



# 45A St Mary Street, Weymouth, Dorset

## Archaeological Observations and Recording during Gas Pipe Connection



Report No. 53534/3/1

July 2019



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**Client:** SGN, Poole Depot, Bourne Valley Road, Poole, BH12 1YT

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## Project Report Summary Page

Project Details			
<b>OASIS Reference</b>	terraina1-361976		
<b>Project Title</b>	45A St Mary Street, Weymouth Gas Pipe Connection		
<b>Short Description of Project</b>	Terrain Archaeology carried out archaeological observations and recording during the installation of a new gas connection to 45A St Mary Street, Weymouth. Quantities of disarticulated human bone were found beneath Church Passage on the south side of St Mary's Churchyard. This bone was derived from burials in St Mary's Churchyard, which may have originally extended across the area of Church Passage prior to the nineteenth century.		
<b>Project Dates</b>	Start: 24-07-2019	End: 25-07-2019	
<b>Previous/Future Work</b>	No/No		
<b>Project Code</b>	53534		
<b>Monument Type and Period</b>	Churchyard (Post-medieval)		
<b>Significant Finds</b>	None		
Project Location			
<b>County/District/Parish</b>	Dorset/ Weymouth and Portland/ Weymouth		
<b>Site Address</b>	45A St Mary Street, Weymouth, DT4 8PU		
<b>Site Coordinates</b>	SY 6795 7880		
<b>Site Area</b>	5.35 m <sup>2</sup>		
<b>Height OD</b>	c. 2.7 m		
Project Creators			
<b>Organisation</b>	Terrain Archaeology		
<b>Project Brief Originator</b>	None		
<b>Project Design Originator</b>	Terrain Archaeology		
<b>Project Supervisor</b>	Peter Bellamy		
<b>Project Manager</b>	Peter Bellamy		
<b>Sponsor or Funding Body</b>	SGN		
Project Archive			
<b>Archive Type</b>	<b>Physical</b>	<b>Digital</b>	<b>Paper</b>
<b>Location/Accession No</b>	No physical archive	No digital archive	No paper archive
<b>Contents</b>			

# 45A St Mary Street, Weymouth, Dorset

## Archaeological Observations and Recording during Gas Pipe Connection, July 2019

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Project introduction

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by SGN to carry out archaeological observations and recording during the connection of No. 45A St Mary Street, Weymouth to the mains gas supply, as human bone had been reportedly found in the vicinity in the past.

The fieldwork was carried out on the 24th and 25th July 2019 by Peter Bellamy.

#### 1.2 Brief

No written brief for the works was produced by or on behalf of the Client.

#### 1.3 Site Location

The site is located on St Mary Street, Weymouth, one of the main streets in the historic core of Melcombe Regis and centred on SY 6795 7880 (Figure 1). The route of the pipe trench runs along Church Passage on the south side of St Mary's Churchyard and into No. 45 St Mary's Street (Figure 2). The ground is flat, lying at a height of about 2.7 m above OD.

#### 1.4 Geology

The solid geology is mapped as Jurassic mudstone of the Stewartby Member And Weymouth Member (undifferentiated) with Superficial deposits of Clay, Silt, Sand And Gravel Alluvium (<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>).

#### 1.5 Archaeological and Historical Background

The Site lies within the historic core of Melcombe Regis. Melcombe has its origins as a small trading settlement in Radipole parish on the north side of Weymouth Harbour, opposite the settlement of Weymouth (Penn 1980, 114-5). In 1280 Edward I made it a borough and the town was replanned on a grid pattern with St Mary Street forming one of the main grid of streets. The new town layout included a chapel, which in 1261 was worth £6 13s 4d (Penn 1980, 115). In 1365-6 it was recorded as the Chapel of St Mary in St Mary Street (Penn 1980, 119). Both Weymouth and Melcombe developed as ports and trading towns with wool as an important export. By the mid fourteenth century, Melcombe was probably the more important of the two towns, but was no more than a modest port with a few wealthy individuals. The port of Melcombe is most likely the entry point for the Black Death in 1348 and it suffered greatly from its effects. The town suffered from French raids in 1377 and 1380 and by the beginning of the fifteenth century the town was in serious decline.

There was a revival in the fortunes of both Melcombe and Weymouth in the sixteenth century. The two towns were united by a bridge in 1593. Melcombe expanded northwards during this period, extending beyond its medieval limits. A house was built on the site of the present 45 St Mary Street in 1580 and was occupied by John Pitt, who was mayor in 1609 (Attwooll and West 1995, 34). The medieval chapel was replaced on the same site by a new parish church in 1605 and was provided with a small burial ground to the north and south of the building. The town suffered during the Civil War and was besieged by Royalist forces in 1644-5. This heralded a much longer decline in the town's fortunes.

The town's return to prosperity is linked to the rise in popularity of sea water as a 'cure' in the mid eighteenth century. Weymouth's development as a health resort was largely due to Ralph Allen who stayed in the town for the summer season from 1750 until his death in 1764 (Attwooll and West 1995, 61). He had frequent visitors during the season, including Royalty. By the 1770s the town was well-established as a seaside resort, with new hotels and holiday accommodation built from this date onwards. The Duke of Gloucester commissioned a residence for himself (Gloucester Lodge) on the north side of Melcombe. This became the summer palace of George III during the years 1789-1805. The patronage of the King made the town one of the most fashionable and popular seaside resorts, which led to the improvement and expansion of the town and the development of the Esplanade.

The expansion of the town begun in the eighteenth century continued throughout the nineteenth century. A new larger St Mary's Church was built to accommodate the growing population and was opened in 1817. The sixteenth century house on the site of 45 St Mary Street was demolished in 1883 and replaced by the present building, which incorporates some work from the earlier house (RCHME 1970, 351).

## 1.6 Previous Archaeological fieldwork

There have been no previous archaeological investigations in the immediate vicinity of the site.

## 1.7 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the Archaeological Observations and Recording was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

Its objectives 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.

## 1.8 Groundworks

The new gas pipe was laid in a roughly 18 m long open-cut trench 0.2 m wide and about 0.45 m deep except at the west end where it was about 1.10 m deep to connect to the existing gas main. The trench was dug by hand.

## 1.9 Methods

The observation and recording of the groundworks was undertaken to the standards of the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists (CIfA 2014), with an archaeologist in attendance during works that possibly may expose pre-modern deposits.

All deposits revealed, irrespective of their apparent archaeological significance, were recorded using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records. The photographic record of the work was maintained in digital format, and included aspects of its setting, conduct and technical detail.

## 1.10 Archive and Dissemination

### 1.10.1 Paper Archive

No paper archive will be retained beyond the end of the project.

### 1.10.2 Artefacts

No artefacts or other materials were retained from the site.

### 1.10.3 Report

A copy of this report will be lodged with Dorset 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](http://www.oasis.ac.uk)) under the reference code *terraina1-361976*. A digital copy of this report will be uploaded for inclusion in the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) online 'grey literature' library.

## 2. Results

### 2.1 Introduction

The whole length of the trench was recorded, though a roughly 5 m length towards the west end of Church Passage was excavated without an archaeologist in attendance. The course of the trench in Church Passage was along the line of an existing electric cable. Most of the area beneath St Mary Street was also disturbed by services. The plan of the gas pipe trench is shown on Figure 2 and the deposits revealed are described in Appendix 1.

### 2.2 Natural Deposits

No natural deposits were revealed.

### 2.3 Archaeological Features

No archaeological features were observed.

### 2.4 Post-Medieval and Modern Deposits

The present St Mary Street surfaces consisted of modern brick paving (100) overlying an earlier tarmac road surface (102). Church Passage had a concrete paved surface set in a bed of sand (103).

Below the paved surface of Church Passage was a deposit of greyish-brown silty sand (104), which had been cut by the trench for an electricity cable at a depth of about 0.4 m below present ground level and backfilled with the same material. This deposit continued below the base of the trench, so its full thickness and extent is not known. It contained significant quantities of disarticulated human bone, including a skull at the east end of the trench (Plate 2) and a concentration of skull fragments about halfway along the trench, lying directly on top of the electricity cable (Plate 3). Other human bone including fragments of leg bone, rib, shoulder blade, etc were found along almost the whole length of this trench. Quantities of animal bone, clay tobacco pipe, brick, bottle glass and eighteenth and nineteenth century pottery were also recovered.

A similar deposit (101) was found beneath St Mary Street and this was heavily disturbed by modern services. It contained greater quantities of brick and slate rubble. No human bone was recovered from beneath the road.

## 3. Finds

### 3.1 Finds Assemblage

A scatter of eighteenth and nineteenth century pottery, bottle glass, clay tobacco pipe and brick fragments was noted in context 104. This included sherds of stoneware jug, local 'Verwood' earthenwares, industrial whitewares and an early eighteenth century wine bottle neck. The brick fragments were all red unfrosted bricks of late eighteenth or nineteenth century date.

The human bone was all disarticulated and many of the bones were broken. This material was not collected or recorded in detail and was reburied in the trench. A small quantity of animal bone and oyster shell was also noted in context 104. This was not systematically collected and recorded.

## 4. Discussion and Conclusions

### 4.1 Discussion

The observations did not reveal any undisturbed archaeological stratigraphy. This is partly due to the shallow depth of the trench and the number of modern services. Almost the whole length of the trench was disturbed by modern services.

The silty sand deposit 104 below Church Passage contained eighteenth and nineteenth century finds and quantities of disarticulated human bone. The human bone almost certainly came from the churchyard, which lay immediately adjacent to the north. It is unclear whether the human bone derived from the normal disturbance of earlier graves during later burials, or was disturbed by the digging of services or other activity not connected with the use of the churchyard. It is possible that the churchyard originally extended as far south as No. 45 St Mary Street and Church Passage is part of a later alteration of the churchyard, perhaps as part of the rebuilding of the church in 1815-17. Historic map evidence shows that Church Passage was in existence by 1841. If this is the case then the human bone derives from pre-nineteenth century burials and it is possible that further articulated bone from earlier burials survives at a greater depth beneath Church Passage.

### 4.2 Conclusions

The archaeological observations and recording during the installation of a gas supply to No. 45A St Mary Street did not reveal any undisturbed stratigraphy. Quantities of disarticulated human bone were found beneath Church Passage. This bone was derived from burials in St Mary's Churchyard, which may have originally extended across the area of Church Passage prior to the nineteenth century.

## 5. References

- |                            |      |   |
|----------------------------|------|---|
| Attwooll, M. and West, J., | 1995 | <i>Weymouth. An Illustrated History</i> . Expanded Edition. The Dovecote Press.   |
| ClfA,                      | 2014 | <i>Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief. December 2014. Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.</i> |
| Penn, K. J.,               | 1980 | <i>Historic Towns in Dorset</i> . Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society Monograph No. 1.                      |
| RCHME                      | 1970 | <i>An Inventory of Historical Monuments in the County of Dorset. Volume Two, South East. London; HMSO.</i>                |

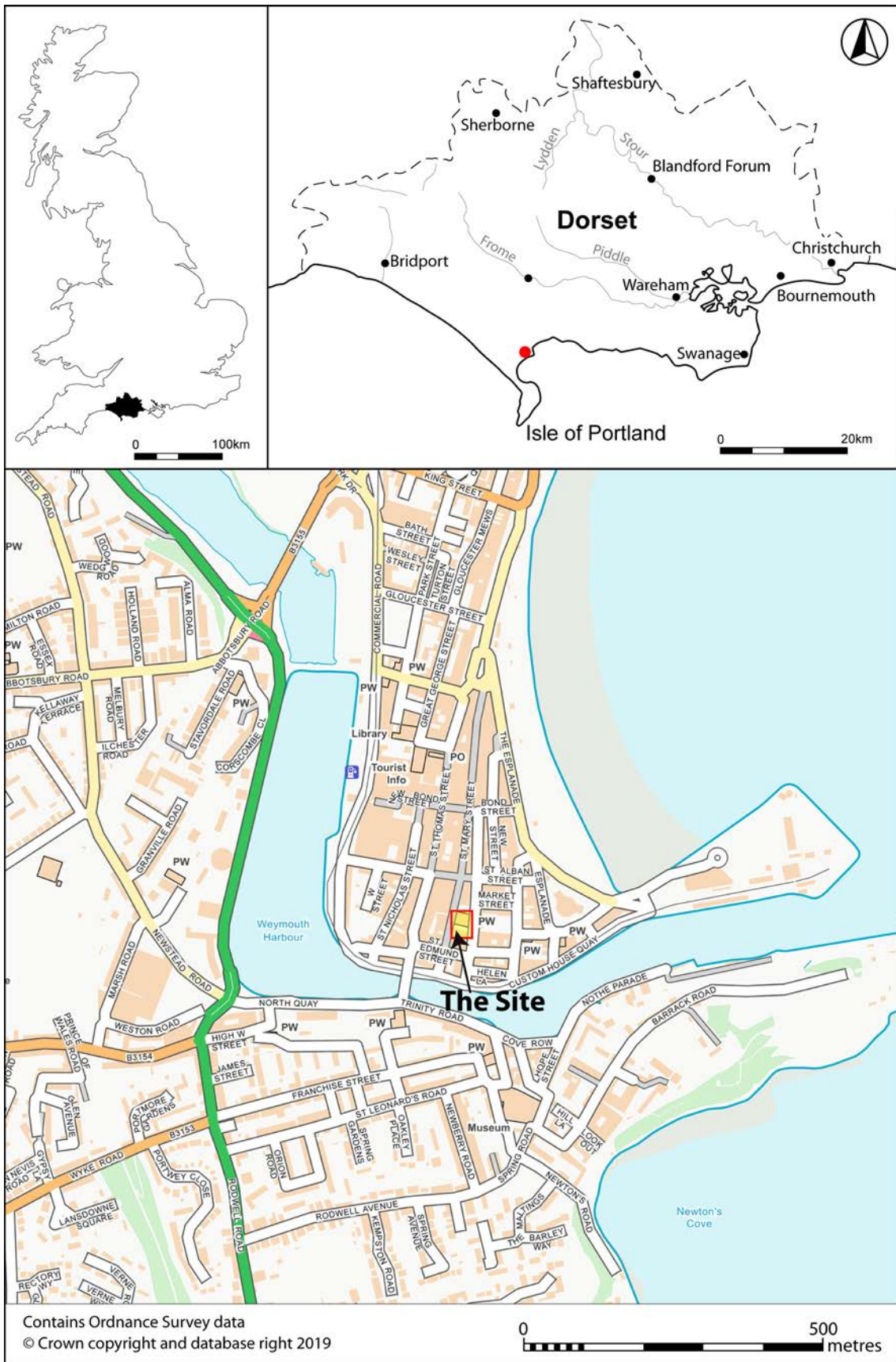


Figure 1: Site Location.

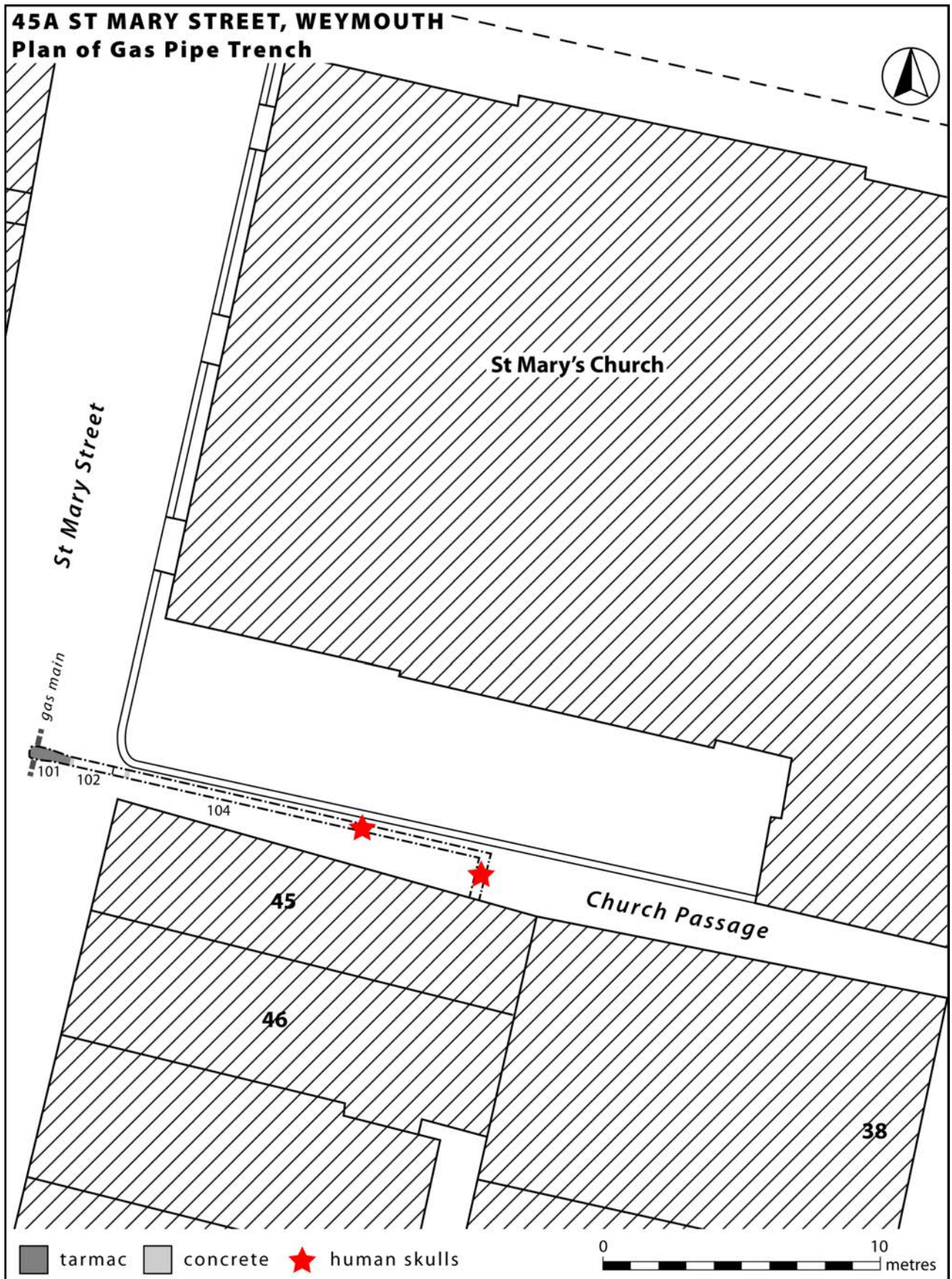


Figure 2: Plan of Observations



*Plate 1: General view of trench looking west towards St Mary Street.*



*Plate 2: Human skull in east end of trench in Church Passage, looking east.*



*Plate 3: Group of broken skull fragments overlying electricity cable in trench, looking west.*

## Appendix 1: Context Summary

### Trench 1

Length: 18.3 m; Width 0.20 m; Depth 0.40–1.10 m.

Context	Description and Interpretation	Depth (m) below ground level
100	<b>St Mary Street Paving:</b> Brick paving on an orange gravel and crushed stone base.	0.00 – 0.18m
101	<b>Earlier Street Surface:</b> Tarmac	0.18 – c.0.40m
102	<b>Disturbed Soil beneath St Mary Street:</b> Mid greyish-brown silty sand with frequent small flint gravel, brick rubble and slate, filling various service trenches in road.	0.20 – 0.4m+
103	<b>Church Passage Paving:</b> Concrete paving slabs set in sand.	0.00 – 0.20 m
104	<b>Disturbed Soil beneath Church Passage:</b> Mid greyish-brown silty sand with moderate small flint gravel, occasional brick rubble and charcoal flecks. Contains disarticulated human bone. Partially disturbed by services backfilled with same material	0.20 – 0.55m +