



Land at Christchurch Court, The Grove, Dorchester, Dorset

Observations and Recording during Construc- tion of New Car Park



Report No. 53364/3/1

May 2012

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New Car Park, March 2012

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Project Report Summary Page

Project Details			
OASIS Reference	terraina1-123456		
Project Title	Land at Christchurch Court, The Grove, Dorchester, Dorset		
Short Description of Project	An archaeological watching brief was carried out by Terrain Archaeology during substantial ground-reduction works to form an extension to the existing Physiques and Shapes Health Club car park on The Grove, Dorchester. This area straddles the two outer ditches of the Roman town defences. The outer ditch was shown to be about 9.8 m wide and to be of two phases. The lower parts of the ditch were not exposed and remain in situ, so a full profile of the ditch was not obtained. No dating evidence was recovered, but there is a suggestion that the ditch silted up gradually into the post-medieval period. Only a small part of the middle ditch of the defences was revealed and the upper parts had been severely truncated by post-medieval activity. A number of traces of post-medieval buildings and a well were found.		
Project Dates	Start: 26-03-2012	End: 30-03-2012	
Previous/Future Work	No/No		
Project Code	53364		
Monument Type and Period	Town Defences (Roman); Town Ditch (Roman); Well (post-medieval)		
Significant Finds	Sherd (Roman); Sherd (medieval); Sherd (post-medieval)		
Project Location			
County/District/Parish	Dorset/ West Dorset/Dorchester		
Site Address	Physiques and Shapes Health Club, 18 The Grove, Dorchester, DT1 1TB		
Site Coordinates	SY 6888 9082		
Site Area	176 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	Physiques and Shapes Health Club		
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.	Terrain Archaeology offices, pending deposition with Dorset County Museum.
Contents	Ceramics, flint, bone	Digital photography	context sheets, photographs, plans, report

Land at Christchurch Court, The Grove, Dorchester, Dorset

Archaeological Observations and Recording During Construction of New Car Park, March 2012

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Introduction

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Physiques and Shapes Health Club to undertake a programme of archaeological observations and recording during the formation of an enlarged car parking area on land at Christchurch Court, The Grove, Dorchester (Figure 1). The site straddles part of the Roman town defences of Dorchester and lies within the Dorchester Conservation Area. It also forms part of the setting of Scheduled Monument DO648 "Dorchester Roman Walls".

'Archaeological observations and recording', 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 26–30th March 2012 by Mike Trevarthen (AlfA) and Peter Bellamy (MlfA).

The pottery was assessed by Lorraine Mepham, MlfA (Wessex Archaeology). The project was managed for Terrain Archaeology by Peter Bellamy. The project was monitored for the Local Planning Authority by Steve Wallis (DCC Senior Archaeologist (Advice and Management)).

Terrain Archaeology gratefully acknowledges the cooperation, support and assistance of Jason Harding and the groundworkers.

1.2 Planning Background

The planning application (West Dorset reference number 1/D/11/001450) was registered on 05/09/2011. An initial Heritage Statement was submitted by NT Building Design Ltd, on behalf of the Client, but this failed to register either the existence and significance of the Roman defences, or National and Local Plan policies relating to treatment of heritage assets within the planning process. Although this omission was, to some extent, remedied by an accompanying letter from Steve Wallis (dated 14 April 2011), no archaeological desk-based assessment, archaeological impact assessment, or archaeological evaluation was requested to further support the application. Full planning permission for the scheme was granted on 31/10/2011.

Condition 8 of the planning consent for the scheme, states *"The applicant shall make arrangements for archaeological observation and recording to take place during groundworks. Details of these arrangements shall be*

submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority at least one month before any work commences on the development site.

REASON: In the interests of observing and recording archaeological remains which may be present at the site in accordance with Policy SA24 of the West Dorset District Local Plan (2006)."

1.3 Brief

No written brief was issued, but the scope of the works was discussed with Steve Wallis, Senior Archaeologist (Advice and Management), Dorset County Council.

1.4 Site Location and Topography

The site (centred on OS NGR SY 6888 9082) comprises 176 m² of land on the western side of The Grove, to the north of Christchurch Court. It lies just outside the Roman town rampart at Colliton Walk. Ground levels along The Grove fall from south to north, but there is also an east-west gradient to the site, which appears to be partly, if not entirely, artificial, and to result from landscaping around Christchurch Court in the 1970s. The original east-west profile of the site appears to have been more gently inclined or even level – a situation confirmed by the general topography of land to the west of the site and an excavated section of the rampart at Colliton Walk (RCHME 1970, 546) to the east.

To the north of the site of the new car park are the buildings of Physiques and Shapes Health Club, which are converted from the former 19th century Marabout Castle pub and much modified and extended in recent times. The present Health Club car park is terraced at street level, significantly below ground level within the site. A stone revetment wall associated with this terracing was removed as part of the present works.

The site lies within the Dorchester Conservation Area, and forms part of the setting of Scheduled Monument DO648 (Dorchester Roman Walls).

1.5 Geology

The underlying bedrock geology is mapped as Portsdown Chalk Formation of the White Chalk Subgroup of Campanian Age. No superficial deposits are recorded (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

1.6 Archaeological and Historical Background

The site lies immediately outside the western side of the Roman town of *Durnovaria*, within the area of the Roman town defences. The defences on the west side of *Durnovaria* comprise an earthen rampart, later surmounted by a stone curtain wall, with a series of three ditches and a counterscarp bank outside. The rampart survives as Colliton Walk and the present road runs along the line of the inner ditch. The site lies directly over the middle and outer ditches and part of the area of the counterscarp bank (Figure 1). The defences are believed to have been originally erected no earlier than c. AD130 and were subject to modifications in the later Roman period (RCHME 1970, 542-9). The alignments of the defences remain firmly fossilised in the layout of the modern townscape, serving to separate its historic core from 19th and 20th century suburban expansion. A number of Roman burials have been discovered in the vicinity of the site. A Roman cemetery was found about 40 m to the south (RCHME 1970, 582) and another about 150 m north of the site (RCHME 1970, 585).

During the medieval period the site was part of the open fields of Fordington. By the late 18th century the area had been enclosed as shown on Simpson's 1779 map of Fordington (reproduced in Sharples 1991, fig. 11). The status of the defences in the medieval period, and the date and mechanisms by which the ditches became infilled remains very poorly understood, although it is believed that the great majority of the Roman wall had been demolished by the beginning of the seventeenth century (RCHME 1970, 542).

During the late 18th century housing was built along The Grove (Draper 2001). The 1841 Tithe Map marks the area as 'Grove Buildings'. The 1888 Ordnance Survey 1:500 Town Plan also provides significant detail of buildings within and around the site. The 1887 altered Tithe Map shows houses all along the frontage of The Grove, and an inn (the

'Castle Inn', later the 'Marabout Castle') owned by Charles Eldridge. This public house survived until the 1990s, when it was converted into the present health club.

The defences on the west side of Durnovaria have been investigated piecemeal in a number of locations (RCHME 1970, Smith 1973, Bellamy 2004). Two archaeological investigations have been undertaken within, or immediately adjacent to, the site. In 1972 a 30 m by 4 m trench was excavated across the southern part of the present development area, in advance of the construction of Christchurch Court, (Figure 2). This revealed the two outer ditches of the defences. Three phases were identified in the outer ditch; an original V-shaped ditch, a wider ditch producing 3rd–4th century pottery and a final phase containing 14th–15th century pottery (by implication a post-Roman or medieval ditch) (Smith 1973). The middle ditch comprised an original Roman phase with an undated recut (Smith 1973). Unpublished finds from the excavation included an infant burial and what may be a Saxon knife.

In 2003, observations during the construction of a small extension to the Physiques and Shapes Health Club recorded part of the outer ditch (Bellamy 2003).

1.7 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 Observations and Recording was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

The objectives of the archaeological works were:

- To observe and record all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.
- To present the results in a report to the appropriate standard.
- To record and understand the exposed parts of the Roman town defences.
- To record and understand the history of the site subsequent to the Roman period, particularly any evidence of post-Roman/early medieval activity.

1.8 Fieldwork

The groundworks comprised the mechanical excavation of a 27 m long trench about eight metres wide at its western end, narrowing to about six metres in its eastern half, and tapering abruptly at its east end to avoid the canopy and roots of an established tree. The average depth of ground reduction across most of the site was 1.9 m, although the impact was slightly lessened at its far eastern end. A 0.6 m wide foundation along the south edge of the trench was mechanically excavated to an additional 0.4 m depth (c. 2.3 m total impact depth). The maximum recorded depth of truncation of archaeological deposits (principally the Roman town ditches and associated fills) was 1.4 m, rising to 1.8 m in the area of the new retaining wall footing.

1.9 Methods

The methodology and scope of the works was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) produced by Terrain Archaeology in August 2011 (Terrain Archaeology document no. 3364/0/1).

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).

The observation of the groundworks was intensive, as defined by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 2008), with a suitably qualified archaeologist present during all sensitive ground disturbance. A running composite section was established along the northern edge, but unfortunately it was only possible to record this at the western end of the site, as further east the removal of a retaining wall along the existing Physiques and Shapes car park meant that the overburden collapsed or was removed before it was possible to record it. The southern edge of the site was dug through the backfill of the 1972 trench, so no intact stratigraphy was preserved.

All features and deposits, regardless of their perceived date and archaeological 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 AAF guidelines (2007), IfA guidelines (2009) and the requirements of the receiving museum.

A photographic record of the watching brief was maintained in digital format. This record includes specific aspects of its technical detail as well as its conduct and wider landscape setting of the project.

1.10 Archive and Dissemination

The project archive (Terrain Archaeology Project Number 53364) will, in due course and assuming legal transfer of title from the landowner can be obtained, be deposited for long-term curation by the Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, which has agreed in principle to accept it subject 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 *terrains1-123456*. 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*.

2. Results

2.1 Natural Deposits

Natural deposits throughout the site comprised truncated, jointed Upper Chalk bedrock. No weathered chalk or solution hollows were seen. At the eastern end of the site, the chalk bedrock survived relatively undisturbed, but further east it had been significantly truncated and lay about 1.35 m below the level of the western end.

2.2 The Roman Town Defences

The recorded remains of the Roman town defences comprised the outer ditch (120), later recut and enlarged (Ditch 114) and part of the middle ditch (116). No trace of the counterscarp bank or the inner ditch was encountered.

Outer Ditch

Ditch 114 was aligned north-south and survived about 9.8 m wide (Figure 3; Plate 2). The edge of the cut into the natural chalk was relatively intact along its western side, but it had been severely truncated to the east and originally was probably at least another 1.35 m wider. Its full depth was not established as it lay below the final construction level of the car park, but it was over two metres deep. The western (outer) side of the cut sloped fairly gently down, becoming slightly steeper towards the east (Figure 4). The surviving eastern edge of the ditch was identified in plan but not investigated further, as it had been truncated to approximately the required construction formation depth by post-medieval activity.

Two fills were identified in this ditch. The lower fill (115) was only exposed and partially investigated in a small exploratory slot. It was of moderately firm, uncompacted mid greyish-brown silty loam, over 0.5 m thick, with occasional small chalk flecks and rare larger stones up to c. 50 mm across. No finds were recovered.

The upper fill consisted of homogenous mid yellowish-brown / dark buff silty loam (108), over 1.8 m thick, and containing moderately frequent small chalk flecks, with rare larger chalk and nodular flint. A small, chronologically mixed assemblage of finds was recovered (discussed in detail below), including residual prehistoric flint work, early and late Roman pottery, Roman roof tile, medieval pottery and post-medieval pottery and clay tobacco pipe.

However, it was not possible within the constraints of the watching brief to maintain any stratigraphic control over the recovery of these finds and it remains unknown whether or not finds of differing dates were associated with different levels within the fill, or indeed whether they derive from two separate phases of ditch fill (cf. Smith 1972).

Trenching for the new revetment wall foundation revealed the eastern edge of an earlier feature (120), which was cut by ditch 114. It was cut into the chalk bedrock at what is likely to have been a similar line to Ditch 114, but its exposed edge was rather steeper, at c. 45° from horizontal (Figure 4; Plate 4). The surviving width or depth of the feature could not be determined, as its full profile was not exposed. A single fill was noted in the limited exposure, comprising a loose pale buff loamy silt (121) with very abundant fine chalk fragments, sometimes ranging up to c. 15 mm but mostly <10 mm across. No finds were recovered. Feature 120 is likely to be the remains of a first phase of the outer ditch, corresponding with the findings of the 1972 excavation (Smith 1972).

Middle Ditch 116

Ditch 116, comprising the western side of the central town ditch, was identified at the far eastern end of the site, and separated from ditches 120 and 114 by about nine metres of truncated intervallum chalk bedrock (Figure 3). The true western edge of the ditch was not seen, being obscured/truncated by post-medieval building impacts, but at the level of observation, cannot originally have been more than about one metre west of the exposed ditch fill. The ditch was not manually excavated, but was trenched to a depth of about 0.4 m to accommodate the footing for the new retaining wall. A single fill (117) was very similar in character to 108 in Ditch 114. Finds were limited to a single fragmentary cow skull.

2.3 Post-medieval and Modern Features

Well 111

The western edge of Ditch 114 was cut by a well (111). It had a circular vertical shaft (111) about 1.0 m in diameter, cut into the chalk. The upper part of the well was steyned with rubble limestone bonded with soft yellow sandy mortar and chalk rubble behind filling a circular cut (109) about 2.5 m in diameter (Figure 3; Plate 6). The eastern edge of the well was overlain by wall footing 104, suggesting the well was 18th or early 19th century in date.

The well shaft had been deliberately backfilled, probably in the mid 20th century, potentially shortly before or during demolition of site buildings in the 1960s. The upper part of the fill was of loose dark grey and reddish-brown 'ashy' silt-loam with abundant 19th and 20th century debris, including brick, tile, roof slate, glass, ceramics, animal bone and part of a white plastic hand-mirror. The feature was not excavated.

Demolished Building

The remains of a demolished building overlay Ditch 114, and sealed the eastern edge of well 111. It comprised a wall 104 running N-S (104), with a cement floor to the east. The eastern end of this building had been destroyed by later activity. Wall 104 was briefly observed in plan prior to removal by machine, so was recorded in section only. It consisted of a crude roughly dressed rubble limestone footing about 0.6 m wide, bonded with yellow-brown sandy mortar, built in a cut (124) through layer 102 and ditch fill 108, down on to the natural chalk (Figure 4). Butting against the east side of wall 104 was a cement floor (105), 30 mm thick, which was laid on a 50 mm thick layer of yellowish-grey bedding mortar (106) over an undulating makeup deposit of chalk, red brick, and greyish-brown loamy silt (107). This floor was traced for a distance of 4.35 m eastwards (Plate 7). The building is probably the one shown in this position on the 1888 Ordnance Survey 1:500 Town Plan, although the cement floor may be a later alteration.

Wall 113

The remains of another north-south aligned wall (113) were noted in the eastern half of the site, amidst much other evidence for 18th and 19th century building impacts (Figures 3-4; Plate 8). The wall was 0.4 m wide, and of chalk rubble and yellow-brown sandy mortar, resting on a mortared flint footing. It was not possible to record the relationship between this wall and the surrounding deposits.

Pit 112

About one metre west of Well 111 was a sub-oval pit (122), which measured about 1.75 m by 1.5 m across. It appeared to be lined with soft grey cement, above which was a firm mid-grey loamy fill (123) with common small stones. This pit was not excavated, as it was clearly of comparatively modern date, and may even have been associated with construction of Christchurch Court.

Pit 118

In the area between the Roman town ditches 114 and 116 was a sub-circular pit (118), about 1 m in diameter and cut into the natural chalk. Its unexcavated fill (119) was of loose dark grey and reddish-brown ashy and gritty loam, with clinker, coal, tile and brick fragments, animal bone (not collected), and 19th – 20th century pottery.

1972 Excavation Trench

Part of the outline of the backfilled 1972 Dorchester Excavations Committee excavation trench (125) was identified along the far southern edge of the site. The excavation backfill (126) was sealed by made ground layer 101.

2.4 Post-medieval and Modern Deposits**Buried Soil Horizon 102**

A 0.15 m thick layer of mid to dark greyish-brown silty loam (102) containing occasional chalk fragments, charcoal, ceramic tile, slate and mortar fragments, bottle glass and 19th – early 20th century pottery was found in the western part of the site directly over truncated natural chalk with a weakly weathered interface, made ground deposits sealed up to a 0.15 m thickness of. It is presumed to be a former topsoil predating landscaping of the site in the 1970s.

Made Ground Deposits

Made ground deposits were present across the entire site, to a maximum depth of about 1.3 m, adjacent to the retaining wall at the western end of the site (Figure 4). Made ground comprised a c. 0.3 m depth of redeposited topsoil (100) over up to 1.0 m of variably composed, mixed chalk rubble and light to dark brown loamy silt (101), with common brick, occasional concrete fragments, iron, plastic (including part of a bucket) and other modern debris. The made ground deposits appear to represent ground levelling and landscaping associated with construction of Christchurch Court in the 1970s.

3. Finds**3.1 Finds Assemblage**

Artefacts recovered during the course of the archaeological works are quantified below (Table 1). All finds (Roman, medieval and post-medieval pottery, Roman ceramic tile, clay tobacco pipe, flaked stone, animal bone and marine shell) recovered from the fills of the town ditches (contexts 108 and 117) are considered significant and have been retained for long-term archival deposition. All other finds (19th-20th century structural and domestic waste material comprising a representative sample from unexcavated contexts of negligible stratigraphic or analytical value) have been discarded.

Context	Roman Pottery	Medieval Pottery	Post-medieval Pottery	Ceramic Building Material	Clay Tobacco Pipe	Flaked Stone	Glass	Leather	Plastic	Animal Bone	Shell
101			**	**			**		**		
102			**	**			**				
108	6/35g	17/119g	3/23g	3/206g	3/16g	8/195g				16/67g	1/30g
111			**	**			6/830g	**	**		
117										9/185g	
119			**	**						**	
Total	6/35g	17/119g	3/23g	3/206g	9/32g	8/195g	6/830g	**	**	16/67g	1/30g

Table 1: Quantification of finds by context (** = present but not quantified)

3.2 Pottery

Lorraine Mephram (Wessex Archaeology)

Introduction

Twenty-six sherds, weighing 177g, were recovered from a single context (layer 108), an upper fill of the Outer Roman Town Ditch 114. This small group is chronologically mixed, containing six Romano-British sherds, 17 medieval sherds and three post-medieval sherds. The breakdown of the group by ware type is given in Table 2.

Romano-British Pottery

Five of the Romano-British sherds are South-east Dorset Black Burnished ware (BB1), and these include rims from a bead rimmed vessel (possibly a bowl: Seager Smith and Davies 1987, type 15, dated 1st century BC to early 2nd century AD) and a straight-sided 'dog dish' (*ibid.*, type 20, dated 2nd century AD onwards). A third rim may be from an everted rim jar but is too small to determine. The sixth Romano-British sherd is a New Forest colour coated ware (late 3rd or 4th century AD).

Medieval Pottery

Medieval sherds include five ware groups, all representing known or probable sources (or source areas) within Dorset. Two sherds, both from jar rims, contain calcareous inclusions, while three others are in coarse sandy fabrics with rare flint inclusions; both these types are of unknown source, although probably relatively local to Dorchester; their likely date range is 11th to 13th century. One sherd is in a coarse sandy fabric of a type found across east Dorset and into south-west Wiltshire from at least the 11th century through to the 14th century; this sherd is in a coarse variant likely to fall earlier rather than later within this range. These wares have a possible source in the Poole Harbour area (Hinton and Hodges 1977, fabric C). Five sherds are in pale-firing, relatively fine sandy fabrics, all glazed, and with one carrying curvilinear combing. These wares are also likely to have originated in the Poole Harbour area in the 13th or 14th century. Finally, six sherds, including a thumbled base, are in fine sandy fabrics of a type found across west Dorset, with one known 13th century source at Hermitage (Field 1966), although the type was probably in use into the 15th century.

Post-medieval Pottery

The three post-medieval sherds are all coarse earthenwares. One is an example of the paler-firing Verwood-type earthenwares of east Dorset, while the other two are redwares of uncertain source. None are closely datable but, in the absence of any distinctively later wares, may date prior to the 18th century.

Context	Ware Type	No. sherds	Wt. (g)	Comments
108	Black Burnished ware	5	31	1 dog dish; 1 bead rim jar
108	New Forest colour coat	1	4	
108	calcareous coarseware	2	16	both jar rims
108	Poole Harbour whiteware	4	35	all glazed; 1 comb decorated
108	sandy coarseware	3	18	Rare flint inclusions
108	SE Wilts/E Dorset coarseware	1	16	coarse variant
108	West Dorset sandy ware	7	34	1 thumbled basal angle
108	redware	2	12	glazed; 1 bowl rim
108	Verwood-type earthenware	1	11	glazed; 1 bowl rim

Table 2: Pottery by context

3.3 Ceramic Building Material

Three pieces of Roman ceramic roof tile (206g) were recovered; all from fill 108 (ditch 114). All were plain, hard-fired and exhibited orange-red oxidised fabric externally and reduced grey cores. Thickness ranged between 18–20 mm. Two of the fragments were curved imbrex tiles, with the third a tegula fragment.

3.4 Clay Tobacco Pipe

Nine pieces of clay tobacco pipe were recovered (32g). Four pieces came from the upper reaches of fill 108 (ditch 114). Three of these were undiagnostic stem fragments (one swelling toward a bowl and heel), but one was a near-bowl with flat heel, and is probably attributable to the seventeenth century on typological grounds.

3.5 Glass

Six pieces of bottle glass (830g) were recovered from well backfill 111 as an indicative sample. Four complete clear bottles were all 19th–20th century square-section types. One was plain, with three being marked LIPTON LONDON AND CEYLON in two lines. The shoulder and partial neck of another bottle was retrieved, as was part of a thick brown glass bottle – probably a beer bottle.

3.6 Flaked Stone

Eight pieces of artificially flaked flint (195g) were recovered; all from fill 108 (ditch 114). Six were crude, unpatinated flakes, all probably hard hammer struck and most likely to result from dressing of flint nodules as for building purposes. These flakes are otherwise undiagnostic, and could range from Roman to post-medieval in date.

Two smaller pieces were both semi-matt blue-white patinated, and are probably residual prehistoric flakes. One appears to be the proximal end of a thick triangular-section blade, obliquely broken in antiquity, and is consistent with an Early Neolithic date.

3.7 Other Miscellaneous Finds

Well backfill 111 yielded part of the degraded leather sole of a woman's left shoe, and part of a lightweight white plastic hand-mirror, the latter unlikely to predate the mid-late 1940s, and more probably 1950s-1960s in date.

3.8 Animal Bone

Sixteen pieces of animal bone (67g) were recovered from fill 108 (ditch 114). This included part of a sheep mandible, with the remainder being small fragments from domestic food species. A broken sheep- or pig rib exhibited a number of cut-marks on its interior facet. A further 9 pieces (185g) of bone came from ditch fill 117, all from a single machine-fragmented skull.

Animal bone was noted from fills 111 (well 109) and 119 (pit 118), but not retained owing to the modern date of these deposits.

3.9 Marine Shell

One broken oyster shell (30g) was recovered from fill 108 (ditch 114). The shell cannot be closely dated and is a characteristic urban find from the Roman period onwards.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 Discussion

At six metres wide (excluding the area within the site investigated in 1972), this work at Christchurch Court probably represents the most extensive cut through the town defences to be recorded by modern archaeological methods, albeit only part of the outer and middle ditches were impacted. This work was undertaken in an area, which may prove to have contained the best-preserved surviving section of the defences on the northwest side of the town, and potentially the only remaining section in that area with the capacity to answer questions about the later depositional history of the ditches. However, in carrying out the works reported on above, there was a significant professional difficulty in reconciling the importance of the archaeological remains surviving within the site, the impact of the construction works on those remains and the restrictions imposed upon the archaeological response by the planning condition. Dorchester's Roman town defences are unparalleled in Britain, in terms of their form, layout and physical extents (RCHME 1970, 545), and collectively represent a monument of national significance: this level of significance is recognised by the protection of large parts of the defences as a scheduled monument (DO648).

Whilst the site itself is not scheduled, Policy HE9.6 of Planning Policy Statement 5 makes explicit that undesignated heritage assets of demonstrably equivalent significance to designated assets should be subject to the planning policies for designated assets (DCLG 1010). More recently, Paragraph 139 of the National Planning Policy Framework reiterates this standpoint, stating unequivocally that "*Non-designated heritage assets of archaeological*

interest that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to scheduled monuments, should be considered subject to the policies for designated heritage assets" (DCLG 2012). And at a more local level, retained policy SA23 of the Adopted West Dorset District Local Plan 2006 states "*Development will not be permitted which would have an adverse effect upon Scheduled Monuments or upon other archaeological sites of national importance and their settings. Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings are affected by proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation.*" Retained policy SA24 continues "*Development will not be permitted which would have an adverse effect upon a site of regional or county archaeological importance unless the need for the development clearly outweighs the intrinsic importance of the remains. If planning permission is granted affecting a site of regional or county archaeological significance, developers will be required to preserve the archaeology in situ or, if it does not merit permanent preservation, by record.*" In respect of these policies, it is clear that the importance of the site's heritage assets was not reflected in the planning condition, which specifically called for archaeological observations and recording during development. This curtailed the ability to design a more appropriate archaeological scheme of works to maximise the recording and understanding of these nationally important remains. It has resulted in little new information on the Roman town defences being gained to offset their physical destruction within the site. A rare opportunity to address critical questions about the Dorchester Roman town defences and their post-Roman history has been lost. However, construction of the new car park extension and retaining walls has not removed all archaeological remains from the site. The lower profiles and primary fills of the town ditches remain *in situ*, and represent an ongoing archaeological interest of national significance, with the potential to address questions about the origins of the defences in the Roman period. This survival should be taken into account as a material consideration during any future development proposals for the site.

Despite the methodological difficulties described above, some useful information was recovered during the watching brief. The position of the outer Roman town ditch was located and the survival of at least part of the middle ditch confirmed. A partial drawn section was obtained through the outer ditch complex and overlying deposits on its western side (Figure 4). The full ditch profile was not exposed, as the archaeological investigations were restricted to the construction impact depth of the scheme. Nevertheless, the existence of at least two phases of ditch was recorded. However, without access to the detailed unpublished 1972 excavation record, it is difficult to confirm whether the two phases identified in the present project are the same as the two earliest phases of ditch described by Smith (1972), though this is likely to be the case. No dating evidence was recovered to compare with that from the 1972 excavations. The second phase ditch contained a chronologically mixed assemblage, including material spanning the Early Roman, Late Roman, medieval, and early post-medieval periods.

No evidence was seen during the present works to support the existence of a medieval ditch phase. The homogeneity of the upper fills of the second phase ditch (114), with the near complete absence of turf lines, tip-lines, erosion lenses and larger stones, contrasts with the more mixed chalky fills of the first phase ditch and also with wider expectations for the natural infilling of an exposed chalk-cut ditch. The fills could be deliberate dumps to level the ditch, or result from medieval and post-medieval overploughing, although neither mechanism seems plausible in this circumstance, or likely to produce soils of the type observed. Perhaps it is more likely that fill 108 represents long-term, low-energy accumulation of humic soil, subject to constant mechanical and biotic re-working and homogenisation in its upper reaches as it deepened. This might be the case if the area of the ditches remained unploughed and relatively heavily vegetated for an extended period of time. Active maintenance of the defences in the post-Roman and Saxon period seems unlikely and the ditches are likely to have become overgrown. The medieval and early post-medieval landuse of the site is unknown, but Simpson's 1775 map of Fordington shows the site lying outside the area of the arable strip fields. The presence of small quantities of medieval pottery (and indeed early post-medieval finds) in the upper part of the ditch fill may merely be a consequence of the longevity of the ditch as a linear hollow. It is known that the ditches survived as substantial earthworks further south in the area of the Borough Gardens until the mid-19th century (Farrar 1953, 74, fn. 5).

4.2 Conclusions

The full width of the truncated outer Town Ditch was exposed over a length of some eight metres, although the southernmost two metres of this comprised backfill from a largely unpublished investigation for the Dorchester Excavation Committee in 1972 (Smith 1972). The outer ditch and its secondary cut are known to have suffered some localised truncation within the site in the 18th and 19th century, but were otherwise well preserved, surviving to a collective width of almost 10 m. The middle ditch had been more affected by later truncation and some of its fill survived, but the full width was not determined. The complete profile of both the outer and middle ditches was not exposed, but two phases of the outer ditch were identified. Not enough of the middle ditch was exposed to determine whether there was more than one phase in this ditch too. The lack of effective stratigraphic control over ground reduction or finds recovery means that the later history of the outer ditch of the defences was not determined in any detail. However, the recovery of pottery dating from the Roman right through to the post-medieval period from the upper part of the ditch suggests a gradual infilling of this ditch over a long period of time. This is counter to the suggestion of a third, possibly medieval, phase of ditch postulated in the published summary of the 1972 excavations (Smith 1972).

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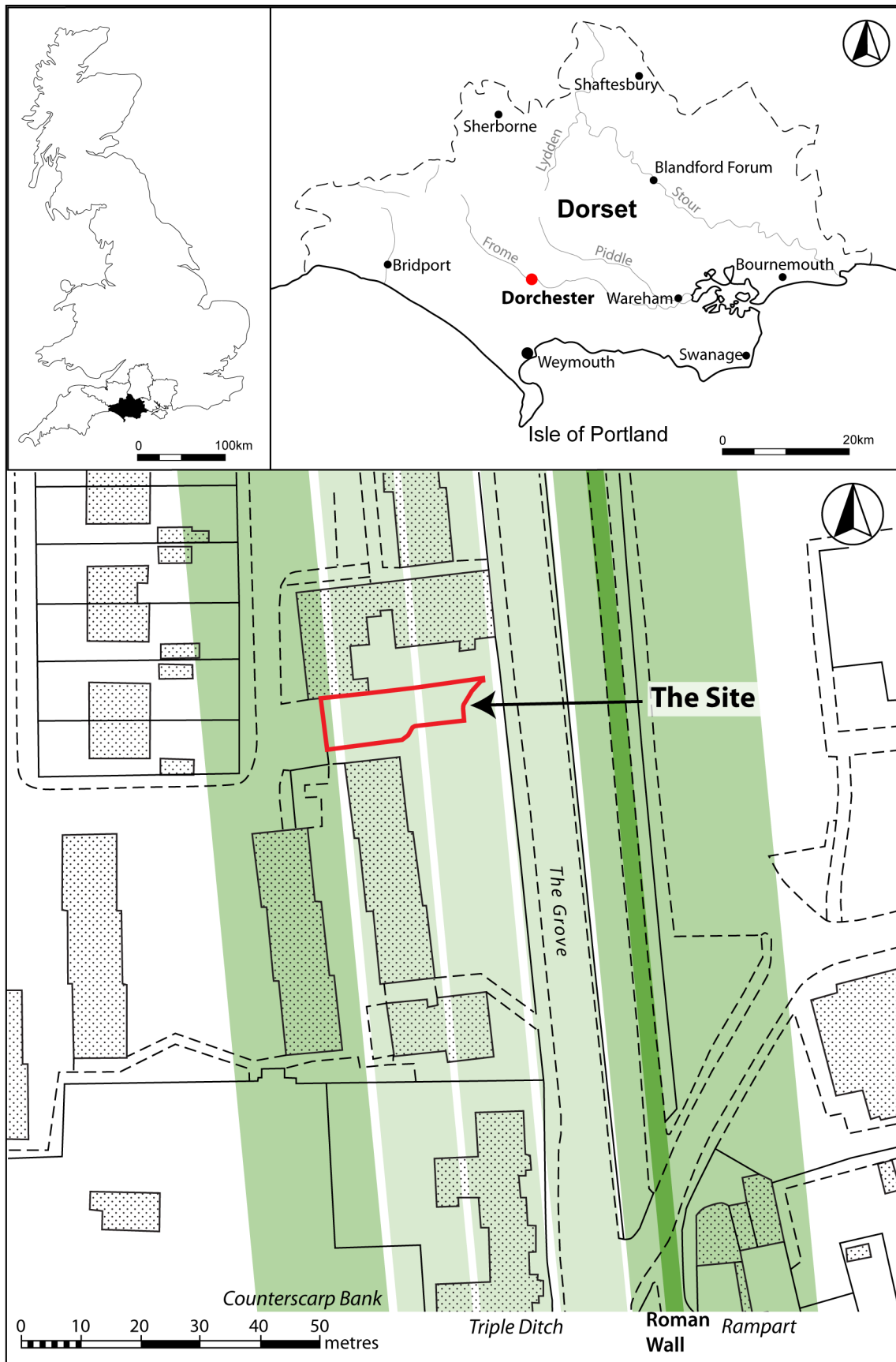


Figure 1: Location map

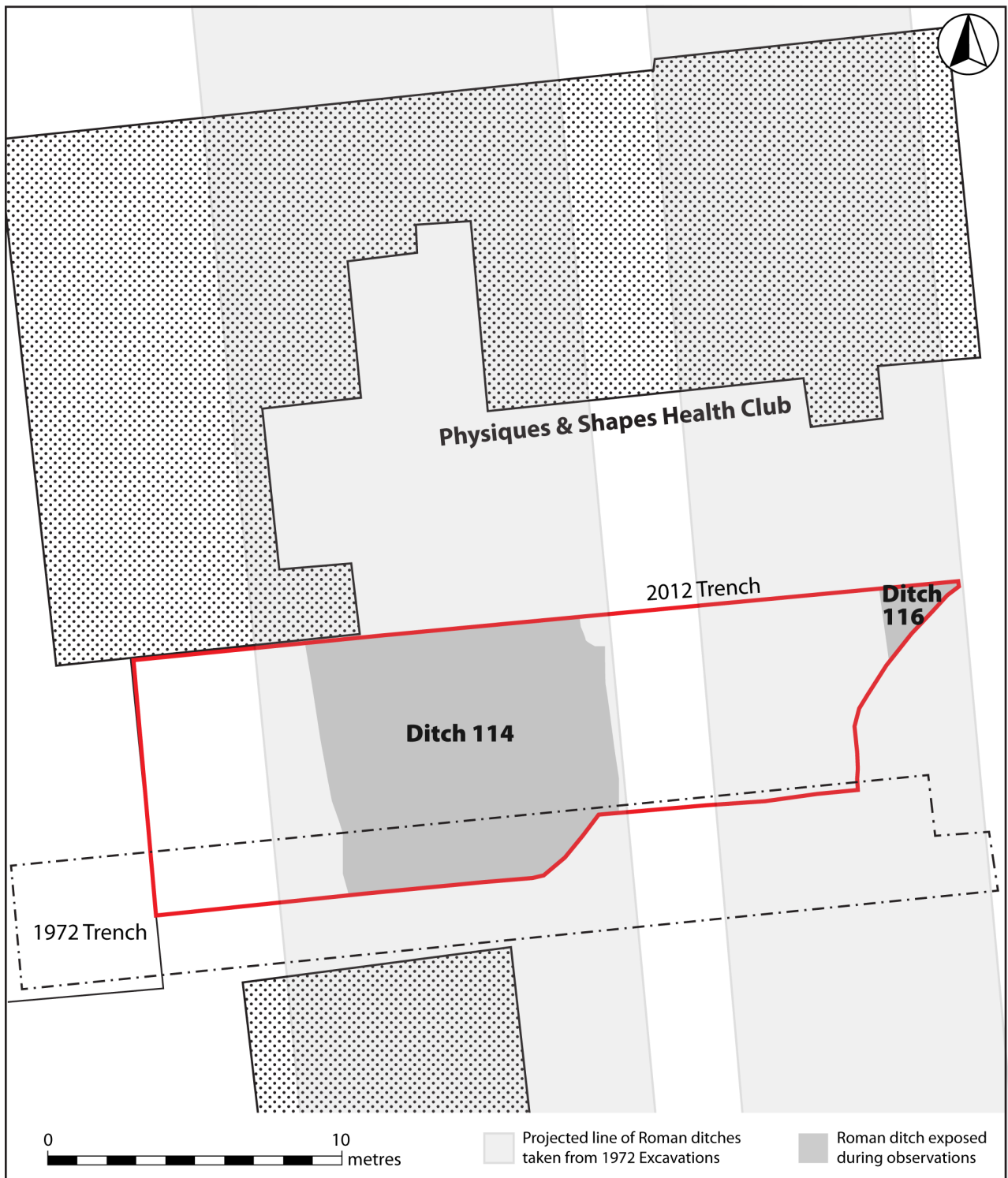


Figure 2: Plan of Archaeological Observations in relation to 1972 Excavations and projected Roman town ditches.

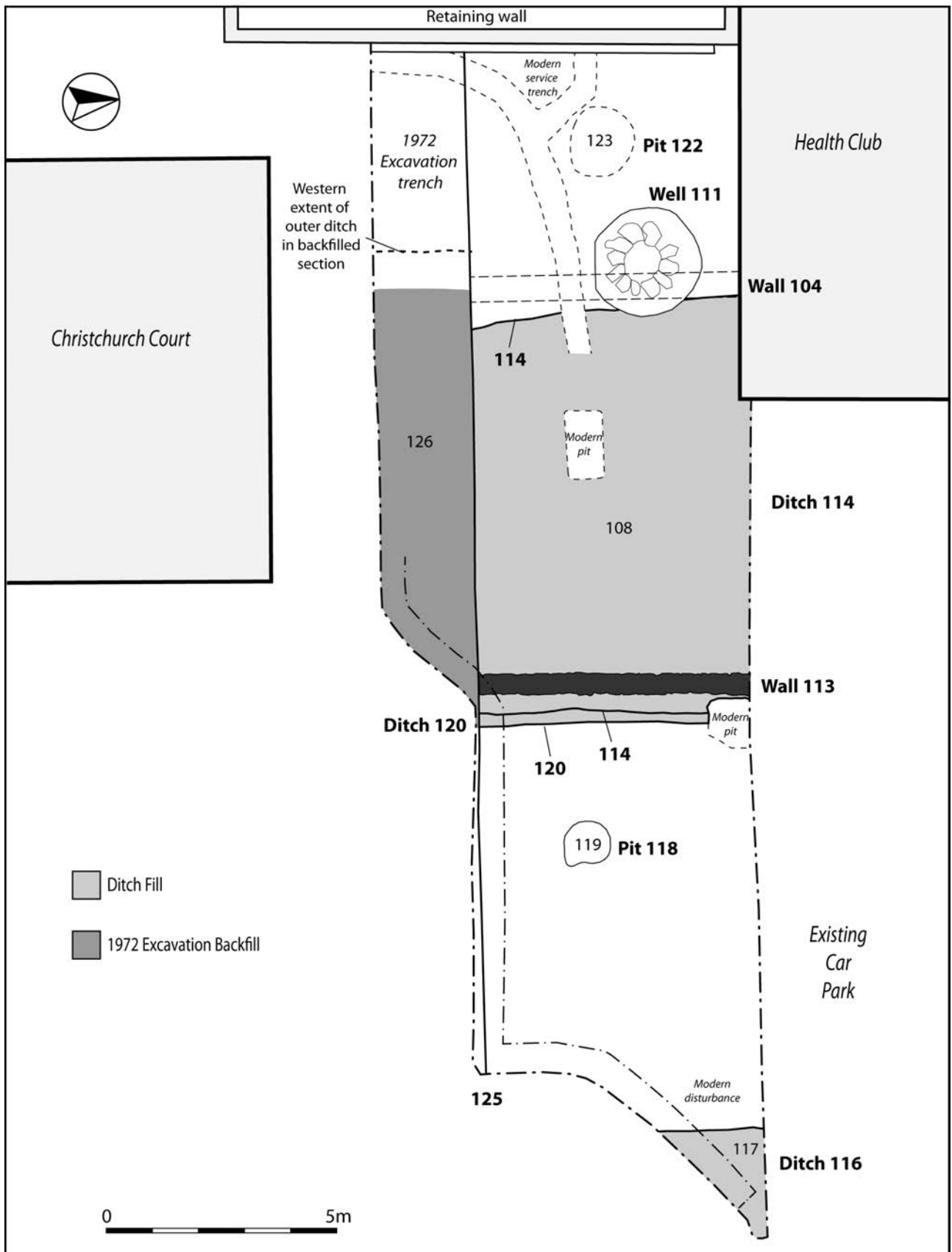


Figure 3: Plan of observations.

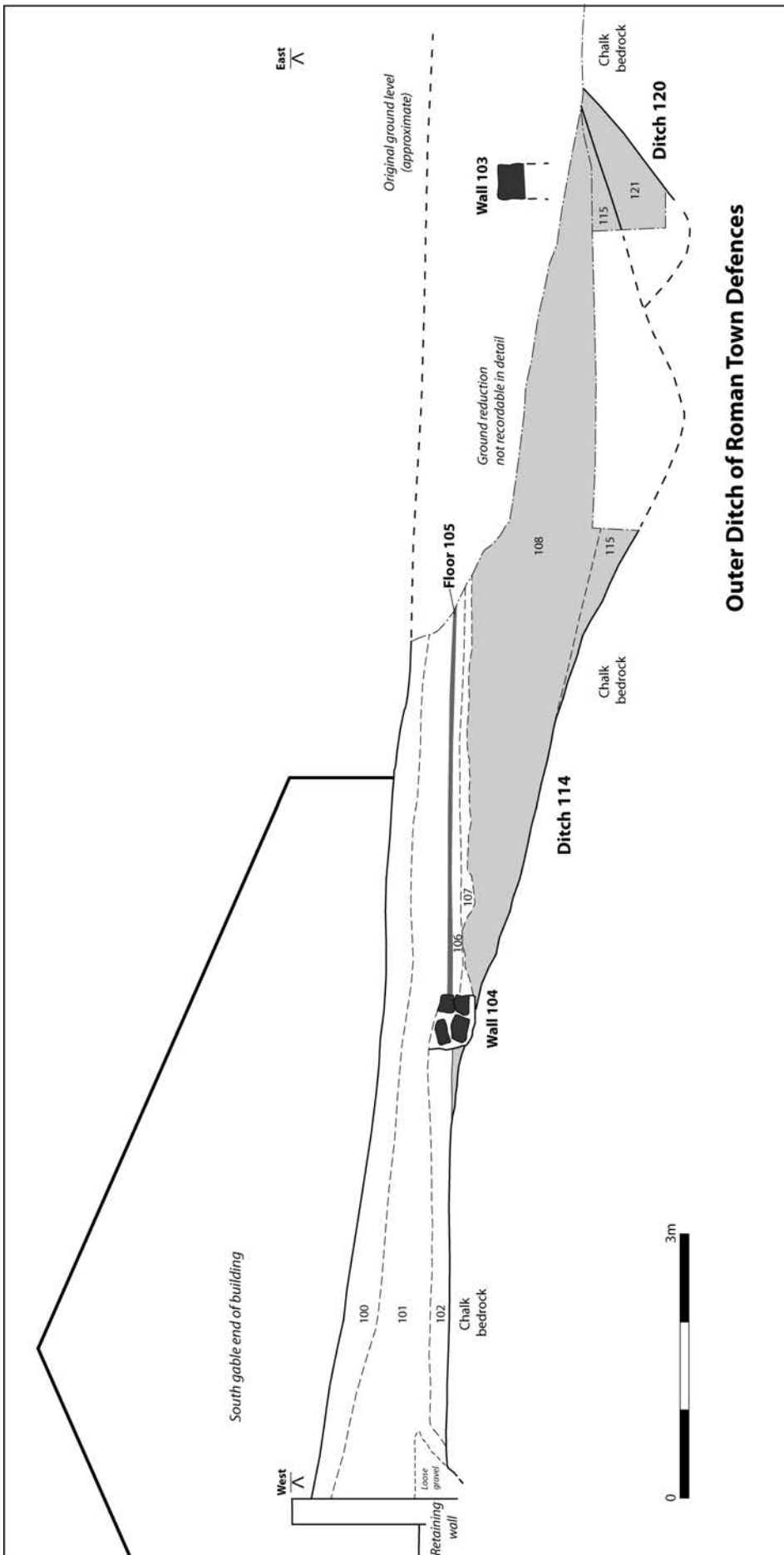


Figure 4: Composite Section of West Part of Site



Plate 1: General view of site looking west from Coliton Walk.



Plate 2: General view of site from west, showing Outer Ditch of the Roman town defences and the backfilled 1972 excavation trench to the right.



Plate 3: Western slope of outer Roman town ditch visible in 1972 excavation trench. 1m scale.



Plate 4: Ditch 120. 1m scale.



Plate 5: Ditch 116. 1m scale.



Plate 6: Well 111. 1m scale.



Plate 7: Floor 105 exposed during machining. 1m scale.



Plate 8: Wall 113 exposed during machining.



Plate 9: Deposits over natural chalk in west end of trench. 1m scale.