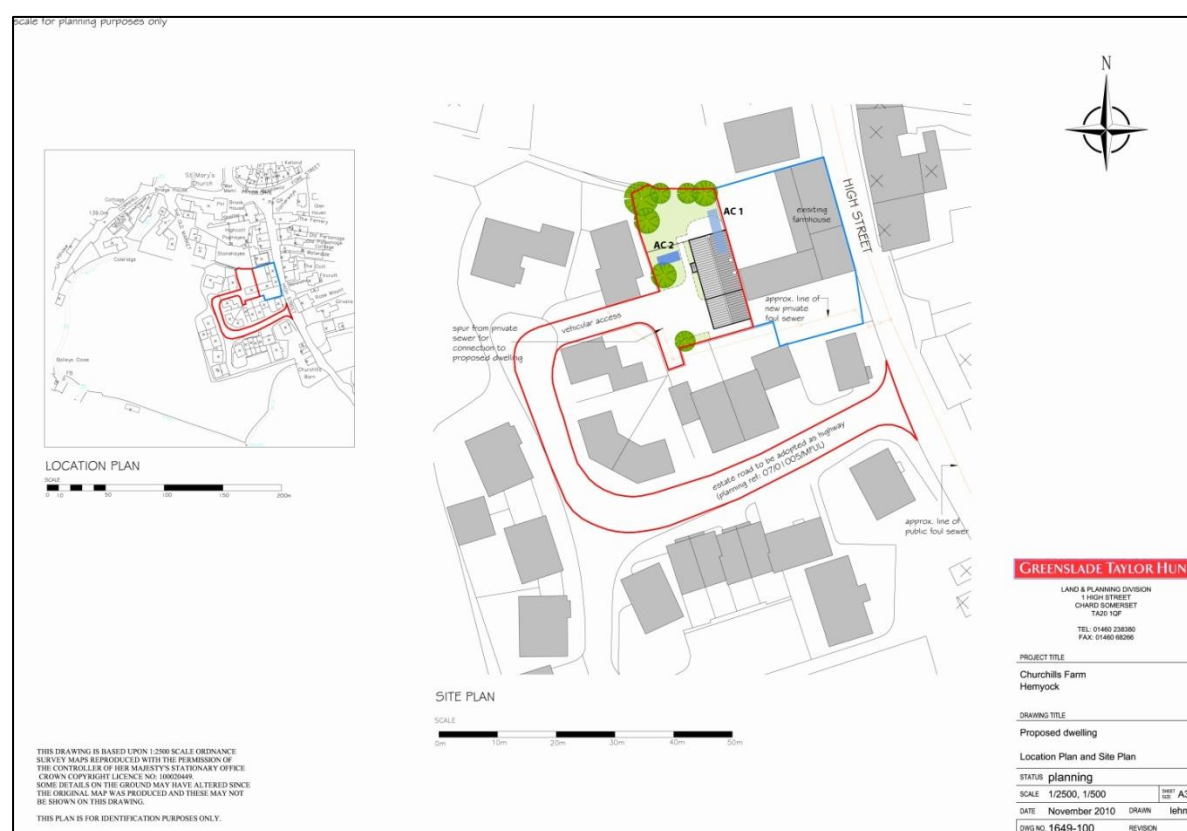


Fig. 1 Position of proposed development area. The published positions of AC Archaeology's 2009 trenches 1 and 2 are shown (AC1 / AC2); the floor plan (from the WSI) is of the building originally proposed, not that constructed as a result of the revised application.

2 Ancient and modern topography

It was clear from the profile of the subsoil surface in the two north-south foundation trenches (Plate 2) that the ancient topography had comprised a slope down through the north end of the development area (plot). There was a drop of 50-60 cm from the northern end of the plot to the levelled ground surface in the garden of the house to the north, and extension of the line of the surface of the subsoil in the sampled plot would have approximately met the ground level in the garden to the north. In the western foundation trench of the house, the subsoil surface below the surface of turf fell from 60 cm in the northern end of the garage area, to one metre in the porch area, to 1.3 m in the northern foundation trench.

The southern part of the eastern foundation trench, in particular, showed that the break of slope from an originally relatively level ground surface in the southern part of the plot (farmyard area, below) had been quite steep, with the break of slope occurring approximately on the dogleg between the house and garage parts of the main building (Fig. 2). The precise degree of slope was invisible due to the presence in the eastern trench of pit F 11, which had been dug close to the edge of the slope. In the western foundation trench (Plate 2), the change in slope was quite steep without being abrupt, at an angle to be expected from observation of the local topography.

In the southern third of the plot (which was lower than the northern) the subsoil surface had risen to be immediately overlain by reinforced concrete and hardcore for the former farmyard hard standing. The level nature of the plot, combined with the level nature of the adjacent plot to the north, clearly shows that the slope had been terraced. The depth of topsoil increased from zero in the southern third of the plot to about 1.3 m in the northern area.

Before the start of the building programme which includes the plot under consideration, the entire area of the plot had been farmyard. The southern third of the plot had been a concrete yard area, and topsoil had been removed prior to the laying of hardcore and reinforced concrete for the yard directly onto the surface of natural clay. This exercise seems likely to have provided much of the topsoil in the northern part of the plot, which was then used to level, or increase any levelling which had already occurred, to the pre-start levels.

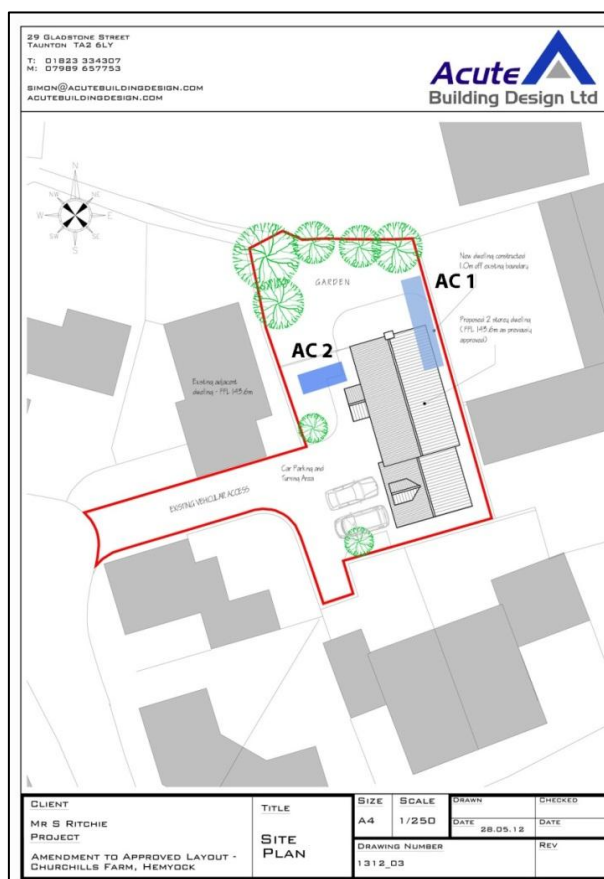


Fig. 2. Block plan showing published positions of AC Archaeology's Trenches 1 and 2.

3 Machining and recording

Foundation trenches for the outer walls were 600 mm wide and nominally 900 mm deep. Actual depth increased from 900 mm in the southern wall of the garage, to 1.3 m in the northern house wall. The Building Control Inspector had indicated that natural clay subsoil should be exposed in the bottoms of all foundation trenches. A 3 tonne excavator was used, a small machine being chosen to enable the manoeuvrability required within a confined area. Although a toothless ditching bucket was available, a toothed bucket was used because the limited power of the machine selected was insufficient to provide the power necessary for use of a toothless bucket.

Archaeological observation comprised observation of the machining of all foundation trenches and associated ground reduction within the footprint of the new building. Stratigraphy was recorded by means of digital voice recordings, context sheets, photography and drawing. The external (longer) face of each foundation trench was trowelled down and recorded; finds were collected during machining, and from section. The bottoms of the foundation trenches, on natural subsoil, were hand cleaned and inspected following a risk assessment occasioned by the depth of the trenches.

The positions and plans of archaeological features, drawn section and levels were plotted onto a 1:50 scale plan (a copy of the Architect's plan submitted with the planning application), provided by SIR Construction.

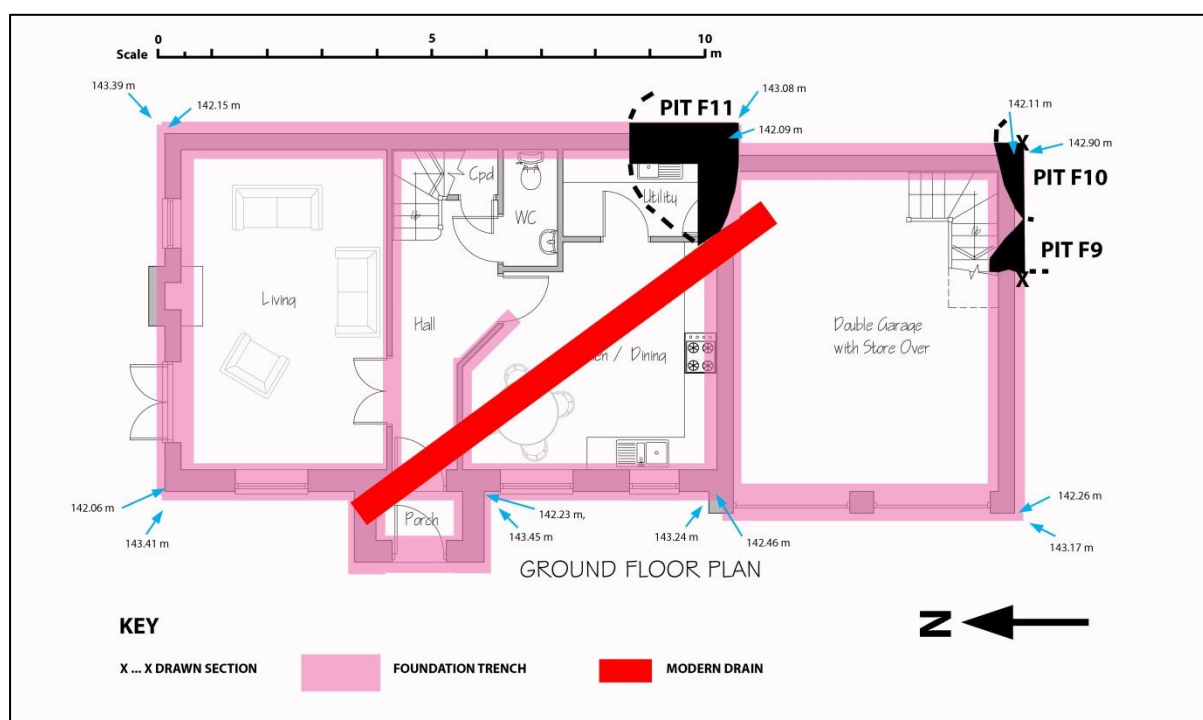


Fig. 3. Ground floor plan showing positions of walls, foundation trenches, modern disturbance and archaeological features. The position of the section shown in Fig. 4 is indicated by X X. The plan above is based on an electronic copy of the Architect's plan submitted with the planning application, at a scale of 1:50. The black areas showing the pits show their plan as exposed below the reinforced concrete in the case of Pits 9 and 10, and below turf in the case of Pit 11; the dashed lines show the likely projections of the pit edges. The positions of spot heights are shown by blue arrows, the digits are metres above OSD Newlyn; the TBM is taken from Hughes 2009, Fig. 2.

Stratigraphy was very straightforward, with hardcore resting directly on natural clay in the south, the depth of topsoil overlying natural increasing from the dogleg in the eastern foundation trench the further north one went. Where topsoil was present, turf and modern topsoil (layer 1) overlay an homogenous soil deposit (layer 2/3) which is interpreted as a recent topsoil consisting of soils which had moved from the lower third of the plot, also possibly from elsewhere, and dumped on top of existing topsoil. The maximum thickness of soils above natural clay was 1.3 m from subsoil surface to modern turf surface, approximately 1 m of this was layer 2/3.

Within layer 2/3, the writer was unable to distinguish any meaningful variation from top to bottom, and the distinction between layers 101 and 102 in AC's evaluation work was not observed. The topsoil in section was

arbitrarily subdivided into context 2 and context 3 to emulate the AC differentiation, even though there was no visible variation, to enable later checking for chronological variation from the finds (none was present). Layer 2/3 was mid grey sandy silty loam containing rare small pebbles, mortar flecks and burnt clay flecks throughout; it was undifferentiated in colour and texture apart from some slight additional siltiness in the lower part in places. The grey layer described by Hughes as a possible buried soil (AC context 103) was absent (Hughes, 2009 *in passim*); a discontinuous layer of sterile grey clay overlay the brown clay subsoil in places, however where examined this was sterile clay without any humus, and is interpreted as leached or weathered natural clay.

The northern part of the eastern foundation of the house was within the area marked by AC Archaeology as containing their Trench 1. The southern end of this was not however visible in the eastern foundation trench, nor the western side in the northern foundation trench.

Archaeological features were sparse, comprising three pits only. Two of these (Fs 9 and 10) lay at the eastern end of the southernmost foundation trench (Plan Fig. 3, Section Fig. 4), where they were visible below immediately under the hardcore for the concrete surface of the farmyard area; they were cut into the surface of natural subsoil. Machining of the foundation trenches commenced at the eastern end of the southern foundation trench, where Pits F 9 and 10 occur; although the pits were suspected during machining, their plan as shown in Fig. 3 is mainly reconstructed from section.

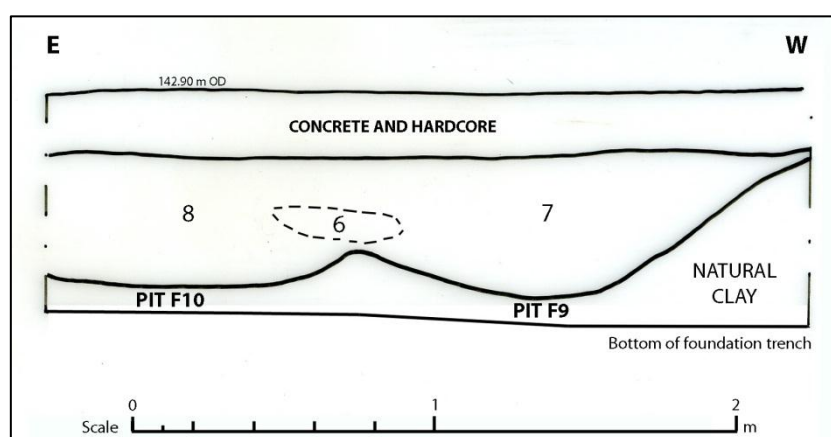


Fig. 4. Section of east end of southern foundation trench.

Features 9 and 10 appear to have been backfilled in a single episode, a patchy layer of redeposited natural clay in section running across the intersection of the two pits (context 6); it may in fact have been the case that Fs 9 and 10 were parts of a single irregular feature.

F 9 was filled by fill context 7. In the southern section of the trench it was 1.55 m wide, narrowing to 200 mm wide in the northern side of the trench; it bottomed out in section (Fig. 4), and appears to have been an irregular feature 460 mm deep. It had an homogenous fill, context 7, which was clearly defined against the natural clay. Context 7 was a dark grey slightly sandy clay silt loam with occasional charcoal flecks and patches of redeposited natural clay, and rare small pebbles, rare small pieces of burnt flint and rare bunt clay flecks.

The adjacent pit F10 was visible in the southern section of this foundation trench, and the eastern side of the main north-south foundation trench. It was of maximum depth 420 mm, at least 1 m wide and of unknown length. Its fill, context 8, was the same as context 7.

The third pit, F11, was cut close to the original break of slope along the southern end of the garage, and was visible in section in both sides of the eastern foundation trench, and northern face of the trench between the house and garage (Plan Fig. 3, Plate 3); the feature was destroyed in the east-west trench by a ceramic land drain with brick surround and capping (Plate 3). F 11 occurred at the starts of the foundation trench between the house and garage, and the eastern foundation trench. It was recognised during the closely observed machining, and sampled by trowelling during the machining process; after cleaning the bottom of the eastern foundation trench it was further sampled to a depth of 200 mm in an attempt to recover finds and look for any

change in the fill. F11 was a large pit, 2.1 m long in the eastern side of the N-S trench, and more than 1.5 m E-W. It was cut into natural clay to a depth below modern ground surface of at least 1100 mm, and was steep sided at its southern and northern ends. Its western side was destroyed by a ceramic land drain whose upper part was encased in modern brick (Plate 3). It was filled by context 12, an homogenous mid grey sandy silty loam with abundant inclusions of burnt clay flecks. There was no sign whatever of burning *in situ*. There was an absence of silt lenses in the fill which might have indicated that the feature had naturally infilled over a period of time, and in view of the homogeneity of the fill it seems most likely that the pit was deliberately infilled in a single episode with material originating from an area of burning.

The natural subsoil exposed in the bottoms of all trenches was trowelled down and it is certain that no other cuts were present in these areas.

The ceramic drain referred to in the preceding paragraph and shown in Fig. 3 would have destroyed the possible gully F202 recorded by AC Archaeology in their Trench 2.

4 Finds

A small assemblage of finds as shown in the table below was recovered during observation of machining and from section.

Context	IRON SLAG		POTTERY						KILN STRUCTURE		CLAY PIPE		ANIMAL BONE		BURNT CLAY		OTHER	
	Slag		Hemyock Ware		Donyatt type ware		Other		Kiln material						Burnt clay fragments			
	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.	No.	Wt.
2	4	151	2	45	1	5	1	1	2	12	1	6	1	6				
3	5	940	6	108					2	116					3	64		
7			6	41													1	3
8			1	46											1	7	1	10
Totals	9	1091	15	240	1	5	1	1	4	128	1	6	1	6	4	71	2	13

Table. No. is number of pieces, Wt. is weight in grams.

I am grateful to John Allan for looking at the finds and commenting on them. The table above summarises the finds, additional comments are given below. A full transcript of my original notes from the meeting is contained in the archive; this has been checked by John Allan.

Pottery: The Hemyock Ware pottery is the same in fabric and form, where the form is identifiable, as that excavated by Exeter Archaeology to the immediate south of the plot; occasional sherds are over-fired, possibly wasters. The Hemyock Ware is all c. 1500 in date. In all 17 sherds were recovered, of which 15 are Hemyock Ware; weights are shown in the table above.

The Hemyock Ware sherds from context 2 are a jug handle and body sherd, the Donyatt-type is a rim sherd, the unclassifiable is a body sherd in a fine buff fabric (?19th century). The sherd from context 8 is a twisted handle from a jug.

Slag: The slag in all cases shows smooth surfaces in part or whole, indicating the type of tap slag. It is all similar to the material recovered by Exeter Archaeology to the immediate south.

?Kiln fabric material: The ?kiln fabric material comprises mainly small burnt clay pieces which sometimes have smooth surfaces in places; there is no positive identification with kiln structure, however JA considers this to be their likely origin. Both pieces from context 3 (107 and 9 g.) are burnt clay with a vitrified base. Some of the material classified as burnt clay may also be kiln fabric.

Animal bone: The animal bone is in small eroded fragments, without sign of pathology or butchery; species are unidentifiable. The fragment from context 3 is part of a long bone with possible canid gnawing.

Clay pipe: The clay pipe fragment from context 2 is part of a bowl and lower stem; the base bears the incuse inscription 'GE ... EB', indicating pipe produced by George Webb of Chard, datable to the late 17th/early 18th century.

Other: the piece from context 7 is a fragment of reduced cindery material, the piece from context 8 is a beaten iron fragment.

Retention Agreement has been reached that all material except the slag will be given to Dr Chris Smart for inclusion in his and John Allan's analysis of the Hemyock kiln material should EH funding be forthcoming. The iron slag will be discarded.

5 Conclusions

The original topography of the plot was a slope down to the north, and the plot had been levelled mainly, apparently, by topsoil being moved from the southern part of the plot to the northern. The topsoil was a single undifferentiated layer between turf and natural clay subsoil, up to 1 m thick. The general fall of the land from south to north and position of the sample area over the break of slope is obvious from observations on site.

Archaeological features were infrequent, and comprised three (possibly two) pits only, dug into subsoil in the southern half of the plot. These pits appear to have been backfilled; the large quantity of burnt clay flecks in the fill of pit F11 suggests that this may have originated from the post-medieval kilns which must exist to the south of the area. There was no burning *in situ* in the sample area, and an absence of kiln or furnace structures. In combination with the burnt clay flecks in pit F11, burnt clay flecks and pieces of ferrous slag also occurred in the topsoil deposit context 2/3, broadly similar to the deposits recorded by AC Archaeology in their earlier evaluation, the features and finds represent an extension of the deposits sampled by Exeter Archaeology to the immediate south of the plot, with the impression that both clay extraction hollows and their backfill with material derived from the kilns and iron smelting furnaces to the south become less dense, and may disappear altogether on the downslope. Pottery production and iron smelting appears to have been concentrated on the more level ground to the south of the plot.

6 Acknowledgments

I am grateful to Mr Sean Ritchie (SIR Construction) for instructing Arrowhead Archaeology in this matter, and for his amiable co-operation on site. I am also grateful to Mr Stephen Reed for his comments on the WSI and this report, and providing me with a copy of the AC Archaeology report. Dr John Allan is thanked for sending me a copy of his lecture on the Hemyock kilns, which included helpful photographs of the Exeter Archaeology excavations to the south, and for commenting on the finds and making recommendations for retention.

7 References

Hughes, S., 2009, 'Land to the rear of Churchills Farm, High Street, Hemyock, Devon'. September 2009, ACA Document number ACD87/2/0 (grey literature).



Plate 1: Pits 9 and 10, facing SE. Scales 2 m and 1 m.



Plate 2: Part of western foundation trench, facing SSW, showing fall in original ground surface from south to north, natural overlain by undifferentiated topsoil context 2/3. The disturbance in the bottom right of the photo is the edge of the land drain. Scales 2 m and 1 m.



Plate 3: Dogleg in eastern foundation trench, facing NNE. Pit F11 is below 2m scale (vertical scale is 1m); modern drain disturbance visible on left centre. Photograph taken before cleaning and sampling of fill exposed in bottom of trench.



Plate 4: Dogleg in eastern foundation trench, facing ENE. Pit F11 is below 2m scale (vertical scale is 1m); photograph taken before cleaning and sampling of fill exposed in bottom of trench.



Plate 5: General working shot facing south.