



**REED BED TRENCHES, ST GABRIEL'S HOUSE,
STANTON ST GABRIEL, DORSET
Archaeological Observations**

Prepared on behalf of:

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Reed Bed Trenches, St Gabriel's House, Stanton St Gabriel, Dorset

Archaeological Observations, June 2000

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Summary

An archaeological watching brief was carried out during the construction of three reed beds to the northwest of St Gabriel House, as part of the upgrading of the drainage system. Previously the remains of several brick clamps have been found in the field. However, no archaeology was encountered, other than a 0.4 m thick layer of ploughsoil, containing sparse medieval and post-medieval pottery, was exposed beneath the modern turf. A number of modern drains were revealed.

Reed Bed Trenches, St Gabriel's House, Stanton St Gabriel, Dorset Archaeological Observations, June 2000

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by the National Trust to undertake a watching brief during the groundworks to upgrade the drainage system from St Gabriel's House. The works comprised the construction of three reed beds along the western side of the field to the north-west of the house and a drainage trench to connect the reed beds to the existing septic tank (Figure 1). The positioning of the drainage features was designed to avoid the areas of highest archaeological potential.
- 1.2 The objective of the archaeological work was to record all archaeological deposits and features encountered during the groundworks.
- 1.3 The Site (centred on NGR SY40029242) is situated in pasture on a northwestern slope. A number of slight earthworks are visible. Immediately to the west of the site, the ground fell away steeply down to St Gabriel's stream. The underlying geology is mapped as Middle Lias Thorncombe Sands (Geological Survey of England and Wales Sheet 327 *Bridport* 1:50000 Drift 1974).
- 1.4 The fieldwork was carried out on 26 June 2000.
- 1.5 Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge Mark Moodie and Chris from Elemental Solutions Ltd for their help and cooperation on site. Thanks are also due to the Clerk of Works, Mike Salmon and Martin Papworth, Wessex Regional Archaeologist. The fieldwork was undertaken by Peter Bellamy who also compiled this report. Pottery identification was by Jo Draper, FSA.

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Stanton was a Domesday settlement. The chapel of St Gabriel is late 14th century or earlier in date (RCHME 1952, 223). A survey of 1650 recorded 23 families in Stanton St Gabriel. St Gabriel House was constructed c. 1700. Today the settlement comprises only the ruins of the chapel, St Gabriel's cottage, St Gabriel's House and an outbuilding. The 1840 Tithe Map shows that the area of the new reed beds was arable in the earlier 19th century.
- 2.2 Excavation in September/November 1998, during the upgrading of the drainage system from the septic tank, revealed the remains of possible brick kiln clamps and some medieval and 17th/18th century pottery (Papworth 1998). A further drain running westwards from the septic tank was dug in October 1998. A watching brief revealed nothing more than field drains and other drains.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The observations were carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeology's *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (1994, rev. 1999).
- 3.2 There was no written project design or specification.
- 3.3 The groundworks were excavated by mini digger fitted with a toothed bucket. The location of the works was planned using taped measurements from the existing property boundaries (which were mapped using a sighting compass and taped measurements). All depths were recorded from the existing ground surface.
- 3.4 The archaeological features and deposits were recorded using Terrain Archaeology's standard recording system of written, drawn and photographic records.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The excavation of the three reed beds and the connecting drain trenches were observed during excavation. The digging of the drain pipe trench from the existing septic tank to the first reed bed was not observed as this was along the line of an existing drain, which had already been the subject of a watching brief in October 1998. Very little archaeology was discovered. The stratigraphic sequence in each of the three reed bed trenches was similar.
- 4.1.2 Reed bed 1 was 4.3 m by 3.9 m and dug to a maximum depth of 0.9 m. Reed Bed 2 measured 3.4 m by 2.5 m and was up to 0.9 m deep. Reed Bed 3 measured 6 m by 2 m, but only the southernmost two metres was dug into the ground (to a depth of 0.45 m): the rest of the reed bed was built up above present ground level.

4.2 Stratigraphic sequence

- 4.2.1 The following stratigraphic sequence was exposed in the footings trenches:

<i>depth</i>	<i>description</i>	<i>context nos</i>
0 – 0.2 m	topsoil	100, 109, 114
0.2 – 0.9 m	drainage trenches	103–108, 112, 113, 116, 117
0.2 – 0.6 m	ploughsoil/colluvium	101, 110, 115
>0.6 m	natural clay	102, 111

A list of all contexts can be found in Appendix 1.

4.3 Natural deposits

- 4.3.1 The natural subsoil exposed on site was a brownish red clay with grey mottles (102, 111). In Reed Bed 2, a stratum of stone in grey clay was found at 0.9 m below ground surface, within the clay 111.

4.4 Ploughsoil/Colluvium

- 4.4.1 A 0.4 m thick layer of brown silty clay with frequent iron mottles and occasional to moderate charcoal flecks (102, 110, 115) was encountered beneath the topsoil. This has been interpreted as a build-up of ploughsoil, or colluvium.

4.5 Drainage Trenches

- 4.5.1 Three drainage features were exposed in Reed Bed 1. The ceramic drain pipe (104) laid in October 1998 crossed the trench in a WNW-ESE direction. Adjacent to this was another ceramic drain (106), which only just protruded into the trench. In the northwest corner of the trench, part of a field drain (107), oriented NE-SW and filled with chert rubble (108), was exposed. Similar land drains were encountered during earlier archaeological investigations in the field.
- 4.5.2 The plastic drain pipe (113) laid in 1998 was exposed running diagonally across Reed Bed 2. This drain pipe trench (112) had been previously excavated in 1998.
- 4.5.3 In Reed Bed 3 another land drain (116), filled with chert pebbles (117), was encountered running NE-SW.

4.6 Topsoil

- 4.5.2 The topsoil, supporting a rich turf was a 0.2 m thick layer of reddish grey silty clay with occasional flint and greensand chert gravel (100, 109, 114)

4.7 Finds

- 4.7.1 Very few finds were recovered. These have been rapidly scanned to provide spot dates and have not been examined or described in detail. All finds are tabulated by context in Table 1.

context	medieval pottery	post- medieval pottery	clay tobacco pipe
109		1/68	
110	2/9		
114		1/13	1/7
115	1/7		
<i>total</i>	<i>3/16</i>	<i>2/81</i>	<i>1/7</i>

Table 1: All finds (no/wt (g)) by context

- 5.8.2 *Medieval pottery.* Three sherds of medieval pottery were recovered from the colluvium. A sherd of 13th/14th century date and one of 15th/16th century date were found in Reed Bed 2. A single sherd of 12th/13th century date was found in Reed Bed 3.
- 5.8.3 *Post-medieval pottery.* A 17th/18th century chamber pot sherd was retained from the topsoil in Reed Bed 2 and a sherd of 19th century earthenware came from the topsoil in Reed Bed 3.
- 5.8.4 *Clay tobacco pipe.* A single pipe stem was recovered from the topsoil in Reed Bed 3.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 No significant archaeology was revealed during the present works. The layer of ploughsoil or colluvium containing small quantities of both medieval and post-medieval pottery attests to a long period of cultivation until the late 19th century.
- 6.2 The positioning of the reed beds was intended to avoid the areas of *in situ* archaeology. The results of the watching brief testify that this was successful.

7 PROJECT ARCHIVE

- 7.1 The archive (TA5064) will be deposited with the National Trust at Castle View, Corfe Castle.

8 REFERENCES

- Papworth, M., 1998 'Stanton St Gabriel, brick kiln and medieval settlement: Interim report' *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* **120**, 114.
- RCHME 1952 Royal Commission on Historical Monuments of England *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Dorset* **1** West Dorset.

Appendix 1: List of all contexts

location	context	description	interpretation	depth below surface
Reed Bed 1	100	reddish grey silty clay with occasional flint and chert gravel.	turf and topsoil	0
Reed Bed 1	101	friable brown silty clay with frequent iron stains and mottles and occasional/moderate small charcoal flecks.	colluvium	0.2 m
Reed Bed 1	102	brownish red clay with grey mottles.	natural	0.6 m
Reed Bed 1	103	linear vertically sided trench	septic tank pipe trench	0.65 m
Reed Bed 1	104	reddish brown silty clay with moderate chert pebbles and cobbles. Contains a 5 inch ceramic pipe with plastic collars.	fill of pipe trench 103	0.2 m
Reed Bed 1	105	linear vertically-sided, flat-bottomed cut	field drain or soakaway trench	0.45 m
Reed Bed 1	106	A 0.15 m thick layer of clean gravel surrounding a 4 inch ceramic drain pipe, covered with clear plastic and sealed beneath reddish brown silty clay.	fill of trench 105	0.2 m
Reed Bed 1	107	linear vertically-sided cut	field drain or soakaway trench	>0.9 m
Reed Bed 1	108	linear patch of void greensand chert rubble beneath a 0.4 m thick layer of brown silty clay.	fill of 107	0.2 m
Reed Bed 2	109	reddish grey silty clay with occasional flint and chert gravel.	turf and topsoil	0
Reed Bed 2	110	friable brown silty clay with frequent iron stains and mottles, moderate small charcoal flecks and sparse gravel.	colluvium	0.2 m
Reed Bed 2	111	brownish red clay with grey mottles and a band of stone in grey clay at 0.9 m below ground surface.	natural	0.6 m
Reed Bed 2	112	linear vertically-sided, flat-bottomed cut	drain pipe trench	0.9 m
Reed Bed 2	113	Plastic 4 inch drain pipe and flint gravel with blue plastic sheeting above.	fill of trench 112	0.2 m
Reed Bed 3	114	reddish grey silty clay with occasional flint and chert gravel.	turf and topsoil	0
Reed Bed 3	115	friable brown silty clay with frequent iron stains and mottles, moderate small charcoal flecks and sparse gravel.	colluvium	0.2 m
Reed Bed 3	116	linear vertically sided trench	soakaway trench	0.2 m
Reed Bed 3	117	chert pebbles	fill of soakaway 116	0.2 m

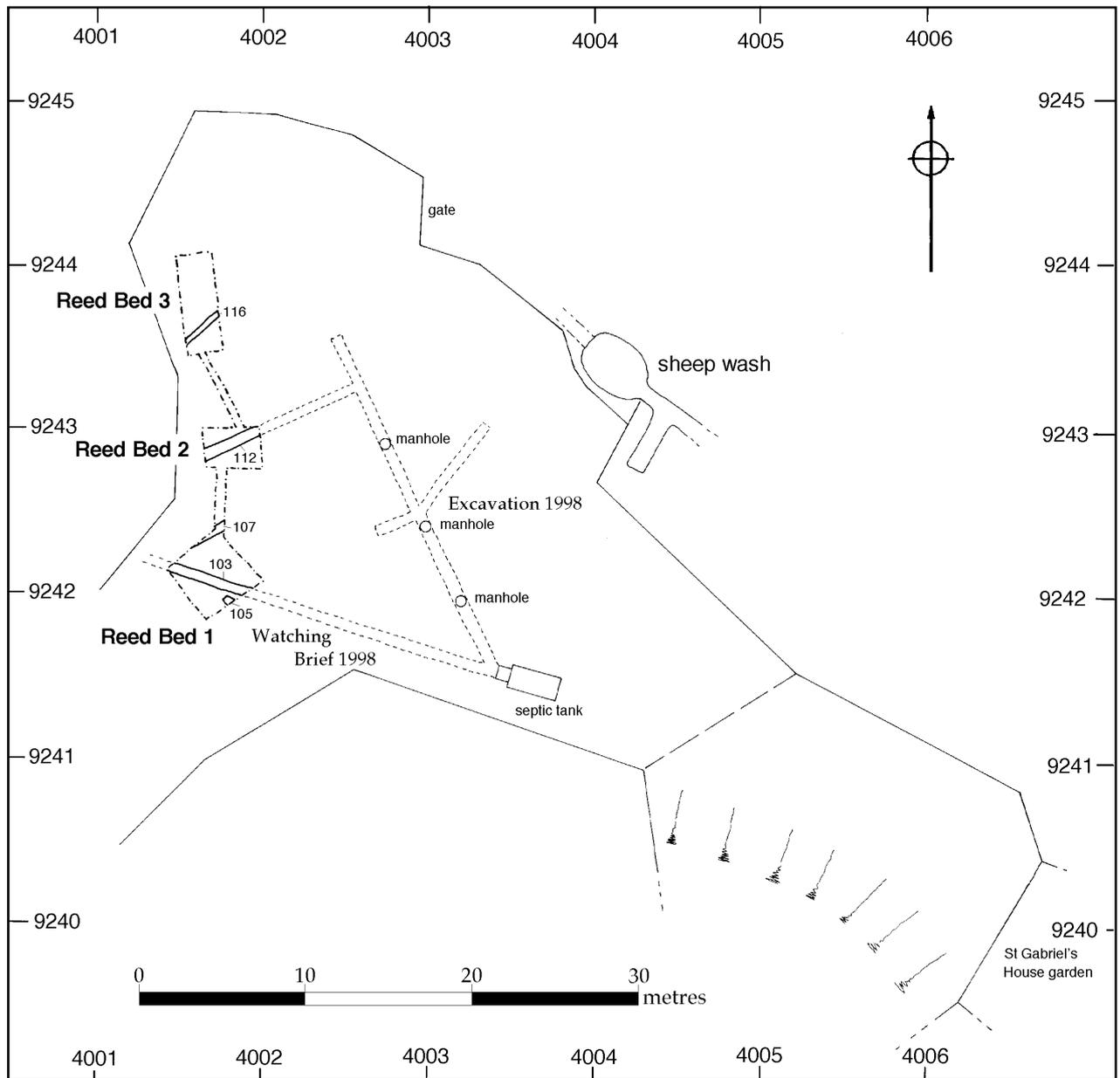


Figure 1: Location of Reed Bed observations and previous archaeological work.