

**TORBAY RING ROAD  
STAGE 3: VALLEY ROUTE  
APPENDIX**

**by**

**S.J. Reed and S.D. Turton**

**Exeter Museums Archaeological Field Unit**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This report is intended as an Appendix to *Archaeological Assessment of DCC Ring Road Stage 3* (EMAFU Report No. 92.63) which considered Valley Route 2 of the proposed Torbay Ring Road Stage 3. During preparation of the original report in December 1992 it was not possible to undertake preliminary fieldwork on the southern part of the route due to limitations of access. It was recommended that the remainder of the fieldwork should be carried out at an early stage to identify any archaeological sites or features which might require preservation, recording, or further detailed assessment or evaluation. This was eventually undertaken in June/July 1993. The results of borehole and trial pit investigations are also included in this report.

## 2. SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL INTEREST (Fig. 1)

### 1. Building north of reservoir (SX86386136; section 2.5 in original report)

This is the only extant building affected by construction. It is described in the mid 19th century as a linhay belonging to Blagdon (a settlement of medieval origin). The building is in a reasonable state of repair, although the corrugated-iron roof is partly blown away. It is constructed of reddish sedimentary rock containing abundant small water-worn stones (conglomerate). The floor surfaces are of rough cobbles. Its plan, with two pillars to the north and south, suggest it was originally an open-fronted, back-to-back linhay which had already been converted by the mid 19th century for use as a 'shed'. The roof is undoubtedly secondary, possibly having gable ends when first constructed.

### 2. Water meadows (SX863614)

Hillside water meadows were identified to the west of the above building during the initial fieldwork (section 2.7 in original report). Closer inspection of the area has revealed part of an infilled channel possibly relating to this system. It runs from the grubbed-out, north-south hedge boundary (north of the small quarry) southward towards the above mentioned building. It cannot be seen to the south of the building. This feature may alternatively represent the remnants of a trackway, although being only c. 1.3m wide this seems less likely.

### 3. Colluvial and palaeoenvironmental deposits

The movement of soil downslope (hillwash) often results in the accumulation of substantial colluvial deposits at the base of valleys or on the lower valley slopes. These deposits are archaeologically significant for two reasons:

- (i) They may overlie and seal early ground surfaces (buried soils) or other deposits which could contain preserved organic material (e.g. pollen). Such material can provide information about past land use. Similarly, dateable material (e.g. charcoal) can often be retrieved.
- (ii) The hillwash (colluvial) deposits may themselves contain artefacts from settlement sites which were located upslope.

During an archaeological evaluation at a landfill site near Exminster in 1991, one such buried soil containing fragments of charcoal was located in a dry valley near Matford. The

formation of this soil occurred during a period of stabilisation of the valley slopes during the middle period of the Bronze Age (about 3500 years ago), and it was subsequently sealed by further hillwash deposits.

During the preliminary fieldwork for the Valley Route it was observed that a likely location for colluvial deposits was to the north-west of Cruel Cross (see section 4.2 (a) in the original report). Further areas were thought to lie in the southern part of the route, although these could not be readily identified during subsequent fieldwork which took the form of above-ground observation. There is evidence that hillwash activity is still taking place in the valley (Major Hedges pers. comm.), although some hillwash deposits may be of periglacial origin.

*Potential for palaeoenvironmental sampling*

The geology of both the Valley and the Plateau Route have been investigated by Norwest Holst Soil Engineering Ltd for Devon County Council, to ascertain the suitability for road construction. This involved the digging of 96 boreholes (BH) and 115 trial pits (TP) along the course of the Valley Route (for the Plateau Route see EMAFU Report No. 93.50). An examination of the log books kindly supplied by Norwest Holst suggests that preserved palaeoenvironmental deposits (waterlogged material and possible buried soils) may be present in at least 10 locations along the route. All the waterlogged deposits are sealed by colluvium.

These areas of potential archaeological interest are listed and summarily interpreted below for the Valley Route (from north to south). The most potentially significant areas are marked with an asterisk. The locations are shown on Fig. 1.

**TP79** SE of Lower Westerland. Between 0.2-1.0m, occasional black organic material; between 1.0-1.6m, woody material and many leaves. Possible water meadow channel. Waterlogged.

**TP81** SE of Lower Westerland. Between 0.8-1.0m, clayey, very sandy silt and gravel with plant remains; between 1.9-2.1m, silt with occasional plant remains which directly overlies the bedrock. Waterlogged.

**BH48** N of Cruel Cross. Between 0.7-1.6m, silty organic clay directly overlying the bedrock. Waterlogged.

**TP65** E of Rams Hill Copse. Between 0.65-1.1m, organic gravel; between 1.1-2.2m, very moist, occasional plant remains. Waterlogged.

**\*BH34** S of Rams Hill Copse. At 1m, clayey gravel band. Possible buried soil. Within 2.5m of very silty, sandy clay becoming firm to stiff at 2m. Above siltstone bedrock.

**\*TP49** N of extant building (near quarry). This was identified as an area of palaeoenvironmental potential in the original report. Beneath 1.8m of very silty, sandy clay is a layer of 'very soft to soft grey silty sandy (fine to coarse) organic (brown, fibrous, spongy, disseminated vegetative matter) clay'. Possible peat deposit. Bedrock does not appear to have been encountered in this trench. Waterlogged.

**\*BH20** W of silted reservoirs, SW of 'T' junction, higher upslope than the other deposits. At

1.25m, clayey silt band 0.95m above weathered sandstone. Possible buried soil.

**\*BH12** S of Greatpark Lane. At a depth of 2m, very clayey band 1.4m above weathered sandstone. Possible buried soil.

**TP11** By watercourse, W of Highfield Crescent. At 1.4m, silty sandy layer (1.1m deep) containing 'occasional black fibrous spongy wood fragments' overlying weathered breccia bedrock. Waterlogged.

**BH1** Southernmost limit of route. Between 2.5-3.5m, rootlets and plant remains. Waterlogged.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 3.1 Preservation

No features requiring preservation have so far been identified along the route on the basis of existing knowledge. However, it may be necessary to earmark certain sites for preservation in the light of the results of the recommended evaluation excavations.

#### 3.2 Archaeological evaluation

##### (a) *Water meadows*

Water meadows may be located within two areas along the Valley Route:

(i) *North of building at SX863614*. Here it is necessary to plot accurately the surface evidence, and any further channels visible on aerial photographs. A trench should be excavated downslope in order to locate any parallel courses which are not visible on the surface.

(ii) *Possible channel in TP79 (SX868621)*. Samples need to be taken from this feature for palaeoenvironmental analysis (see (b) below).

##### (b) *Palaeoenvironmental sampling*

These have been identified in section 3 above, and samples should be taken from these areas as part of the evaluation programme. The evaluation programme should include provision for laboratory processing, species identification and the dating of suitable samples taken at this stage. The most sensitive areas (asterisked in 3 above) may require additional excavation.

(i) *Peat deposit, TP49 (SX863615)*. From the description in the log, this would appear to be a substantial (at least 1.4m deep) peat deposit sealed by 1.8m of colluvium. The depth and extent of the feature must first be established by trenching. If not totally disturbed by the trial pit, this deposit should be sampled for:

- (i) radiocarbon dating - of the formation of the deposit and also the overlying colluvium;
- (ii) palynological (pollen) analysis of a column through the deposit - providing details of land use with relation to chronology;
- (iii) identification of any preserved plant remains.

Peat deposits at comparable depths to TP49 sampled in the Wolf Valley, West Devon (Roadford Reservoir), have produced dates from the 2nd-3rd millennia BC.

(ii) *Buried soils.* At this stage, the interpretation of these deposits can only be provisional. Trenching of the clay bands recorded in BH34, BH20 and BH12 is needed to confirm whether or not they represent soils sealed by subsequent hillwash. If so, they may contain material (e.g. charcoal) suitable for radiocarbon dating in addition to pollen, macrofossils or chance artefactual material.

(iii) *TP79* (see above). Once again, a trench is required to establish the nature of the feature. If appropriate, samples should then be taken for palaeoenvironmental/dating analysis.

(iv) *Organic material.* Any organic material from the deposits recorded in TP81, BH48, TP65, TP11 and BH1 should be sampled as for TP49 if found to be suitable after trenching.

Samples from all the above mentioned areas should give an indication of land use within the valley and on the valley slopes over a considerable time-span. The deposition of overlying colluvium was probably due to a change in the use of the valley sides (e.g. deforestation, agricultural activity).

### (c) *Further palaeoenvironmental sampling*

Wherever appropriate, samples should be taken from hedgebanks crossed by the route (e.g. the parish boundary), where the possibility of preserved buried soils may be related to the other palaeoenvironmental samples taken.

## 3.3 Building recording

The building (linhay) to the north of the reservoirs (No. 1) requires archaeological recording prior to construction. This should take the form of outline elevation and ground plan drawings, and should include a photographic record.

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## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Pye, A.R. & Matthews, A. 1991 *An archaeological evaluation of a landfill site at Trood Lane, Exminster* (EMAFU Report No. 91.59).

## CORRIGENDUM

In the original report on the Valley Route (EMAFU Report No. 92.63) it was erroneously stated in section 2.2 that the Old Farmhouse at Lower Westerland was a Listed Grade II building. This is now known not to be the case. The house itself was not viewed at close range during fieldwork.