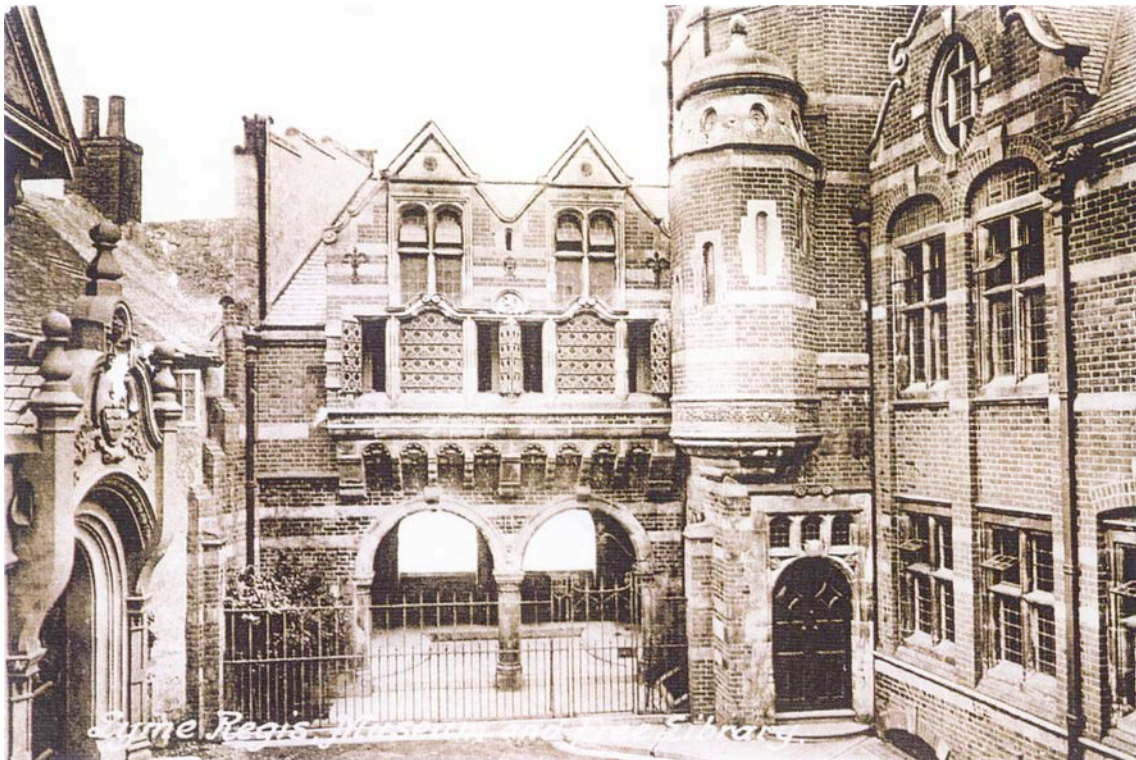


**PROPOSED EXTENSION, LYME REGIS MUSEUM,
LYME REGIS, DORSET
Archaeological Observations and Recording**



Report No. 53167/3/1

December 2006

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SUMMARY

Terrain Archaeology carried out a programme of observations and recording during the excavation of four Engineer's Test Pits in the area of a proposed extension to Lyme Regis Museum, Lyme Regis, Dorset.

No evidence of the previously extant cottages on the site was found although a single stone culvert was observed in Trench 2. Its alignment suggests that it was part of the drainage from the Guildhall to the north.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Lyme Regis Museum to undertake a programme of observations and recording during the excavation of four engineers test pits within the area of the proposed extension at Lyme Regis Museum, Lyme Regis, Dorset.

Lyme Regis Museum lies within the medieval part of Lyme Regis on the south side of Bridge Street, close to the mouth of the River Lim at Ordnance Survey NGR SY34289210. It is adjacent to the Guildhall (or Town Hall) and just behind Gun Cliff (Figure 1).

The site lies on the lower slopes on the east side of the Lim valley at a height of about 5m above Ordnance Datum. The topography dips down to the south and west but the site is terraced and exists on three different levels. At present the whole area is surfaced with tarmac and the southern side is retained by a massive wall. The area is the Lyme Regis Town Council car park.

The underlying geology is mapped as Lower Lias shales (Geological Survey of England and Wales sheet 326/340 *Sidmouth Drift* (1974).

The fieldwork was carried out on 23 November 2006 by Jo Draper and Christopher Chaplin.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the following for their help and cooperation during this project: Lyme Regis Museum, T Flay and Son, and Alan Conisbee Associates.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The archaeological and historical background to the site has been presented in detail in the Desk-based Assessment produced by Jo Draper and only a brief summary is presented here.

The site lies within the area of the medieval settlement of Lyme Regis.

The site lies in the area of the former Cockmoile Square, which was lined with houses, some of which probably dated from the 17th century. These houses were small, plain and possibly timber-framed.

The Guildhall was rebuilt in 1887–9 and the area of Cockmoile Square was cleared in 1899. The construction of the museum was completed in 1901. Two of the houses on Cockmoile Square survived right up to the 1930s, filling the space between the town hall and the museum.

There have been no archaeological investigations in this part of Lyme Regis.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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

The objective of the archaeological works was to record, to an appropriate professional standard, all the *in situ* archaeological deposits and features revealed by the groundworks.

METHODS

Although there was no written brief for this work observations and recording were carried out by Jo Draper during the excavation of engineer's test pits. The work was carried out in accordance with the Institute of Field Archaeologists Code of Conduct and *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*.

All test pits were excavated by machine after the tarmac had been sawn through. They ranged in depth from 0.55 m to 1.1 m. Test Pit 3 encountered solid concrete immediately beneath the tarmac and was therefore not excavated further.

All deposits exposed in the trenches were recorded using elements of Terrain Archaeology's recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records. The position of the trench was located by taped measurements to existing boundaries. All depths recorded were below existing ground surface.

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. The archive will be deposited with the Lyme Regis Museum.

RESULTS

Test Pit 1

This trench was situated to the rear of the south-west corner of the museum and was 0.7m long by 0.5 m wide. It was excavated to a depth of 0.55 m where a layer of concrete was encountered. Overlying this was a deposit of imported reddish hardcore over which the tarmac had been laid.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were found.

Test Pit 2

This trench was sited to investigate the footings of the east wall of the museum and was 1.5m long by 0.5 m wide. The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.1 m through a deposit of wet, unconsolidated yellowish grey mixed gravel containing angular and rounded chert and flint up to 0.25 m. At a depth of 0.45 m, with no cut visible due to the nature of the deposit, the top of a well-made linear covered culvert was observed, constructed of substantial slabs of un-mortared blue lias. It was aligned N-S with an internal void measuring 0.22 m wide by 0.30 m deep.

One piece of late medieval pottery (probably 15th century) was recovered from the spoil from this trench.

Test Pit 3

This trench was situated against the southern wall of the Guildhall. Immediately beneath the tarmac was a layer of concrete relating to manhole covers and drains and therefore the trench was not fully excavated.

No features or deposits of archaeological interest were found.

Test Pit 4

This trench was situated along the eastern edge of the development area on the line of the front wall of the cottages which had survived on the site until 1930. The trench was excavated to a depth of 0.9 m through a deposit of wet, unconsolidated yellowish grey mixed gravel containing angular and rounded chert and flint up to 0.25 m. This deposit was very similar to that found in Test Pit 2 and at a depth of approximately 0.7 m became more orange.

A winkle shell was the only object found in this deposit.

DISCUSSION

Although the trenches were very small, they do seem to demonstrate that no remains of the cottages or their predecessors survive. It seems that a deep deposit of gravelly material extends across the site and is most probably beach material as it matches current material on the shore just below the site. It is very unlikely to be an *in situ* beach as the site is approximately five metres above current sea level.

The covered culvert appears to pre-date the cottages and may be associated with drainage from either Bridge Street or the Guildhall. A similar but larger and mortared covered drain was examined on the outskirts of Lyme (Draper 1998) and seems to relate to road improvements of the 1770s. These drains were usually needed after roads were properly paved because of water running off quickly and easily, but since this site is at the bottom of a steep hill drains may always have been needed. From the early 1820s John Bennet ran seawater baths in the area of the museum (Warner & Gupta 1997, 48-49) but this culvert seems to be positioned to drain water from Bridge Street rather than anywhere under the museum. Projecting the line of the culvert northward it does however encounter the Guildhall, which has been on the same site since the 16th century or earlier.

RECOMMENDATIONS

These trenches have made archaeological evaluation trenches unnecessary. Although it is a small sample, it seems unlikely that much archaeological stratigraphy survives. It is possible, however, that buried underneath the redeposited beach gravels there remains some medieval stratigraphy. The excavations for the basement of the building should be under archaeological control.

PROJECT ARCHIVE

The archive (Terrain Archaeology Project No. 53211) will be deposited with Lyme Regis 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

- Draper, J. 1998 'Lyme Regis, drain', *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 120, 117-118
- Draper, J. 2005 Cockmoile Square & the Museum Area, Lyme Regis: Archaeological Assessment & Historical Survey. Unpublished report for Lyme Regis Museum.
- Warner, J. & Gupta, P. 1997 *The Bennets of Lyme Regis 1762-1911*

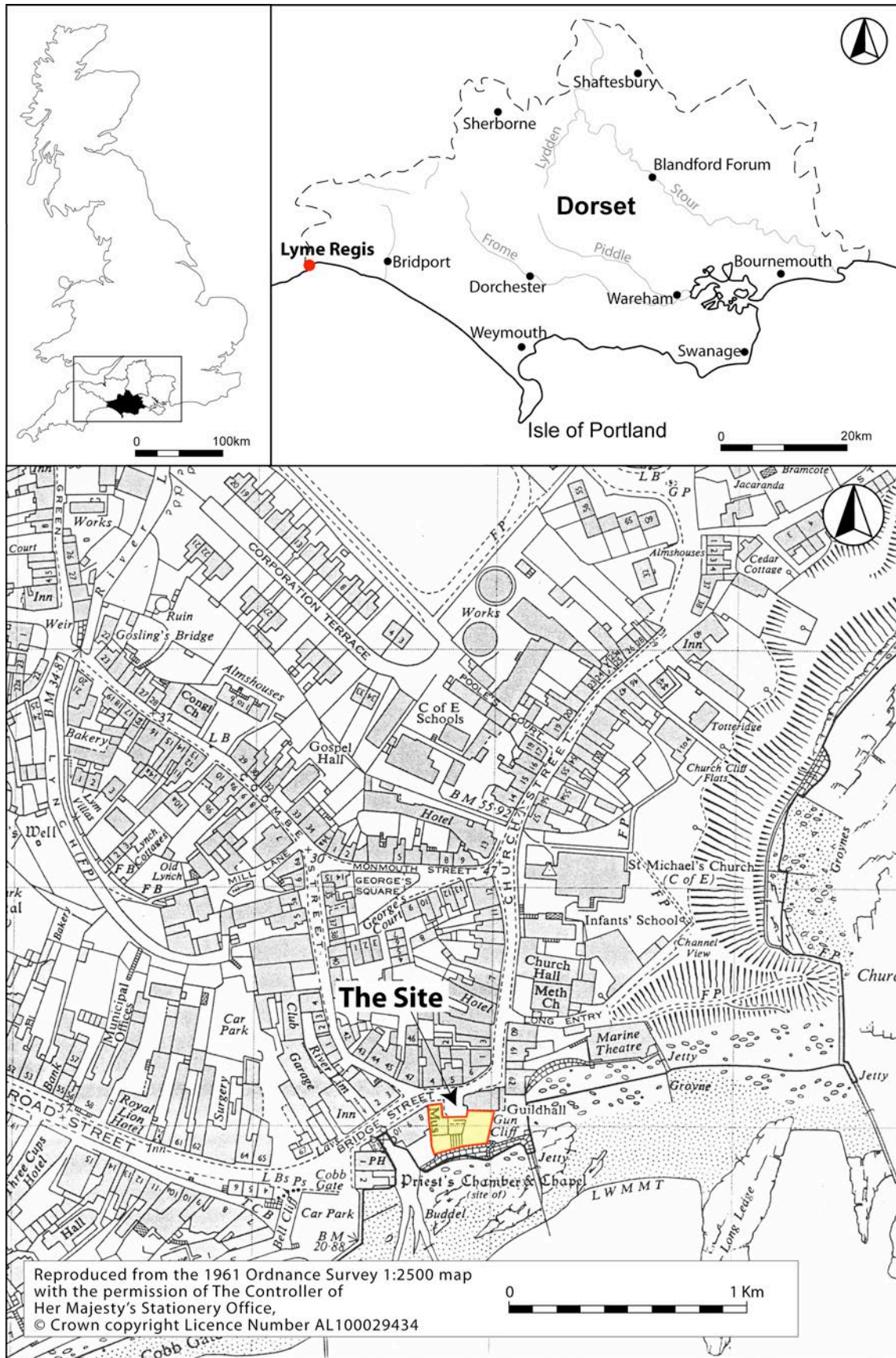


Figure 1: Location map

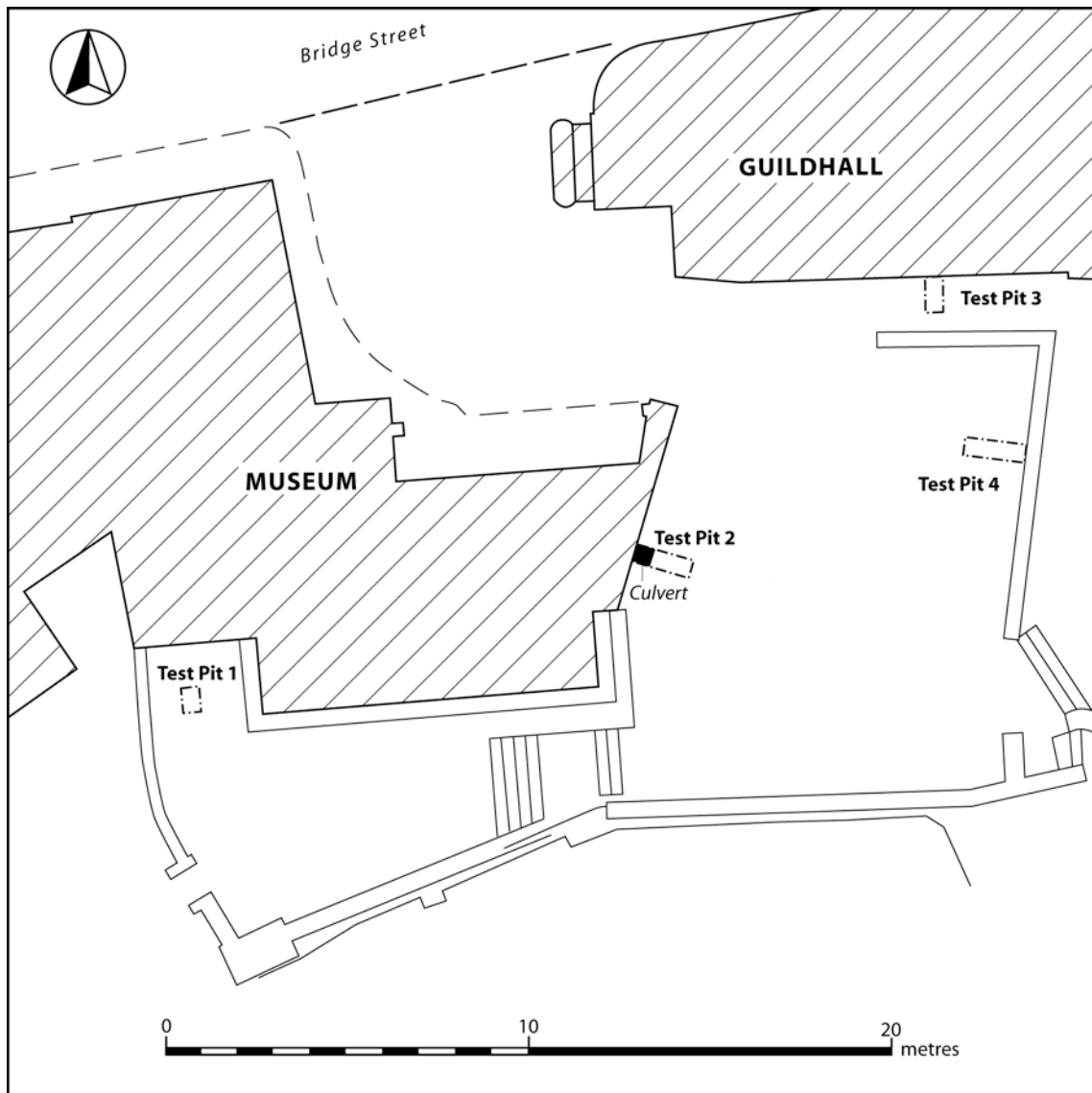
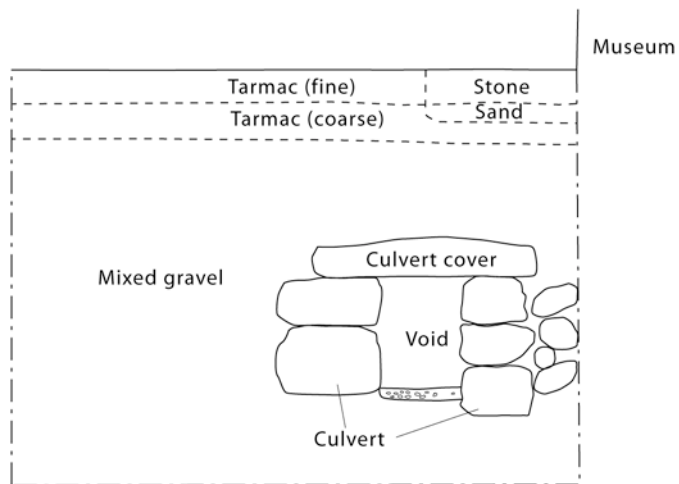


Figure 2: Plan of observations

Test Pit 2 - North facing section showing culvert



Test Pit 4 - North facing section

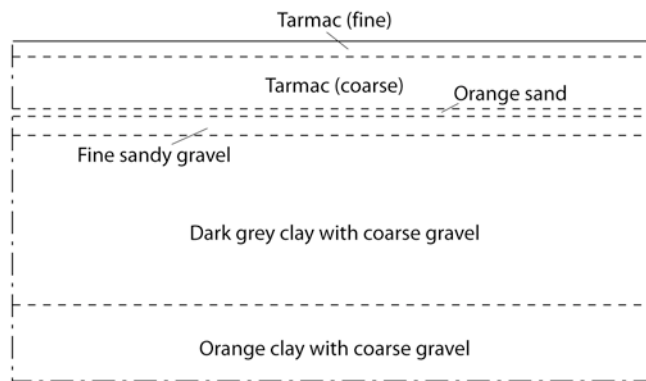


Figure 3: Sections –of Test Pits 2 and 4



Plate 1: The Museum area just before the Museum was built with the new Town Hall (1887-9), the cottages and the empty site purchased for the museum in 1887.



Plate 2: Just after the Museum was built (completed in 1901). The Museum butts up to cottages which seem to have been repaired and look rather smart.



Plate 3: The area in the 1920s with the Museum tile-hung on the upper part and rendered on the lower. The cottages are to the right as is the Drill Hall on the Theatre site.



Plate 4: The cottages on the site in 1924 with the Guildhall on the right.



Plate 5: 1920s air photograph showing the museum with the cottages on the right.

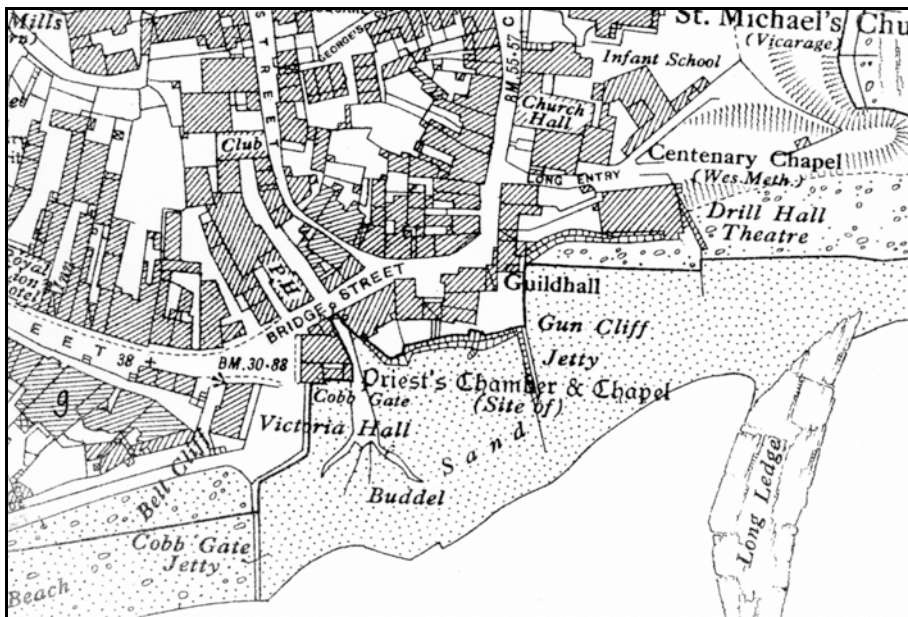


Plate 6: 1929 O.S. map showing cottages between the Guildhall and the Museum.



Plate 7: Postcard from 1930 showing cottages in process of being demolished.

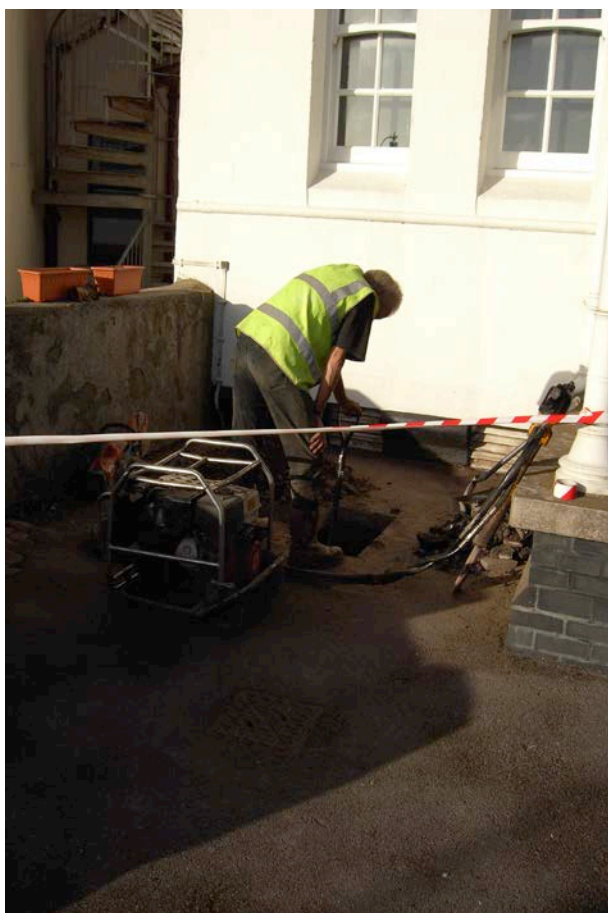


Plate 8: Test Pit 1 - location shot.



Plate 9: Test Pit 1 - section.



Plate 10: Test Pit 2 – location shot.



Plate 11 Test Pit 2 – north facing section.



Plate 12: Test Pit 2 – southern elevation of culvert.



Plate 13: Test pit 4 – location shot.