



Former British Rail Store, Helen Lane, Weymouth, Dorset Observations and Recording



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Former British Rail Store, Helen Lane, Weymouth, Dorset

Archaeological Observations and Recording, February 2012

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March 2012

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Project Report Summary Page

Project Details			
OASIS Reference	terrains1-119739		
Project Title	Former British Rail Store, Helen Lane, Weymouth		
Short Description of Project	An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Terrain Archaeology in February 2012 during groundworks undertaken in association with construction of three new residential apartments at the former British Rail store site, Helen Lane, Weymouth, Dorset. The remains of a stone wall which is thought to be part of the north east corner of the 17 th century George Tavern were exposed. Two other walls of brick and stone are probably 19 th or 20 th century in date. The works did not penetrate deep enough to expose the medieval/post-medieval reclamation deposits that are predicted to occur on this site.		
Project Dates	Start: 14-02-2012	End: 16-02-2012	
Previous/Future Work	No/No		
Project Code	53091		
Monument Type and Period	Wall (post-medieval) Public House (post-medieval)		
Significant Finds	Sherd (post-medieval)		
Project Location			
County/District/Parish	Dorset/ Weymouth and Portland/Weymouth		
Site Address	Helen Lane, Weymouth, DT4 8AX		
Site Coordinates	SY 6800 7872		
Site Area	70 m ²		
Height OD			
Project Creators			
Organisation	Terrain Archaeology		
Project Brief Originator	None		
Project Design Originator	Terrain Archaeology		
Project Supervisor	Mike Trevarthen		
Project Manager	Peter Bellamy		
Sponsor or Funding Body	Mr M R Jones		
Project Archive			
Archive Type	Physical	Digital	Paper
Location/Accession No		Terrain Archaeology offices, pending deposition with Dorset County Museum.	Terrain Archaeology offices, pending deposition with Dorset County Museum.
Contents	None	Digital photography	context sheets, photographs, plans, report

Former British Rail Store, Helen Lane, Weymouth, Dorset

Archaeological Observations and Recording, February 2012

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Introduction

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Stuart Nicklen to undertake a programme of archaeological observations and recording during pre-construction groundworks associated with development of three new residential apartments at the former British Rail stores building, Helen Lane, Weymouth (OS NGR ST68007872, Figure 1, hereafter 'the site').

The archaeological works were required to fulfil Condition 7 of Weymouth and Portland Borough Council's grant of Planning Permission for the project (Application No. 97/00430/FUL) which states "*The development shall not commence until the applicant has made arrangements for archaeological observations and recording to take place during the development. These arrangements shall be submitted and approved in writing by the Borough Planning Authority at least one month before any work commences on the development site*".

'Archaeological observations and recording', also more colloquially known as an archaeological watching brief, is defined by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA) as "*a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons. This will be within a specified area or site on land, inter-tidal zone or underwater, where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed. The programme will result in the preparation of a report and ordered archive*" (IfA 2008). Its purposes are: "*to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works*" and "*to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.*"

Fieldwork was carried between the 14th and 16th February 2012 by Mike Trevarthen (IfA), and the report incorporates previously unreported small-scale site observations on 28th November 2002 by Steven Tatler. The project was managed for Terrain Archaeology by Peter Bellamy.

Terrain Archaeology gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Stuart Nicklen and the groundworkers. Jo Draper made useful comments on the pottery. The archaeological works were monitored on behalf of Weymouth & Portland Borough Council by Steve Wallis (Senior Archaeologist (Advice and Management), Dorset County Council).

1.2 Brief

No written brief was issued by, or on behalf of, the Weymouth and Portland Borough Council.

1.3 Site Location and Topography

The site (centred on OS NGR SY 6800 7872) within the Weymouth Town Centre Conservation Area, close to the harbour quayside on the south side of Helen Lane (Figure 1). The local topography is flat, with modern ground levels at c. 2.8 m above Ordnance Datum, representing artificially reclaimed land.

1.4 Geology

The underlying geology is mapped as Stewartby Member and Weymouth Member (undifferentiated) mudstones of the Oxford Clay Formation. The superficial deposits are recorded as Alluvium - Clay, Silt, Sand and Gravel (http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html).

1.5 Archaeological and Historical Background

The site lies at the southern end of the medieval planned town of Melcombe Regis. The date of origin of the settlement at Melcombe is not known but it is recorded in the early 12th century. A market and fair were granted to Melcombe in the 13th century. In 1280 Edward I made Melcombe a borough and the town was re-planned, becoming the staple port for wool in 1310 (Bellamy *et al.* 2011). Melcombe Regis was badly affected by the Black Death (famously held to be its port of entry into Britain) but the town later recovered and was a flourishing port in the late medieval and early post-medieval period.

Melcombe Regis was transformed in the late 18th and early 19th century into a fashionable seaside resort and the focus of the town shifted from the harbour and backwater toward the sea and Weymouth Bay, with the construction of a large number of Georgian terraces incorporating guest houses for visitors to Weymouth (Brodie *et al.* 2008).

Properties to either side of the site are modern, but those to the east (fronting onto Custom House Quay) are older: one (Vaughan's) may be late eighteenth or early nineteenth century, but the other (the George Inn) is late nineteenth century in date. A plaque on the front of the building identifies it as the site of the George Tavern, bequeathed in charity to the town in 1668. Buildings along the west side of Maiden Street some fifty metres west of the site are also seventeenth century.

There has been relatively little archaeological investigation in the historic core of Melcombe Regis. No previous archaeological investigation has been undertaken on or in the immediate vicinity of the site, but two watching briefs have been undertaken relatively close to the site at the Ship Inn, Custom House Quay (Keen 1978, 117) and in the car park behind the Guildhall, St Edmunds Street (Hulka 2000). Both of these watching briefs exposed evidence for former beach deposits suggesting that the former shoreline in this area ran roughly along the line of Helen Lane. This area was reclaimed and these beach deposits were built over in the seventeenth/eighteenth centuries.

1.6 Aims and Objectives

The aims and objectives of the archaeological works were laid out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (Terrain Archaeology 2012).

The aim of the archaeological programme was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource, including historic built structures, existing on the site.

Its objectives were:

- To observe and record the all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate archaeological standard.
- To present the results in a report to the appropriate standard.
- To record and understand the nature of any exposed beach deposits.
- To record and understand the nature of any land reclamation deposits exposed on the site.

1.7 Fieldwork

In November 2002, a testpit 1.2m by 0.5 m across by up to 1.1 m deep was dug by hand in the eastern part of the site (Figure 2). This exposed part of a sewer pipe trench and the deposits immediately east of it.

In 2012, the concrete slab floor of the British Rail stores building was broken out and removed by groundwork contractors prior to commencement of archaeological observations. Then the entire area of the site was reduced by machine to a depth of about 0.5 m for the construction of concrete raft footings. None of the subsequent works was monitored archaeologically.

1.8 Methods

The methodology and scope of the works was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by Terrain Archaeology in May 2002 (Terrain Archaeology document no. 3091). This was revised in January 2012 (Terrain Archaeology document no. 3091/0/2).

The work was carried out in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists *Code of Conduct and Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (IfA 2008).

Following the removal of the existing concrete floor, the whole area of the site was reduced to the formation level by a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a flat ditching bucket. This was monitored by an appropriately qualified and experienced archaeologist. Manual cleaning of archaeologically significant areas and deposits was undertaken where necessary to achieve the aims and objectives of the scheme. No excavation was undertaken below the level of construction impact.

All exposed deposits and features, regardless of their perceived date and significance, were recorded using components of Terrain Archaeology's system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records. These 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.

A digital photographic record of the watching brief was maintained, incorporating specific aspects of its technical detail as well as its conduct and wider townscape setting.

1.9 Archive and Dissemination

The project archive, comprising written, graphic and photographic records, and appropriate background documentation, is currently stored by Terrain Archaeology under the project code 53091. In due course, and subject to the legal agreement of the landowner to full Transfer of Title, it is anticipated that those components of the archive not re-interred on-site, or selected for discard in accordance with appropriate policies will be accessioned for long-term curation and storage by the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, which has agreed, in principal, to accept it, subject to fulfilment of the Museum's requirements of the preparation of archaeological archives. Deposition of the archive will place it in the public domain.

A paper copy of this report will be lodged with Dorset County Council's Historic Environment Record (HER). The HER is a publicly funded and accessible resource, and deposition of the report will place it, and the project results, in the public domain.

A digital summary of the archive will be placed with the OASIS project (www.oasis.ac.uk) under the reference code *terrains1-119739*. A digital copy of this report will be uploaded for inclusion in the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) online 'grey literature' library.

A brief summary of the fieldwork results will be published by Terrain Archaeology in the next edition of the *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*. No further publication is proposed.

2. Results

2.1 Natural Deposits

No natural deposits were exposed during the works.

2.2 Made Ground Deposits

The earliest deposit exposed on site was an extensive layer of made ground comprising artificial dumps of loose, mixed light yellow-brown silty sand and gravel, sometimes containing brick, limestone and pieces and roof-slate (106). No excavation of this material was possible. Deeper geotechnical pits excavated before commencement of the archaeological programme were not recorded, but anecdotal evidence suggests this made ground extends to a depth in excess of one metre below modern ground level.

2.3 Post-medieval Structural Remains

The remains of three wall footings (103, 104, 105) were exposed during the works but the relationship between them had been largely disturbed or destroyed by a modern manhole (Figure 2; Plate 2).

Wall 103

At the southern end of the site was a wall footing (103) aligned NNE-SSW, which was exposed for a distance of about four metres (Figure 2; Plates 1-3). Wall 103 continued southwards beyond the limit of the site and to the north it was disturbed by the insertion of a modern manhole. This wall measured about 0.65 m wide and was built from rubble limestone, some roughly dressed, measuring up to 500 x 250 x 250 mm across, with a rubble core and bonded with mid yellowish-brown sandy clay. The east side of this wall was well faced (Plate 3), but the west face was more irregular. At least two courses of this wall survived. The base of this wall was not exposed. There was some indication that this wall formed a corner with a return to the WNW at its northern end. There was no surviving trace of the return wall exposed during the works other than a single *ex situ* block and the corner itself was disturbed by the manhole making the identification and interpretation of the corner difficult. The relationship between wall 103 and made ground layer 106 is uncertain. Layer 106 occurs on both sides of the wall, but it is unclear whether Wall 103 was cut into layer 106 or whether layer 106 butted against both faces of the wall remains.

Wall 105

The line of Wall 103 was continued to the NNE by Wall 105, which appeared to butt against its northern end (Figure 2; Plate 4). Wall 105 measured between 0.4–0.45 m wide and was constructed of roughly coursed stone and brick and bonded with hard off-white sandy lime mortar. Wall 105 was not precisely on the line of wall 103, but it sat on a wider footing which continued the line of the western face of wall 103 almost exactly (Plate 5). This footing was not excavated and the relationship with wall 105 was not investigated. The southern end of Wall 105 was partly disturbed by the modern manhole cover and the conditions on site meant that it was not possible to trace the full extent of this wall to the north.

Wall 104

To the east of the southern end of Wall 105 was another wall (104) of similar character and construction to 105, running roughly perpendicular to it (Figure 2; Plate 2). Any relationship between Walls 104 and 105 had been destroyed by the modern manhole. It was not possible to establish the presence, or otherwise, of a wider footing to wall 104 within the groundworks programme.

2.4 Other Deposits and Features

Monitoring of small-scale groundworks within the site in 2002 suggested the presence of a cobbled surface or layer of cobbles in the northeastern part of the site. Individual rounded cobbles were identified but no new evidence for a surface was found during the current works. However, the immediate surroundings of the original observation had subsequently been disturbed by geotechnical test pitting.

The entire site was sealed by layer (100), comprising up to 0.4m of loose, mixed dark grey-brown soil containing nineteenth and twentieth century detritus, limestone, cobbles, slate etc. It was evident that there were several comparatively modern discrete cut scoops or pits associated with this layer, but it was not possible to investigate these separately during the site reduction works

3. Finds

3.1 Finds Assemblage

There were no finds from securely stratified, uncontaminated deposits. A small group of effectively unstratified pottery and clay tobacco pipe was retained from mixed, undifferentiated overburden layer 100, primarily for its potential to characterise the site's development, and to allow a record of its presence to be made. One complete glass bottle was retrieved as indicative of several broken examples from layer 100. Brick and roof slate were ubiquitous but were not collected.

Context	Pottery	Clay Tobacco Pipe	Ceramic Building Material	Glass
100	11/282g	14/72g	3/211g	*

Table 1: Quantification of retained finds by context

3.2 Pottery

A small, mixed assemblage of post-medieval pottery of 18th and 19th century date was recovered from context 100. This included six sherds (86g) of industrial whitewares, mainly dating to the 1840s; three sherds (159g) of 18th-early 19th century olive green glazed earthenware; and one sherd of 19th-20th century salt-glazed stoneware bottle (21g). The most significant piece is a sherd of imported 18th century tin-glazed earthenware plate (12g) with a makers' mark – probably a crown (Plate 6) on its underside.

3.3 Clay Tobacco Pipe

Fourteen pieces of clay tobacco pipe (72g) were recovered. All were plain, unmarked stem fragments and cannot be dated closely.

3.4 Ceramic Building Material

Two fragments (204g) from a green glazed ridge tile of potentially late medieval or early post-medieval date were found and both retained traces of pale grey mortar on their lower surfaces. One fragment of white glazed tile (7g) was also recovered.

Bricks and brick fragments of 18th and/or 19th century date were ubiquitous throughout the site, including in the lowest exposed ground reclamation deposits, but were not retained.

3.5 Glass

Unstratified bottle glass was noted throughout layer 100 but was not retained for analysis owing to the low informational value of the context. One complete codd bottle in colourless glass was recovered as representative of several otherwise broken examples. These were all made for W. RISLEY & SON, WEYMOUTH by DAN RYLANDS Ld, SOLE MAKERS, BARNESLEY. Bottles with this form of makers' mark are believed to have been produced in the period 1888 – 1897 (www.mpotten.freeserve.uk/rylands.html).

4. Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 Discussion

The groundworks exposed the remains of at least two structures. The earliest structure is represented by Wall 103. No dating evidence was recovered to date this wall, but the historic map evidence, particularly Hutchins 1774 map of Weymouth (Figure 3), suggests it may be the remains of the northeast corner of the original George Tavern, which was known to have been in existence by the mid 17th century. The old George Tavern was demolished in the late 19th century, but the northeastern part of the building may have been demolished sooner to form a yard behind the inn as shown on the 1866 Ordnance Survey 1:500 Town Plan. This demolition may have taken place when 'Vaughans' was built adjacent to the east in the early 19th century. No floor or other surface was exposed during the works. The offset footing partially exposed below wall 105 which continues the line of wall 103 may be the footing for the yard wall shown on the 1866 Ordnance Survey map.

Walls 104 and 105 may have originally be part of a single building given their similar character. This building may be that shown on the 1929 Ordnance Survey 25-inch map.

The design of the footings for the new development meant that there was no opportunity to observe the full depth of deposits on the site. The upper 0.5 m thickness of deposits covering the site were broadly dated to the 19th-20th centuries. The lowest layer exposed by the works (Layer 103) occurred extensively across the site and was not closely dated but contained significant quantities of building material including brick, stone and roof slate fragments. Although, the relationship between this layer and the structural remains found on the site was not satisfactorily

determined, it seems most likely that Layer 103 represents levelling of the site following an episode of demolition. Most likely, this was associated with the demolition of the George Tavern in the late 19th century.

4.2 Future Potential

The limited depth of the groundworks (to about 500 mm below modern ground level) has not entirely negated the site's archaeological potential: it should therefore be noted that the site retains its capacity to contain potentially significant heritage assets with archaeological interest, as defined by *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012, Annex 2, 50). Based on ground observations in the vicinity, these assets might be characterised as artificial land reclamation dumps of late medieval and/or post-medieval date (with potential for buried quayside or marine structures) over earlier estuarine or beach deposits.

The positive results of the archaeological programme have demonstrated the advisability of undertaking development-led archaeological works in this part of Weymouth, even on small-scale developments and limited groundworks projects. Key aims for any future archaeological works in the locality should include contribution toward identification of former shorelines, to mapping, dating and understanding historic land reclamation around the harbour and should record of the extents and dates of any pre-modern building remains in order to better understand the historic development of Melcombe Regis.

4.3 Conclusions

The observations have contributed to our understanding of this part of Melcombe Regis, in particular, the discovery of part of the seventeenth century (or earlier) George Tavern. The groundworks did not penetrate into the reclamation deposits nor into the buried shoreline beneath, so the current works have not been able to contribute towards our understanding of the earlier history of this part of the town and the development of Melcombe Regis quayside. However, the character of the present development means that potential evidence for this still survives at a lower depth.

5. References

- | | | |
|--|------|--|
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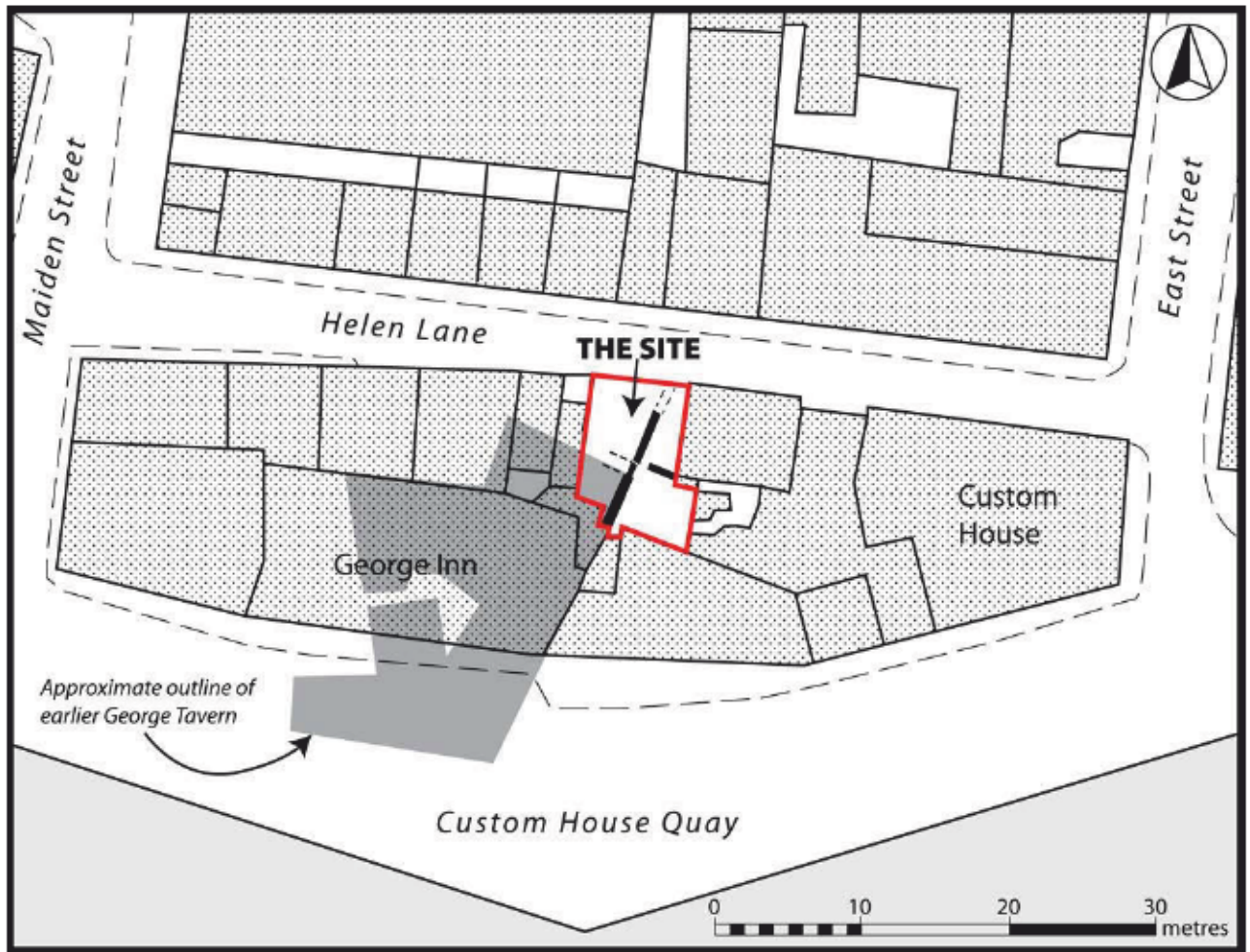


Figure 1: Location map showing the site and the approximate position of the original George Tavern (after Hutchins 1774).

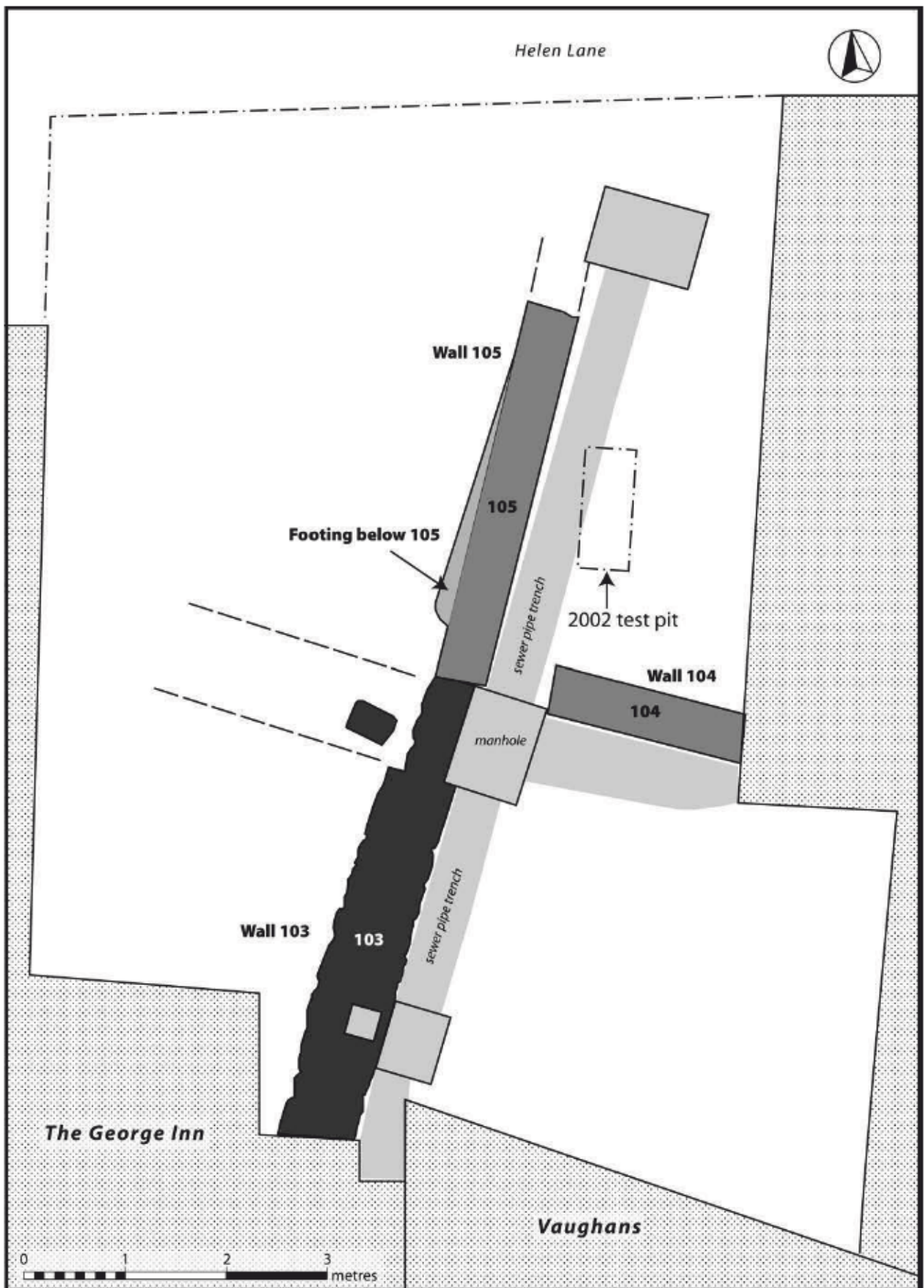


Figure 2: Plan of Archaeological Observations

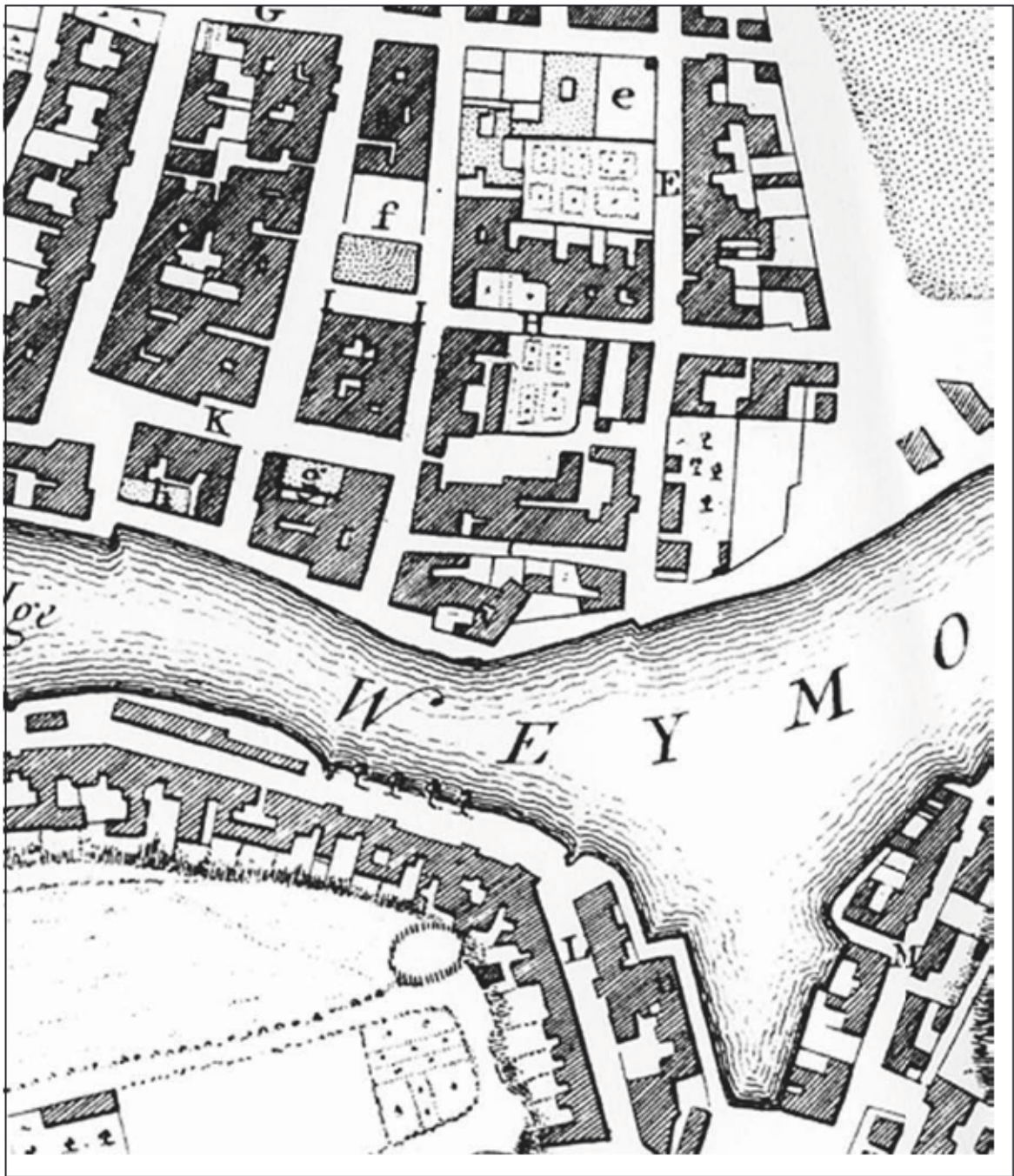


Figure 3: Extract from map of Weymouth published in Hutchins 1774, showing the location of the original George Tavern.



Plate 1: View of southern half of site, with the George Inn behind.



Plate 2: Walls 103, 104 and 105. View from the NNE: 1m scale.



Plate 3: East face of Wall 103. View from the east: 1m scale.



Plate 4: Wall 105 to left and Wall 103 to right. View from the west.



Plate 5: View along Wall 105 showing offset footing beneath. 1m scale.



Plate 6: Eighteenth century pottery mark on imported tin-glazed sherd from Context 100.