

16 High Street Fordington CSO, Dorchester, Dorset Archaeological Observations and Recording, February 2002

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SUMMARY

Archaeological observations were carried out during sewerage system improvements outside 16 High Street Fordington, Dorchester (SY 6962 9072) close to the area where substantial Roman building remains have been found in the past. No archaeological deposits that are likely to pre-date the post-medieval period were observed during the groundworks.

INTRODUCTION

This project was commissioned by Wessex Water following advice from Steven Wallis, Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council.

The groundworks comprise the excavation of a hole 3.0 m by 3.0 m down to a depth of about 3.5 m.

The site is on the south side of High Street Fordington, outside number 16A Fordington Court, at Ordnance Survey NGR SY 6962 9072 (Figure 1). The site slopes gently to the north and east and lies at a height of about 55.45 m OD. The underlying geology is mapped as Upper Chalk (Geological Survey of Great Britain 1: 50,000 Sheet 328 *Dorchester* 1981).

The fieldwork was carried out between 30th October 2001–28th February 2002.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the following for their help and cooperation during this project: Frances Clayton and Tony West (Wessex Water); Michael Lloyd (Oscar Faber); Jane Lewis and the groundworkers (Brent). The fieldwork was undertaken by Peter Bellamy.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The area lies just outside the eastern side of the Roman town of *Durnovaria*. Possible traces of the gate to the Roman town and other possible Roman building traces were observed during sewage works at the junction of High Street Fordington, and Salisbury Street (Woodward and Ashford 1997).

Parts of a substantial late Roman house with a fine mosaic floor were uncovered in the earlier part of the 20th century, lying at a depth of about 0.9–1.2 m partly beneath the footpath outside 12 and 14 High Street Fordington and the foundry yard to the south (RCHM 1970, Vidler 1928).

Further traces of Roman activity have been found on the northern side of the road at the old foundry (Cox and Robinson 1998), immediately adjacent to the present site.

A large number of Roman burials have been discovered beneath High Street Fordington, further to the east of the present site (RCHM 1970).

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objective of the archaeological observations is to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

The archaeological works aimed to observe and record all the in situ archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.

METHODOLOGY

The observations were carried out in compliance with the specification prepared by Terrain Archaeology (Document T3068, October 2001) and in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (1994, rev. 1999).

The location of the groundworks was surveyed by taped measurements from the existing buildings. All depths have been recorded as below present ground levels.

All archaeological deposits and features exposed during the works were recorded using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records.

The records have been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current UKIC guidelines and the requirements of the receiving museum, Dorset County Museum.

RESULTS

The groundworks comprised the excavation of an area 3.0 m by 3.0 m across and over 3.0 m deep by mechanical excavator (Figure 2). The trench was observed and recorded at a point where the excavation had reached approximately 1.6 m – 2.0 m below ground level. At this point, natural chalk bedrock was visible in many places at the bottom of trench. Measured sketch sections were produced of the north and west-facing sides of the trench (Figure 3).

Natural Deposits

Natural solid chalk bedrock was observed at a depth of 1.47 m below present ground level. The chalk appeared to have been truncated by recent activity.

Post-medieval and Modern deposits

The deposits exposed in the trench appear to be associated with post-medieval and modern activity, much of it associated with modern services. The deposits mainly comprise layers of chalk rubble interspersed with layers of grey clay and dark brown soil. There was no dating evidence, other than a number of slate and brick fragments, but the general character of the deposits suggested a post-medieval or modern date. Further details of the deposits observed are given in Figure 3 and illustrated in Plates 1–3.

CONCLUSIONS

None of the deposits observed during the groundworks are likely to be earlier than the post-medieval period. The area is heavily disturbed by modern service trenches. No Roman or earlier deposits survive.

PROJECT ARCHIVE

The archive (Terrain Archaeology Project No. TA5089) will be deposited with Dorset County Museum, which has agreed in principle to accept the archive, subject to fulfilment of the Museum's requirements of the preparation of archaeological archives. A copy of the microfilmed archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Record.

REFERENCES

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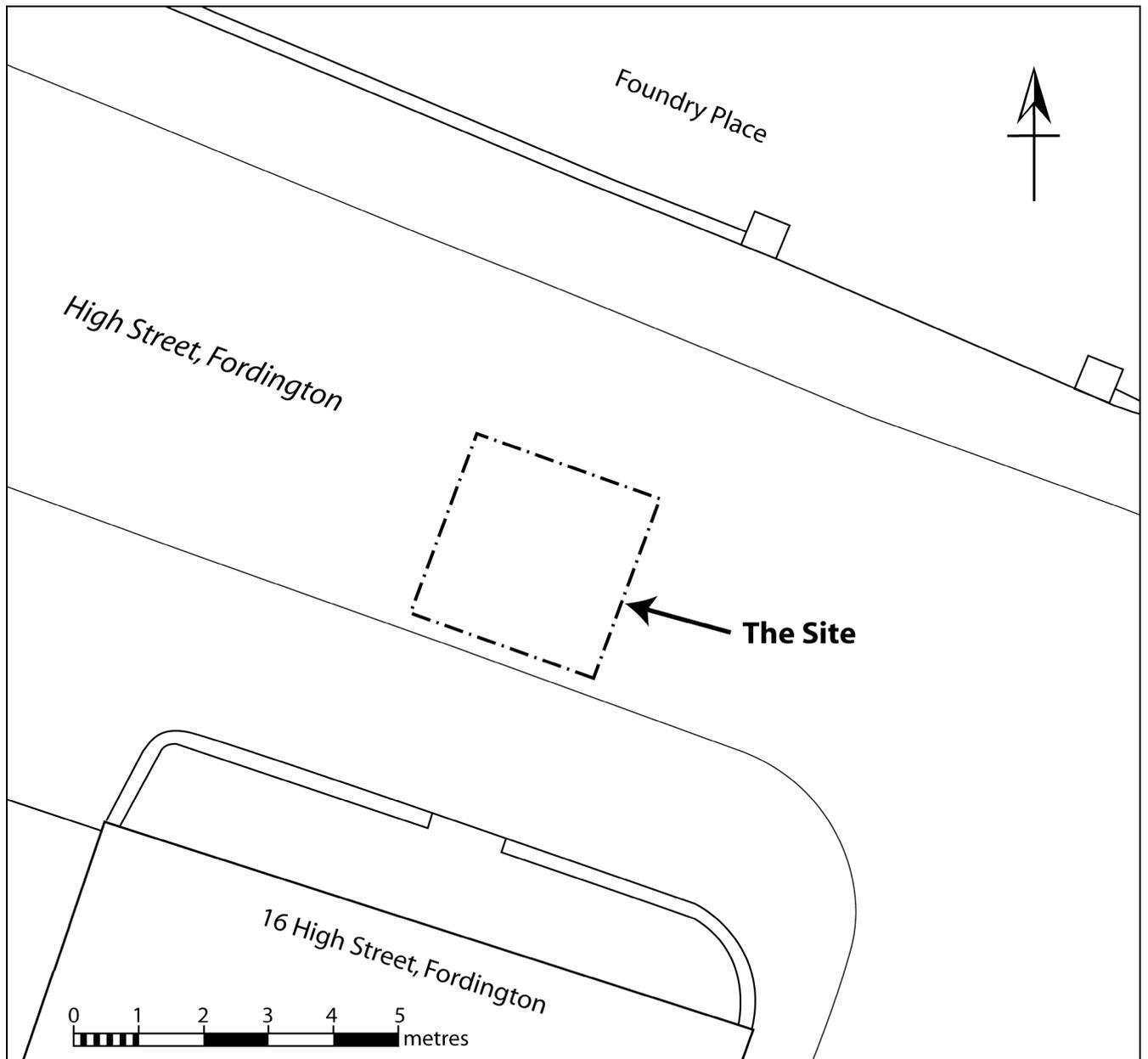
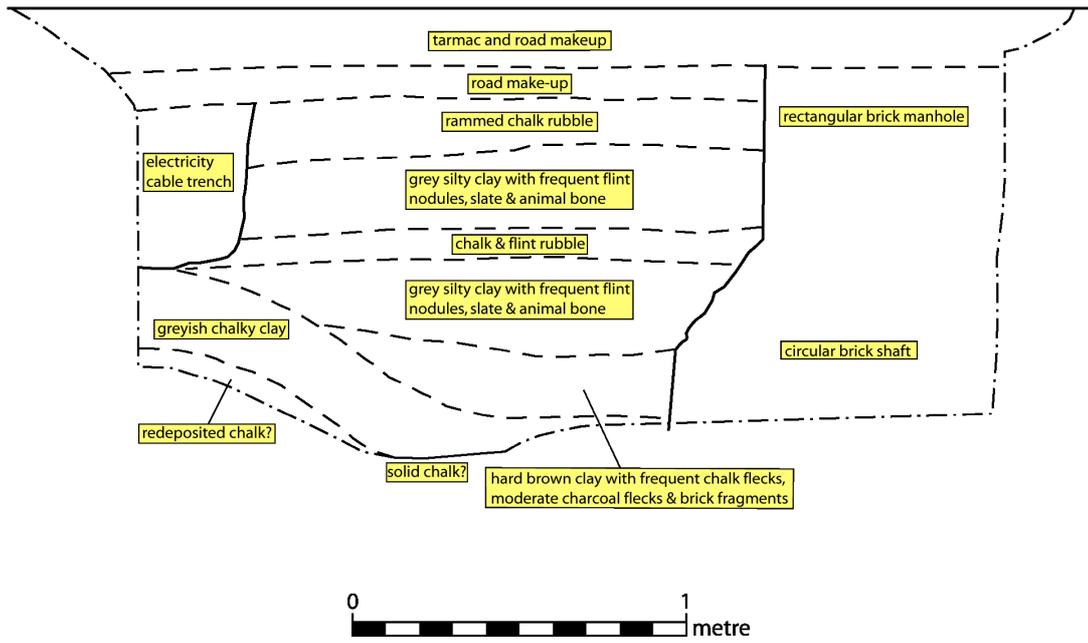


Figure 2: Plan of site

North-facing Section



West-facing Section

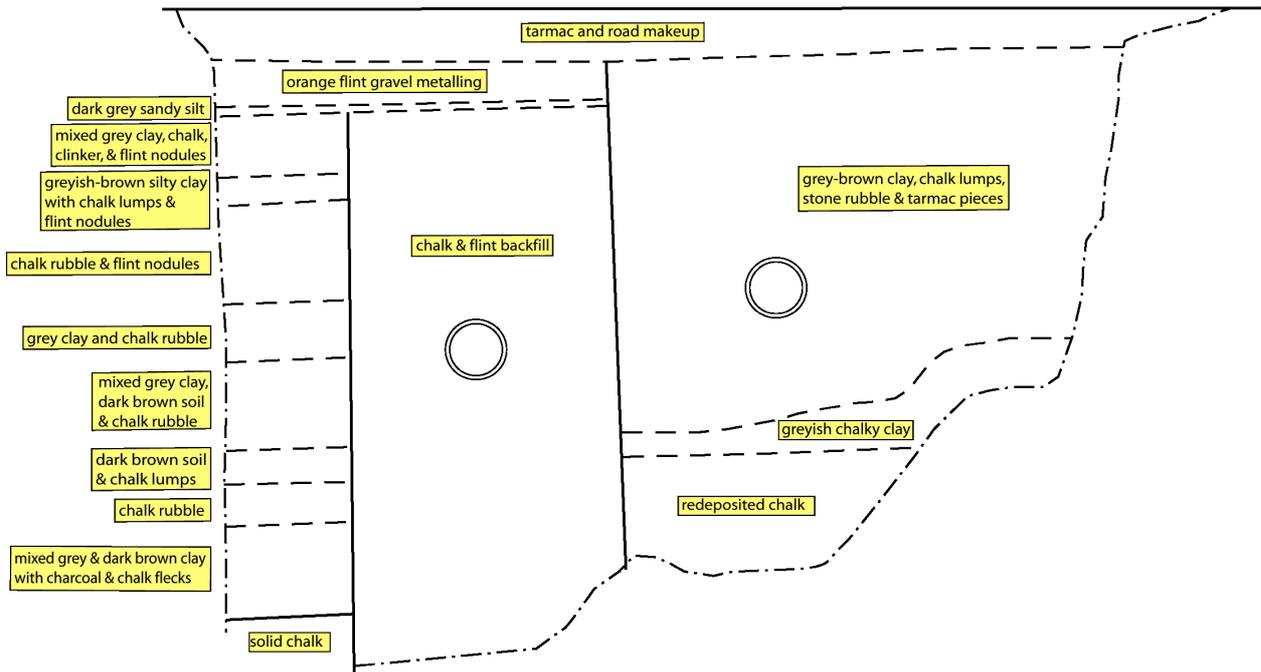


Figure 3: North- and west-facing sections