

45-46 BROAD STREET, LYME REGIS, DORSET
Archaeological Observations and Recording



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45–46 Broad Street, Lyme Regis, Dorset

Archaeological Observations, October 2004

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SUMMARY

Archaeological observations and recording were carried out by Terrain Archaeology during the construction of a new extension to the rear 46 Broad Street, Lyme Regis (SY34079215). This was on the site of the Great House, a late 16th/early 17th century house, demolished in 1913.

The remains of a stone building with cobbled floor and stone drains were exposed. This was probably an outbuilding, perhaps a stable, behind the Great House. It appears to have been demolished in the 18th or early 19th century. Another cobbled surface was found at a higher level and may be the remains of an outbuilding behind the present buildings.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Mr Stuart Anderson to undertake archaeological observations and recording during the construction of a new extension to the rear of 46 Broad Street, Lyme Regis. This is in fulfilment of Condition 5 of the consent for Planning Application No. 1/W/04/000671.

The development comprised the conversion of vacant premises to the rear of 46 Broad Street, the refurbishment of a ground floor covered passageway and the construction of a new two storey extension. The archaeological observations were limited to the groundworks associated with the new extension.

‘Archaeological Observations and Recording’ (or ‘watching brief’) is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons, within a specified area or site where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.

The site lies to the rear of 45 and 46 Broad Street (Figure 1), at NGR SY34079215. The topography slopes down to the east and the site lies at about 22.8 m above Ordnance Datum. The area of the site was partially cleared before the start of the archaeological observations and a temporary stone surface laid in the garden. The limits of the site were defined by stone walls on the east, west and north sides. There was a rough stone garden wall immediately to the west of the footprint of the new extension. The northern end of this wall and its return to the east were demolished to make way for the present development.

The underlying geology is mapped as Lower Lias (British Geological Survey 1:50000 Sheet 326 *Sidmouth Drift*, 1974).

The fieldwork was carried out on 27th October 2004 by Peter Bellamy, during very stormy and wet weather, which impeded the detailed recording of the site.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge Mr Stuart Anderson, the groundwork contractors, Jonathan Hansford, Steven Wallis (Dorset County Council), and Jo Draper for their help and cooperation during this project.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Broad Street is one of the main medieval streets of Lyme Regis. Its width suggests that it was a market street and the regular tenements suggest a deliberate layout, perhaps dating from the 13th century (Penn 1980).

45–46 Broad Street are on the site of the Great House, a late 16th or early 17th century house of great size whose three-storey porch was a prominent feature in the street until it was demolished in 1913. The current buildings on the street side may incorporate some remains of the Great House, whose gardens ran down to the river at the back. Because the ground slopes steeply behind and with poor access to the rear, the outbuildings would have been more useful set immediately behind the house, rather than further to the rear of the property. The 1841 plan of the town (Figure 2) shows extensive outbuildings just behind the house.

Although earlier historians of Lyme have associated the Great House with the medieval Leper's Hospital known to have existed in Lyme, this seems unlikely because such Leper's Hospitals were always sited well out of towns because skin diseases and leprosy were thought to be contagious.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

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

The archaeological works aimed to observe and record all the in situ archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.

METHODS

The work was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation for the project (Document 3165), prepared by Terrain Archaeology in July 2004 (Appendix 1). It was undertaken in line with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*.

The groundworks comprised the machine-excavation of the footings trench for the new extension (Figure 3). This trench was 0.9 m wide, up to 1.2 m deep and measured 4.0 m north to south and 6.0 m west to east.

The observations of the footings trench was intensive, as defined by the Institute of Field Archaeologists, with a suitably qualified archaeologist present during sensitive ground disturbance.

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 footings trench was located on a plan provided by the client. 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 Dorset County Museum.

RESULTS

Standing Building

The existing building forms the southern boundary of the observations. This building was not examined in detail, but the site clearance and subsequent excavations revealed some further details.

The footings were exposed in the east end of the site. The footings were similar to the wall above and were of squared stone construction. They were founded on the top of the natural clay with the lowest course of stone blocks projecting 0.08 m beyond the wall face above (Figure 4).

There are two doorways in the area of the new extension, in addition to the present back door, to the west. To the east of the doorways was a blocked window (Plate 1).

Natural Deposits

At the base of the new footings trench was a compact brown clay (104), being the top of the natural clay, with a slightly disturbed layer of brown clay and stone fragments (103), 0.1 m thick above.

Buried Soil

In the western part of the site, the natural clay was sealed by a 0.35 m thick layer of clean brown clay loam soil (112). This has been interpreted as an earlier garden soil layer. No dating material was recovered from it.

Building 116

The remains of a substantial stone wall (110) were exposed in the eastern part of the trench. It was constructed of squared stone rubble (about 350 by 250 by 200 mm across), bonded with lime mortar and brown clay. It was 0.8 m wide and survived two courses (0.5 m) high. There was no trace of a construction trench and was founded directly on top of the natural clay 104 (Figure 4, Plate 2). This wall ran along the northern edge of the footings trench with a return to the south about 3.5 m in from the eastern boundary of the site (Figure 3, Plate 3). It continued eastwards beneath the present boundary wall. The projected line of the return to the south meets the present rear wall of the existing building in the eastern doorway (Figure 3). There is no scar for this wall visible on the elevation, suggesting it is earlier than the present buildings on the site.

Within the northeast corner of the footings trench, the remains of a cobbled floor (109) were exposed (Figure 3). This comprised tightly packed ovoid pebbles set end on in a stiff strong brown clay, immediately overlying the natural (103). This cobbled surface butted against wall 110 to the north. To the south it was bounded by a stone drain running east–west about 0.6 m south of wall 110. This drain comprised rectangular pieces of Lias laid in a 'V' shape (Plate 4). Another similar drain running north–south exited through wall 110 to the north. The relationship between these two drains was not exposed.

No floor deposits survived to the south of the drain.

Demolition Deposits

The area within Building 116 was filled with number of deposits that appear to derive from its demolition. To the southeast was a 0.18 m thick layer of pale yellowish-grey clayey sand (102), which was composed primarily of decayed lime mortar and frequent cobbles, with occasional small patches of brown soil. Further north the cobble floor was covered by a layer of mid brown

sandy clay (105) containing a large quantity of slate fragments and a 0.25 m thick layer of mid yellowish-brown sandy clay mortar debris with patches and lenses of brown soil (108).

At the northern end of the trench, the remains of wall 110 and soil layer 112 were sealed beneath a thin layer of very dark brown/black sandy loam with very frequent charcoal, coal and clinker (114). It is unclear how far south this layer extended.

Structure 117

The remains of a small extension or outhouse against the south wall of the existing building were exposed (Plate 5). This was about 2.2 m by 3.5 m across and was largely disturbed by the initial clearance of the site. It comprised a drystone wall (115) about 0.3 m wide, the eastern side of which ran along the top of wall 110 and the western side was under the eastern edge of the western door (Figure 3). The north wall was not identified, but this structure did not appear to continue further north of the northern end of the footings trench. The western wall appeared to be partially bonded into the wall of the existing house beneath the present doorway. There was no evidence that the eastern wall was bonded into the present building, as there is no trace of a wall scar on the existing elevation. Within the area defined by the walls was a cobbled surface of closely set vertical ovoid pebbles in a brown clay matrix (111). This surface sloped down to the north. It was constructed directly over the earlier garden soil 112 (Figure 4).

No dating evidence for this structure was recovered.

Garden soils

Overlying all the deposits and features described above was a 0.3 m thick layer of mixed greyish-brown clay loam (101) with frequent gravel, clinker, slate, clay pipe fragments etc. The top of this layer had been machined off during the original site clearance. In the northern baulk of the footings trench, a 0.3 m thick layer of mixed brown and greyish-brown sandy loam (113) with frequent cobbles and stone fragments, lenses of clay, gravel, plaster, etc and with frequent charcoal and coal fragments. Both of these layers probably represent the levelling up of the ground after the demolition of Structure 117. Layer 113 was sealed beneath the present loose dark greyish-brown loam garden soil (100).

Finds

Very few finds were noted from the site. A very small quantity of clay tobacco pipe stem was noted in layer 101, but was not collected. Two sherds of pottery were retained from context 108.

Pottery (Jo Draper)

160 g of pottery were recovered from context 108, comprising an unglazed sherd from a large vessel, perhaps 18th century, and one sherd glazed orange internally with 'keying' for a large (more than 90 mm by 30 mm) handle, perhaps from a bread bin, probably 18th or earlier 19th century.

CONCLUSIONS

No medieval or earlier remains were identified. All the features and deposits relate to the late medieval 'Great House' that formerly stood on this site, or the present buildings constructed in the early 20th century.

The earliest structure exposed (Building 116) was part of a building with substantial stone walls and a cobbled floor incorporating stone drains. The nature of the flooring suggests that this building was an outhouse, possibly a stable. No dating evidence for its construction was recovered but a small quantity of 18th or earlier 19th century pottery was found within the demolition deposits

in this structure. The map evidence suggests that it had been demolished before 1841. It is likely that this structure was a stable attached to the late 16th/early 17th century 'Great House'.

The later structure (117) was much less substantial. The precise nature of this structure was not determined but the cobbled floor suggests an outbuilding. The relationship with the present buildings on site was not fully examined and it is not clear whether it was associated with the Great House or with the present building. No dating evidence was obtained and it has not been identified on the historic maps.

PROJECT ARCHIVE

The archive (Terrain Archaeology Project No. 53165) will be deposited with Dorset County 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

Penn, K. J., 1980

Historic Towns in Dorset. Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society Monograph 1.

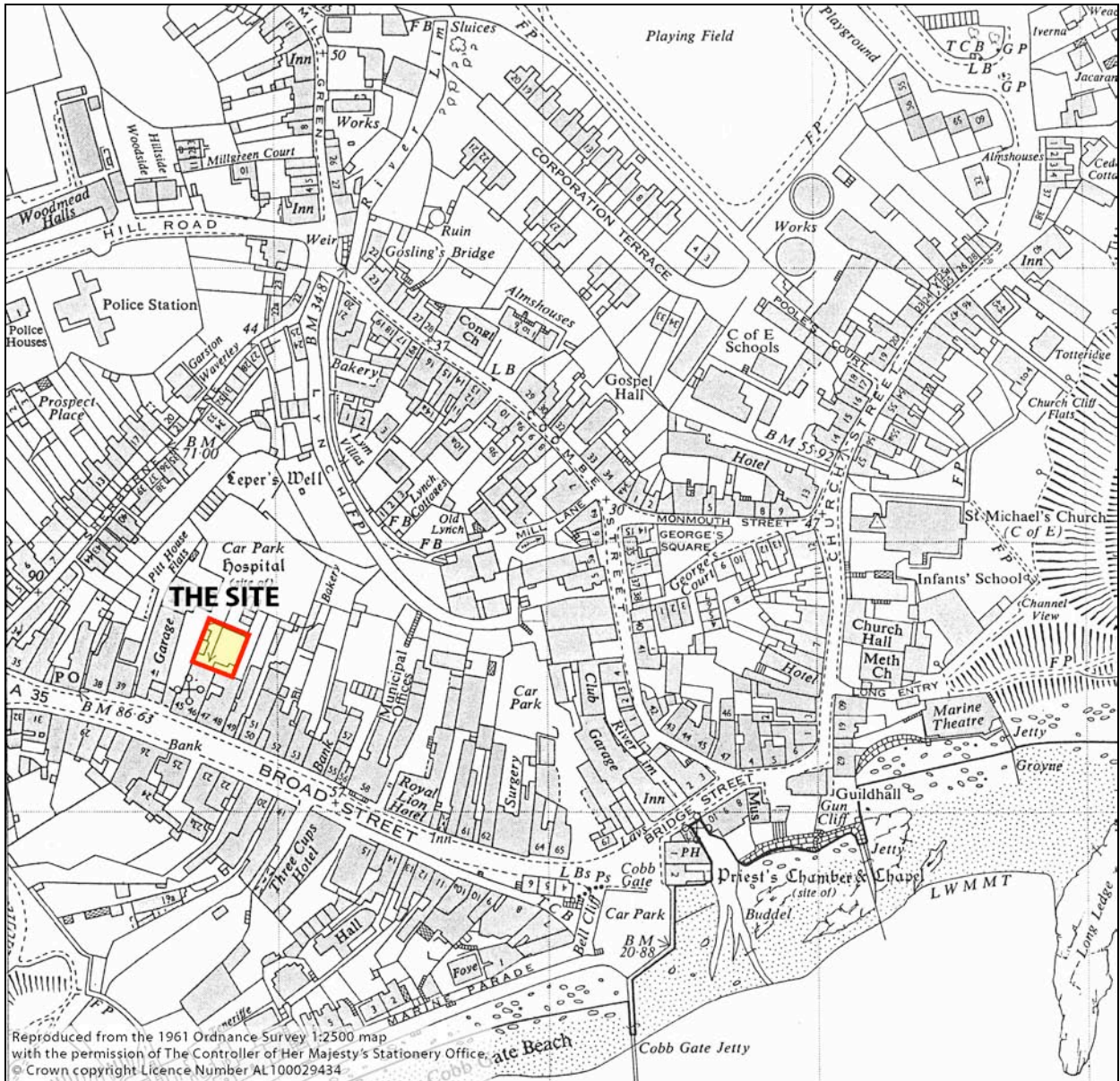


Figure 1: Location Map



Figure 2: Extract from the 1841 plan of Lyme Regis, showing approximate area of site.

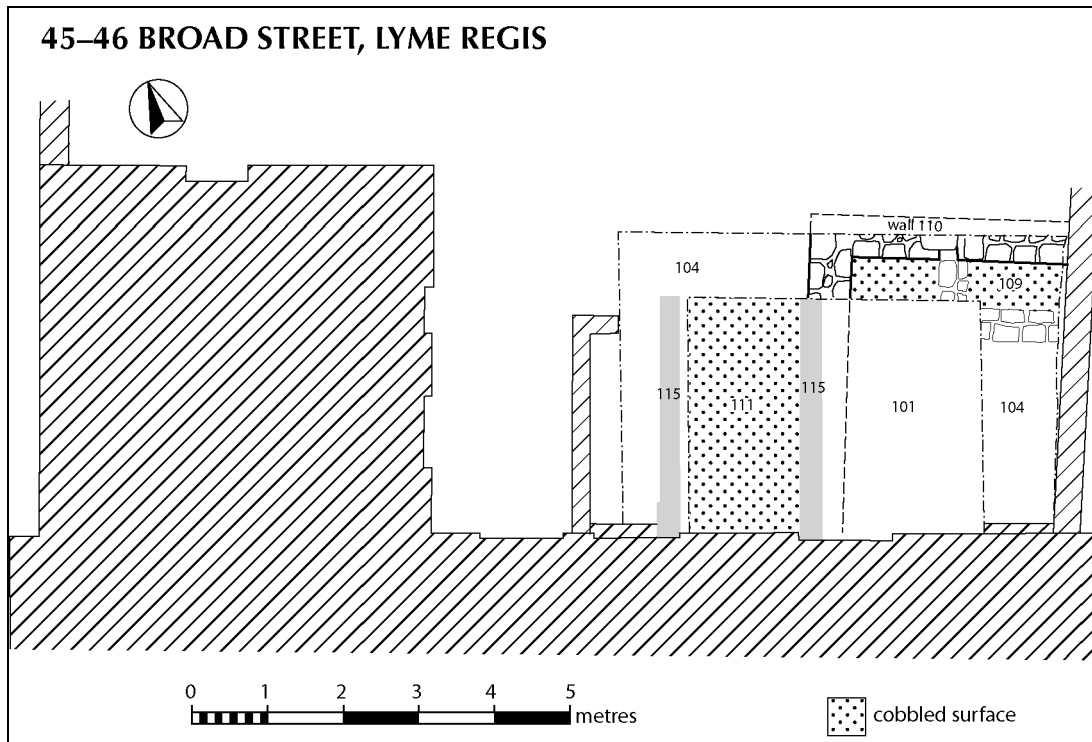
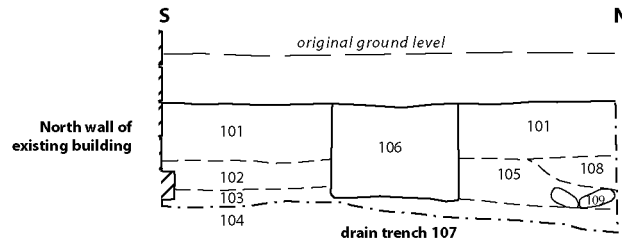
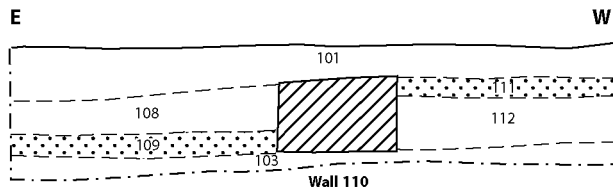


Figure 3: Plan of footings trench

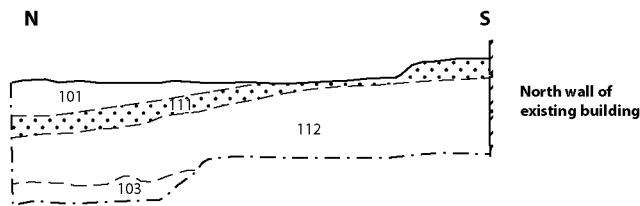
East-facing section of east side of footings trench



North-facing section of north side of footings trench



West-facing section of west side of footings trench



South-facing section of north side of footings trench

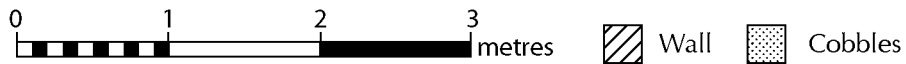
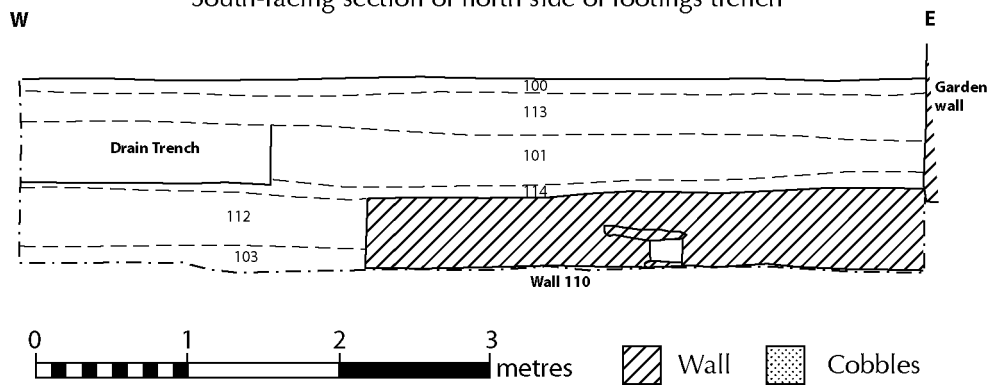


Figure 4: Sections



Plate 1: General view of site looking southeast.



Plate 2: Wall 110 at the east end of the footings trench, looking north. Note drain in western side of photo.



Plate 3: West end of Wall 110, looking northeast.



Plate 4: Cobble floor 109 in east end of trench, looking north. The southern side of the drain forming the southern limit of the cobbles has been removed.



Plate 5: View of area of new extension during clearance, showing remains of Structure 117. Viewed from northeast.