

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING
AT EDGINSWELL LANE, TORQUAY**

by

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by Exeter Archaeology (EA) in August 2001 during water mains rehabilitation works at Edginswell Lane, Torquay. The project was commissioned by John Kennedy CE Ltd on behalf of South West Water Ltd (SWW) at the request of the Torbay Council. The work was undertaken in accordance with a brief supplied by Torbay Council Archaeology Officer (Bishop May 2001) and a subsequent project design prepared by EA (July 2001).

2. THE SITE (Figs 1–5)

The works entailed the replacement of a section of water main approximately 750m in length, which extended from the junction of Edginswell Lane with the A3022 (SX88986660) westwards to the junction of Edginswell Lane with an unclassified road near Odicknoll Farm (SX88356680). The route rises from around 40m AOD at its eastern end to a height of 55m AOD east of where Hamelin Way passes over Edginswell Lane, before dropping down to around 40m AOD again at the western end of the route. The underlying geology of the area is Permian Watcombe clays with sandstone and breccia (BGS), overlain by typical brown earths of the Crediton association (Soil Survey).

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1990 an archaeological assessment was undertaken by EA (formerly Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit) in respect of a SWW pipeline to be laid through Edginswell (Weddell 1990). Two potential sites were identified in the vicinity of Edginswell.

The first was the field-name ‘Stone Chester’, located to the south-west of the village (SX88566596), recorded in the 1841 Tithe Apportionment for St Mary Church. The name ‘chester’ is derived from the Old English *ceaster* meaning old fortifications, and is sometimes applied to archaeological remains of Roman or prehistoric date.

The second was the village of Edginswell itself (SX887661) identified as *Wille* recorded in Domesday Book. The village is likely to have originated as the manorial centre or a demesne farm, the latter accounting for half of the taxable land within the whole manor. In the Lay Subsidy of 1332 Edginswell was assessed separately and contained ten taxpayers, as many as the whole of the rest of the parish. At the time of the 1840 Tithe Map there were five main dwelling sites, which is largely reflected by the present-day layout of the village.

A watching brief was subsequently undertaken by EA (then EMAFU) later in 1991 (Reed 1991). In the vicinity of the ‘Stone Chester’ field a trackway that adjoins the field was cut by the pipeline and observed to be metalled. No dating evidence was recovered but it is possible that the trackway was medieval in date and would be contemporary with a medieval field system to the south-west. No features were observed in the vicinity of the village of Edginswell, although one sherd of medieval pottery was collected from north of the village.

4. AIMS

The principal aim of the archaeological project was to establish the presence or absence, nature, character, extent and date of any archaeological deposits, features or structures exposed during trenching or access works. This was to ensure that any significant material was adequately investigated and recorded.

5. METHOD

The rehabilitation technique employed was almost exclusively pipe bursting. This involved the excavation of small pits (average size approx. 1.30m by 0.90m) to connect to existing supply pipes and other water mains, and larger pits (average size approx. 3.00m by 1.10m) to facilitate the use of pipe bursting equipment. Excavation was undertaken using a mini-digger fitted with a toothed bucket.

Visits by EA staff were made to the site at key stages to observe excavations in progress. All stratigraphic information was recorded on standard EA watching brief record sheets, a drawn record was compiled at scales of 1:20 or 1:50 as appropriate, and a photographic record was made consisting of colour slides and black-and-white prints.

It should be noted that a stretch of open-cut excavation to the north-east of the village of Edginswell had already been excavated and backfilled prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

6. RESULTS

A total of 31 pits were observed. These were all located within Edginswell Lane or on the adjacent northern pavement.

The pits were excavated along the line of the existing service trench, the majority partially encroaching into previously unexcavated ground. In a number of pits, all potential archaeological deposits had been removed or were obscured by services other than the water main. Elsewhere, the stratigraphy consisted of a stiff red natural clay, sometimes slightly silty and containing small quantities of gravel, overlain by 0.20m–0.95m of tarmac (present) road surface and associated make-up. The clay was seen to depths of between 0.30m and 0.70m (to the base of the pits).

Within pit 18 (Fig. 4), near the top of the hill east of Hamelin Way, solid sandstone bedrock was observed beneath the natural clay subsoil (0.70m below the present ground level). Cutting into the bedrock, at right angles to the pit, was an east-west aligned feature. Part of this feature was hand excavated and found to be a vertically sided cut, most likely an early service trench. Its compact fill consisted of fractured sandstone and gravel, and it contained a number of flints, both worked and unworked, together with fragments of a broken ceramic drainage pipe and a single sherd of china.

In pit 31 (Fig. 4), on the side of the hill east of Hamelin Way, masonry remains were observed at a depth of 0.56m below the surface, directly beneath the make-up material for the road. Safety concerns over the depth of the trench meant that detailed recording was limited to its northern end. Here, two courses of large subangular limestone blocks were set within a dark red clayey sand containing one sherd of transfer print Staffordshire pottery. The

masonry was abutted by a thin layer of tarmac, representing a previous, though modern, surface.

7. THE FINDS

Very few finds were retrieved during the course of the watching brief, and only those from pit 18 were retained. The residual flints, consisting of three struck flakes and 11 unstruck fragments, from the feature in pit 18 were undiagnostic. The sherd of china from pit 31 indicates that the 'wall' in this pit is probably of 19th- or 20th-century date.

8. DISCUSSION

Previous archaeological assessment and monitoring at Edginswell in 1990/91 indicated that there was the potential for the survival of archaeological deposits in this area. It seems likely that the present Edginswell Lane preserves the line of a medieval road or trackway associated with the Domesday settlement.

However, the recent archaeological observations have confirmed that construction of the present road, and indeed the insertion of services, has resulted in a considerable degree of truncation along a 750m length of Edginswell Lane. This was particularly apparent in the vicinity of Hamelin Way, where in places the depth of modern material and disturbance was substantial. Such disturbance will have undoubtedly resulted in the loss of any earlier archaeological deposits or features, e.g. former road surfaces.

Where previously unexcavated ground was observed within the pits, it almost invariably consisted of natural clay subsoil encountered at a depth of between 0.30m and 0.70m, overlain by modern make-up, backfill and tarmac. No medieval (or earlier) deposits or features were located, and indeed very few artefacts were retrieved. The residual flints recovered from the fill of the earlier service trench in pit 18 attest to general prehistoric activity in the area, but were undiagnostic. The limestone blocks recorded in pit 31 either represent the remains of a wall or revetted bank of 19th/20th-century date.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project was commissioned by John Kennedy, and administered by P. Rush (John Kennedy) and P.M. Stead (EA). A brief for archaeological investigation was supplied by H. Bishop (Torbay Council), who also monitored the fieldwork. The fieldwork was undertaken by A.J. Passmore and C.J.M. Whitton, and the illustrations were prepared by T. Ives.

SOURCES CONSULTED

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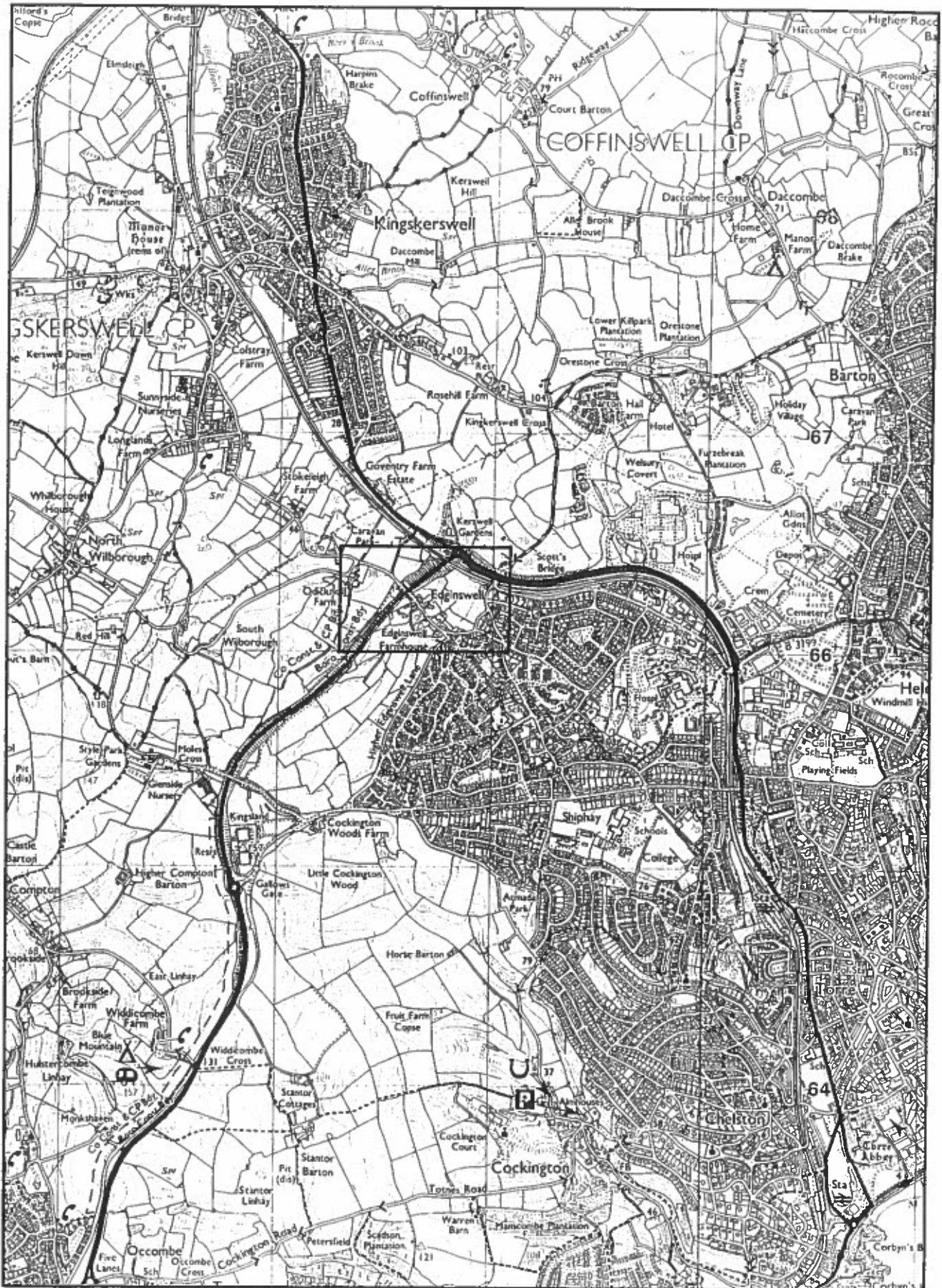


Fig. 1 Location of site. Reproduced from the 1:25000 Explorer map 31 by permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. © Crown copyright 1997. All rights reserved. Licence No. A1 100016685

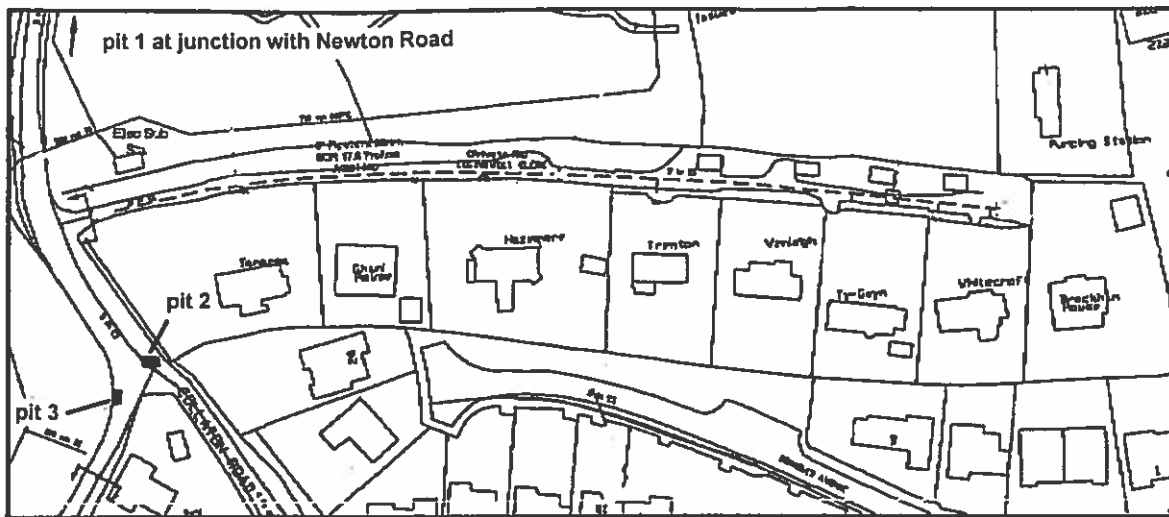


Fig. 2 The eastern part of the route (based on a plan supplied by J. Kennedy). Scale approx. 1:1600.

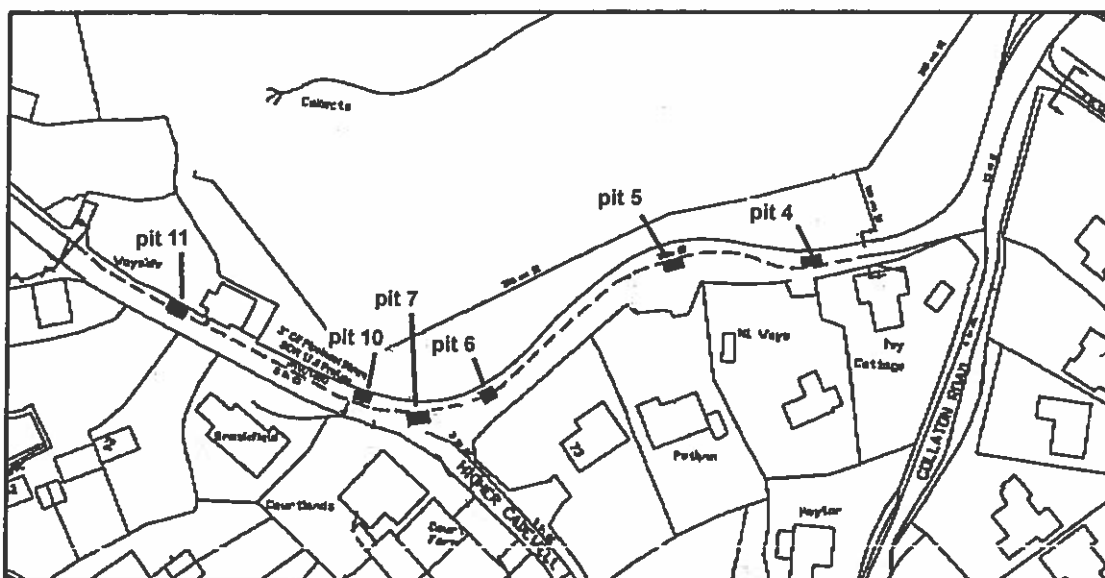


Fig. 3 The central part of the route (based on a plan supplied by J. Kennedy). Scale approx. 1:1600.

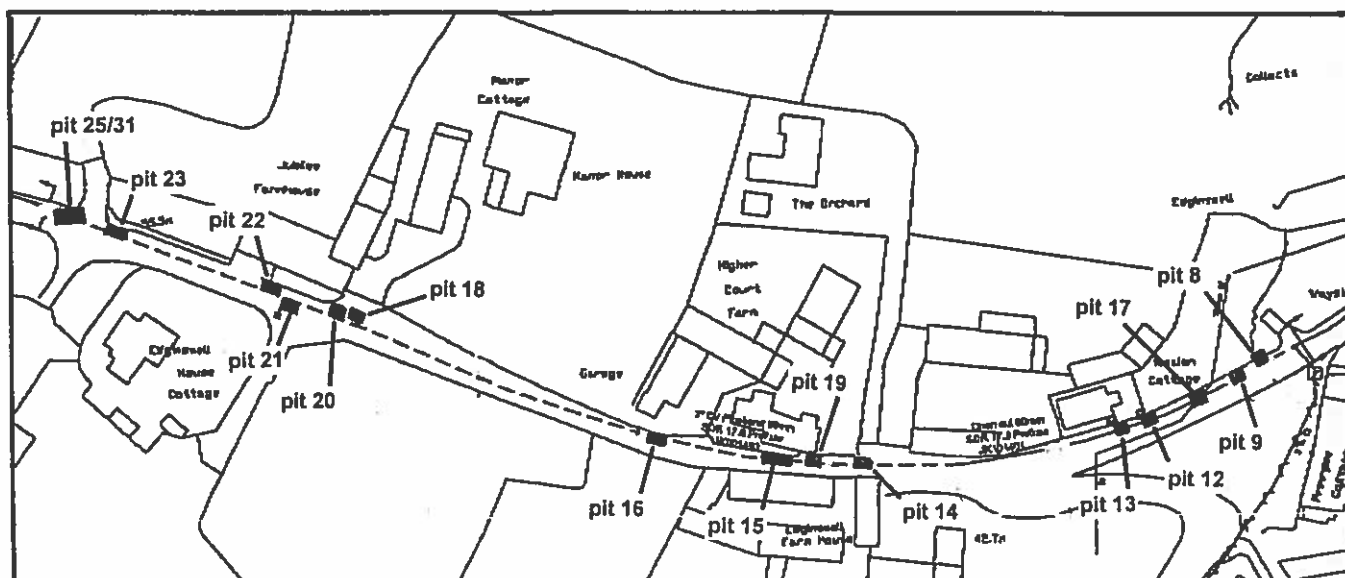


Fig. 4 The central part of the route (based on a plan supplied by J. Kennedy). Scale approx. 1:1600.

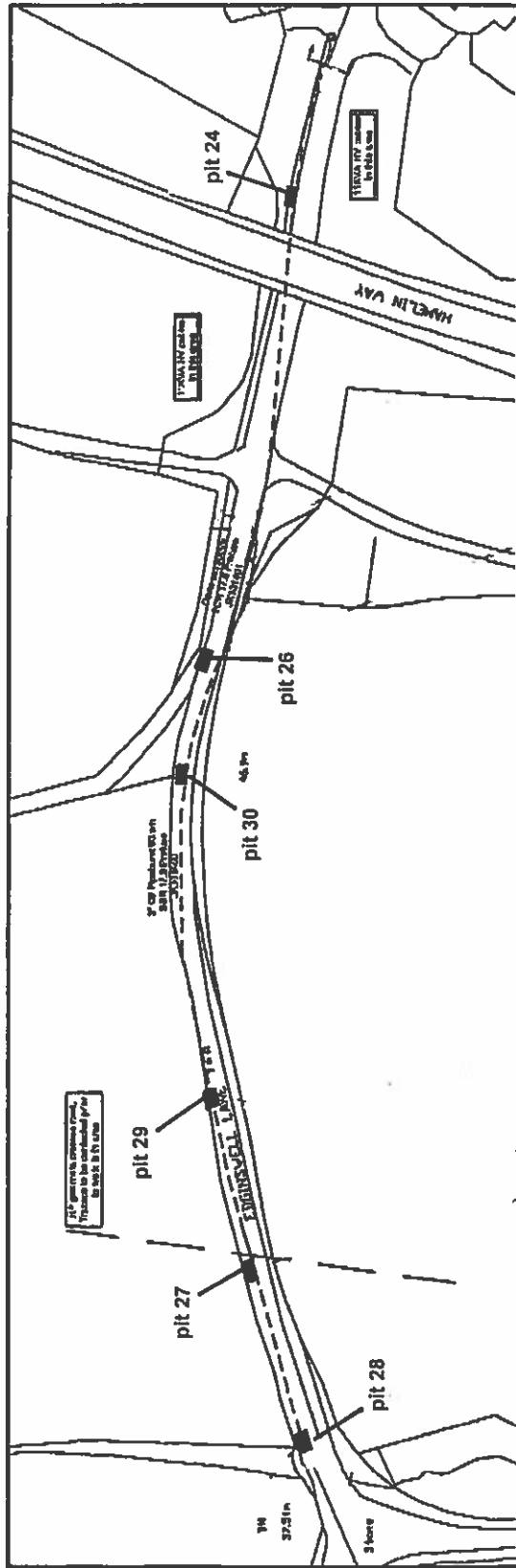


Fig. 5 The western part of the route (based on a plan supplied by J. Kennedy). Scale approx. 1:1600.