



**69 MOUNT PLEASANT AVENUE SOUTH, WEYMOUTH,
DORSET
Archaeological Evaluation**



Report No. 53330/2/1

August 2010

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DORSET**

Archaeological Evaluation, August 2010

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SUMMARY

In August 2010, Terrain Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation at number 69 Mount Pleasant Avenue South, Weymouth, Dorset (centred on NGR SY67048140) prior to determination of full planning consent for its redevelopment. The site lies in an area of Weymouth long known to produce Roman artefacts and widely believed to form part of the immediate hinterland of a Roman port facility on Radipole Lake.

Two trial trenches were mechanically excavated, south and east of the extant bungalow. No pre-modern features were discovered and no residual Roman finds were seen, suggesting the site lies at some distance from local foci of Roman activity.

A large infilled feature seen in Trench 1 was probably originally a small quarry. This is likely to be of 19th century date and appears, on the basis of finds in its upper fills, to have been backfilled in the late 19th or early 20th century.

INTRODUCTION

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by L A Jolliffe LLP (hereafter referred to as 'the Client'), through their agents Turner Associates, to undertake archaeological evaluation of number 69 Mount Pleasant Avenue South, Weymouth, Dorset, (centred on NGR SY6704281401, hereafter referred to as 'the site') prior to its proposed redevelopment.

The redevelopment proposal has received outline planning consent (planning reference 09/00410/OUT) and comprises demolition of the existing bungalow with construction of two new dwellings on the site. Condition 10 of the site's outline consent states that *"The developer shall commission an archaeological assessment of this site by persons authorised by the Local Planning Authority and shall not commence works on site until this assessment has been completed to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority. If the results of the assessment justify, reasonable access shall be given to persons designated by the Local Planning Authority to observe the excavations and to record items of interest unless an agreement can be reached to the satisfaction of both the developer and the Local Planning Authority to allow a full archaeological programme of works to be carried out before commencement of work."*

Discussions with Steve Wallis, Senior Archaeologist (Advice and Management), Dorset County Council, who provides archaeological planning advice to Weymouth and Portland Borough Council, indicated that a full desk-based archaeological assessment was not necessary in this particular case, but that an archaeological evaluation in the form of trial trenching would be appropriate in order to provide sufficient information to enable the form of the full archaeological programme of works to be determined. This is in line with Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 — Archaeology and Planning (PPG16) (now replaced by Planning Policy Statement 5 Archaeology and Planning, (PPS5)) and with Policy B5 of the adopted Weymouth and Portland Local Plan 2005.

An archaeological evaluation, as defined by the Institute for Archaeologists Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation (1994, as revised) is *"a limited programme of intrusive fieldwork, which determines the presence, or absence of archaeological features, structures, deposits, artefacts or ecofacts within a specified area or site. If such archaeological remains are present, field*

evaluation defines their character, extent, quality and preservation, and enables an assessment of their worth in a local, regional, national or international context, as appropriate."

The fieldwork was carried out on the 11th August 2010 by Peter Bellamy and Mike Trevarthen.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge the help and cooperation of the following during this project: Alan Jolliffe, Matthew Summers (Turner Associates), Jo Riley (Weymouth and Portland Borough Council), Steve Wallis and Gordon Le Pard (Dorset County Council).

THE SITE

The site lies on the south side of a rounded hill rising to about 25 m above OD just to the north of Radipole Lake (Figure 1). To the west is the valley of the River Wey. The geology of the site is mapped as Cornbrash.

The site comprises a sub-rectilinear land plot of about 0.13 ha immediately east of the junction between Mount Pleasant Avenue South and Roman Road (NGR SY67048140). At the time of fieldwork, the central part of the site was still occupied by a bungalow with associated garage and covered yard to the north, although recent mechanical clearance of vegetation had made the surrounding garden accessible for evaluation (Plate 1).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The site is on a south-facing hillside above the head of Radipole Lake, in an area of Weymouth long known to yield Romano-British finds. The Dorset County Council Historic Environment Record (DCC HER) notes that a Romano-British cemetery was partially excavated to the south west of the site, during road widening at Spa Hill (now Spa Road) in 1844. 'Over seven' skeletons were found interred on variable alignments, some with accessory vessels. The remains of a Roman 'causeway', pitched stones, pottery sherds, ash, animal bone and shell were also found in an extensive area of 'made soil' and, in adjoining fields, debris including Roman tile and coins has been found. A shale plaque and other Roman pottery said to have been found at Radipole in 1869 are in the Medhurst Collection of the British Museum (RCHME 1970, 615). Additional parts of the Spa Hill cemetery were destroyed by laying of water pipes in 1936 (DCC HER 4 002 437C). Finds from the vicinity of 112-114 Spa Road include Roman pottery (including Samian ware), a 1st century brooch and 4th century coins and the *opus signinum* floor of a Roman building (DCC HER 4 002 437A).

Roman pottery, a Roman bronze key and a 1st century copy of an As of Claudius (AD 41-54) came from Icen Road (DCC HER 002 437B) and, just west of the site, a Roman brooch and a second copied coin of Claudius came from the garden of 60 Mount Pleasant Avenue (DCC HER 4 002 437).

It remains unclear at present whether these individual find spots represent separate sites, or are indicative of a single more widespread Roman settlement area. The Roman road south from Dorchester to the Dorset coast aligns on the northern end of Radipole Lake, and it is widely supposed that there was a port situated in this area. Although there have been Roman finds from the marine sediments of the Backwater, a.k.a. Radipole Lake (RCHME 1970, 615), the exact location of any such facility has never satisfactorily been identified.

Prior to partition and development of the area from the very late 19th century, the site lay within agricultural land (OS 25-inch series, 1890). Map evidence indicates that the bungalow at 69 Mount Pleasant Avenue South (at that time part of Roman Road) was built at some time between 1903 and 1929.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the archaeological works were established in a Written Scheme of Investigation (Terrain Archaeology 2010, Document No. 3330/0/1). These were:

- To evaluate the archaeological potential of the site, that is, to appraise the nature, extent, level of preservation, and importance of any archaeological deposits.
- To record all the in situ archaeological deposits and features revealed during the works in order to provide sufficient data to assess the archaeological significance of the site.
- To assess the nature, extent, state of preservation and importance of the archaeological remains and present the results in a report.

The results of the evaluation may be used to formulate a strategy for the preservation or management of any archaeological remains; and/or formulate an appropriate response or mitigation strategy to planning applications or other proposals which may affect adversely any such archaeological remains, or enhance them; and/or formulate a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research.

METHODS

The evaluation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Terrain Archaeology 2010) and with the Institute for Archaeologists *Code of Conduct and Standard and guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (1994, as revised).

Two trial trenches were excavated (Figure 1): Trench 1 (south of the bungalow) measured approximately 6 m by 1.2 m, and Trench 2 (east of the bungalow) measured about 9 m by 1.2 m.

Trenches were stripped of overburden under the direct supervision of a suitably qualified and experienced archaeologist, using a tracked 7 tonne mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.2 m wide toothless ditching bucket. Mechanical excavation continued to the upper interface of undisturbed natural deposits or to the upper exposure of potential archaeological remains, after which select manual cleaning of trench-bases was undertaken where necessary.

All trenches were recorded to a standard commensurate with the aims and objectives of the project, using components of the Terrain Archaeology recording 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 photographic record of the evaluation was maintained in 35 mm black-and-white print and digital format, recording its setting and conduct, as well as aspects of its technical detail.

By prior agreement, backfilling of trenches was undertaken by the Client after completion of archaeological excavation and recording, and approval of the archaeological works by Dorset County Council's Senior Archaeologist.

RESULTS

Trench 1

Trench 1 lay in the southern part of the site, to the south of the existing bungalow (Figure 2) and within the footprint of the southern proposed new building. It measured about six metres long and 1.2 m wide and was aligned roughly E-W.

Natural Deposits

Natural deposits (106) were seen only at the western end of the trench, and comprised an unknown depth of firmly-seated rubbly pale grey limestone brash (mostly less than 0.1 m) set in a sparse matrix of smaller limestone brash and 'gritty' light yellow-brown clayey silt.

Quarry Pit 105

Quarry pit 105 occupied the majority of Trench 1, making its width in excess of 4.5 m. Its eastern end lay beyond the eastern end of the trench. The single exposure of its western edge (Figure 2; Plate 3) showed this to be irregular and steep/vertical, cutting to an unknown depth (into the underlying natural limestone brash).

Only the uppermost fills of the quarry were excavated: the lowest of these (103) comprised an over 0.3 m thickness of compact greyish-brown clay with moderate- to frequent small stone pieces (<50 mm) and frequent, patchy charcoal and clinker. Three pieces of post-medieval and modern pottery and a small piece of roof slate were recovered.

Above 103, layer 104 lay at the eastern end of the trench, and comprised a very compact deposit of mid greyish-yellow clay with very frequent poorly sorted limestone pieces up to about 0.1 m across. This material appears to contain significant amounts of redeposited natural limestone brash. No finds were recovered.

Overlying the lower fills, layer 102 also lapped over the western 'lip' of the cut. It comprised dark greyish-brown clay with frequent limestone pieces (<50 mm) and frequent ash lenses, charcoal and clinker, and appears to represent final infilling and levelling of the former quarry pit, perhaps to level the site prior to construction of the adjacent bungalow.

Garden Soil

Topsoil/garden soil within Trench 1 (101) comprised a c. 0.15 m thickness of friable mid-dark greyish-brown humic clay, containing moderate small limestone fragments and occasional charcoal fragments. No finds were recovered, but a quantity of modern pottery and other modern debris was noted in this layer.

Trench 2

Trench 2 lay in the northeast part of the site, to the east of the existing bungalow (Figure 2), just to the south and east of the northern proposed new building. It measured about nine metres long by 1.2 m wide and was aligned roughly N-S.

Natural Deposits

As in Trench 1, natural deposits (209) comprised an unknown depth (in excess of 0.6 m) of firmly-seated rubbly pale grey limestone brash, poorly-sorted, irregular and fragmented (mostly less than 0.1 m) set in a sparse matrix of smaller limestone brash and 'gritty' light yellow-brown clayey silt.

Lower Soil 208

Immediately overlying the natural was a 0.1-0.15 m thick layer (208) of friable, firm mid dark reddish-brown clayey silt with moderate small limestone pieces and occasional clinker. This may be a lower garden soil or a much-disturbed remnant of the original (pre-bungalow) soil sequence. No finds were recovered.

Terrace 204

The northern edge of cut 204 (Figure 3; Plate 5) comprised an irregular steep/vertical cut c. 0.4 m into the natural limestone brash. The feature possessed a flattish base some 1.3 m wide, and its southern edge rose more gradually (c. 20° from horizontal) to join the gentle southerly fall of the natural ground. A single fill deposit (205) consisted of firm, friable mid dark greyish- and yellowish-brown clayey silt containing occasional small limestone pieces, cinder and 19th-20th century pottery. Some 21 pieces of animal bone (cow, sheep) came from a single localised area near the base of the fill, where they may represent deliberate discard of unwanted meat-joints.

Garden Soil and Related Features

Along much of the length of Trench 2, superficial deposits were dominated by an homogenous garden soil (203), ranging in thickness from about 0.3 m to the north to as little as 0.15 m near the southern end of the trench. This soil was cut by a modern limestone rubble-filled footing (200), 0.95 m wide and 0.35 m deep, for a narrow, east-west aligned concrete garden path (Figure 3). The garden soil overlay a localised dump of fireplace ash and cinder (110) up to 0.1 m thick.

A modern service trench (206) was partially exposed along the western edge of Trench 1, turning westward where it encountered 'terrace' cut 204. The service trench was up to 0.4 m deep, but its width remains unknown, and no service pipe or cable was identified during limited excavation. Its single fill (207) comprised a mixed deposit of dark greyish-brown clayey silt with patches of heat-reddened soil, cinder and common small limestone pieces.

Finds

Small assemblages of finds were recovered from both trenches, and are quantified in Table 1. All are of 19th-20th century date and none are considered significant, except inasmuch as they confirm the comparatively modern date of the features revealed by the evaluation. None of the finds have been retained.

Context	Iron objects	Post-medieval and modern pottery	Post-medieval and modern glass	Slate	Animal bone
103		3/9.1g		1/61.7g	
205	1/52g	1/5.6g		1/1.4g	21/115g
207		1/2g	2/5.8g		
Total	1/52g	5/16.7g	2/5.8g	2/63.1g	21/115g

Table 1: Quantification of bulk finds by context

Iron Objects

A single sinuous, square-sectioned iron object (103 mm long, 52 g) from fill 205 may be the remains of a double-ended suspension hook. The object is probably of 19th-20th century date.

Pottery

Five sherds of pottery (16.7g) were recovered. Four were industrially produced white glazed china, some with blue transfer decoration. All are probably of 19th-20th century date. A single sherd of well-fired buff earthenware (103) had light yellow-brown internal glaze, and is characteristic of hand-produced wares made in east Dorset (Verwood area) in the 19th and earlier 20th centuries.

Glass

Two sherds of bottle glass (5.8g) were recovered from fill 207: One was thin and colourless, the other thicker and brown. Both are likely to be 19th-20th century in date.

Slate

Two pieces of modern roofing slate (63.1g) were recovered. The larger piece (from fill 103) retains part of a nail-hole.

Animal Bone

Some 21 pieces (115 g) of animal bone were recovered from a single location toward the base of terrace fill 205. These included a piece of cow rib and longitudinally sawn vertebra as well as smaller bones including rib, long bones and unfused epiphyses, probably representing lamb or mutton. The cleanly sawn bone and the context of the finds make it unlikely they pre-date the 20th century.

DISCUSSION

The evaluation trenches sampled an approximate 1.5% sample of the site. This is less than the 2% or 5% normally employed in archaeological evaluations of this type. Nevertheless, it can be argued that, given the restricted area of the site, the results from the evaluation trenches are likely to be representative of the archaeological character of the whole of the development area.

The evaluation trenching found no evidence for human activity pre-dating the 19th and 20th centuries on the site. Prior to development of the area as residential housing from the late 19th century onwards, local land use appears primarily to have been agricultural, resulting in development of a homogenised ploughsoil and some physical truncation of underlying natural deposits. The site itself was developed for housing in the 1920s.

The absence of Roman features or deposits from the trenches, taken alongside the lack of any residual Roman artefacts in the ploughsoil and topsoil horizons, suggests that the site lies at some distance from areas of Roman domestic and other activity. The nearest sub-surface archaeological deposits of Roman date in the area were found on Spa Road about 200 m to the south west, where a number of Roman burials were discovered in 1844 (RCHME 1970). The nearest Roman finds to the site were a brooch and a coin recovered from the garden of 60 Mount Pleasant Avenue. It is unclear whether these reflect surviving below ground archaeology or are stray finds.

The earliest feature revealed on site was the infilled remains of a probable old quarry. The date of this quarry is not known and it is not shown on any of the historic Ordnance Survey maps. However, the finds evidence suggests it was finally infilled and levelled in the 19th or early 20th century, before construction of the current bungalow in the 1920s. This feature appears to have exploited the local cornbrash limestone, perhaps as a source of road stone in the later 19th century or, more probably, as a source of material for limeburning. Cornbrash was commonly used for limeburning in Dorset. A number of limekilns are known to have existed in the area (Stanier 1993). The nearest limekiln lay on the edge of Radipole Lake (SY 6675 8085), about 450 m to the south (Stanier 1993, 49, No. 278). Historic map evidence suggests it was in use in the mid 19th century, but had become disused by the 1890s.

PROJECT ARCHIVE

The project archive (Terrain Archaeology Project Number 53330) will, in due course and after any necessary legal transfer of title from the landowner has been 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.

A copy of the microfilmed archive will be deposited with the National Monument Record and a digital summary of the archive (including this report) lodged with the OASIS project (www.oasis.ac.uk) under the reference code *terraina1-81215*.

REFERENCES

- [RCHME] Royal Commission on Historic Monuments (England) 1952 *An Inventory of the Historical Monuments in the County of Dorset, Volume 1: West*. London, HMSO
- Stanier, P.H., 1993 'Dorset limekilns: A first survey', *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society*, **115**, 33-49.
- Terrain Archaeology 2010 Proposed redevelopment, 69 Mount Pleasant Avenue South, Weymouth, Dorset: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Evaluation. Unpublished report, reference 3330/0/1, August 2010.

APPENDIX 1: TRENCH SUMMARY TABLES

TRENCH 1			
Length:	6.0 m	Width: 1.2 m	Depth: 0.6 m
Context Number	Description and interpretation	Depth below ground level	
101	Modern garden soil. Friable mid dark greyish brown humic clay containing moderate small limestone fragments and occasional charcoal fragments. Above 102.	0.00 – 0.15m	
102	Levelling deposit. Compact dark grey brown clay containing frequent limestone pieces (<50mm), ash lenses, charcoal flecks and clinker. Below 201, above 102/103	0.15 – 0.45m	
103	Infill deposit in former quarry 105. Compact mid greyish brown clay containing moderate small stone pieces (<50mm), frequent charcoal and clinker patches. Below 102 above 104.	0.30 – 0.65m+	
104	Infill deposit in former quarry 105. Localised dump/large lens of very compact mid greyish yellow clay with very frequent limestone pieces up to 0.10m. Below 103, overlies additional unexcavated fills.	0.30 – 0.55m	
105	Cut of small quarry. Large steep-sided feature cut into natural limestone brash. Width unknown but in excess of 4.5m. Depth also unknown. Filled with 103, 104.	0.15 – 0.65m+	
106	Natural deposits. Unknown depth of firmly-seated, poorly sorted irregular 'brashy' fragmented pale grey limestone pieces (mostly <0.10 m) in a sparse matrix of finer limestone brash and 'gritty' light yellow-brown clayish silt.	0.15m+	
Notes: Trench 1 was located in the southern garden of the property, immediately south of the bungalow. Modern ground levels sloped very gradually from west to east			

TRENCH 2			
Length:	9.0 m	Width:	1.2 m
		Depth:	0.6 m
Context Number	Description and interpretation		Depth below ground level
200	Cut of foundation for modern garden path. Aligned east-west. Vertically sided with a flat base. 0.90m wide by 0.35m deep. Cuts 203, filled with 201.		0.00 – 0.35m
201	Fill of cut 200. Path foundation comprising compacted dump of poorly sorted limestone pieces up to c0.10m: These are not crushed, but appear to be a 'clean' redeposit of natural limestone brash.		30mm -0.35m
202	Recent garden path. Concrete and concrete slab garden path c. 30 mm thick, aligned east-west and linking the concrete apron surrounding the bungalow with the eastern boundary of the garden plot. Above 201.		0.25 – 0.36m+
203	Modern garden soil. Turf over mid-dark grey-brown clayish silt containing occasional small cinder, coke, coal, charcoal etc. Thickness ranges from c0.30m at northern end of trench to as little as 0.15m at the southern end of the trench. Below 200, above 210.		0.00 – 0.30m
210	Dumps of hearth ash. Seen only immediately south of garden path foundation cut 200, this deposit comprises up to 0.10m thickness of loose, soft mid-light grey ash and cinder, thinning and tailing-out to the south. The fact this deposit was seen in both trench edges indicates it is not a fill of cut 206, but is a positive layer pre-dating re-establishment of garden soil 203. Below 203, above 207.		0.30 – 0.40m
204	Cut of east-west aligned feature. Aligned east-west and of uncertain purpose. The north edge was slightly irregular and vertical, cutting into the underlying limestone brash with a drop of 0.40m from north-south. A rounded basal break of slope gave way to a flattish base c1.30m wide, The southern edge of the feature rose gently at c20° from horizontal to rejoin the gradual southerly fall of the natural topography. This may be a structural terrace relating to construction of the bungalow: Its northern edge is almost precisely aligned with the original north wall. Filled with 205, above 208.		0.45 – 0.85m
205	Single fill of cut 204. Firm but friable mid-dark greyish and yellowish brown clayish silt with occasional limestone pieces, cinder, glass, c19th-20th century pottery and some animal bone (all from the same area). Below 206, above 205.		0.45 – 0.85m
206	Cut of service trench. Aligned north-south but possibly turning westward toward the bungalow at its northern end. Vertical-sided with a flattish base. Filled with 207, cuts 205.		0.30 – 60m

Context Number	Description and interpretation	Depth below ground level
207	Single fill of cut 206. Firm, heterogeneous deposit, mainly composed of mid-dark grey-brown clayish silt with occasional patches of heat-reddened soil, occasional cinder, coal and glass, and common poorly-sorted small limestone (<30mm).	0.30 – 60m
208	Lower garden soil or remnant subsoil. Friable, firm mid-dark reddish brown clay-silt with some cinder (potentially intrusive) and moderate small limestone pieces, mostly <20mm. Diffuse irregular basal interface with natural deposits 209. Layer is 0.15m thick to north, thinning to only 0.10m at the southern end of the trench. Cut by 'terrace' cut 204 but more generally physically sealed by garden soil 203: Above natural deposits 209.	0.30 – 0.45m
209	Natural deposits. Unknown depth (>0.60m) of firmly-seated, poorly sorted irregular 'brashy' fragmented pale grey limestone pieces (mostly <0.10m) in a sparse matrix of finer limestone brash and 'gritty' light yellow-brown clayish silt.	0.45m+ (north) 0.25m+ (south)
Notes: Trench 2 was located in the rear garden of the property, immediately east of the bungalow. The northern part of the trench was relatively flat. There was a relatively pronounced break of slope just south of garden path 202, beyond which ground sloped gently from north to south.		

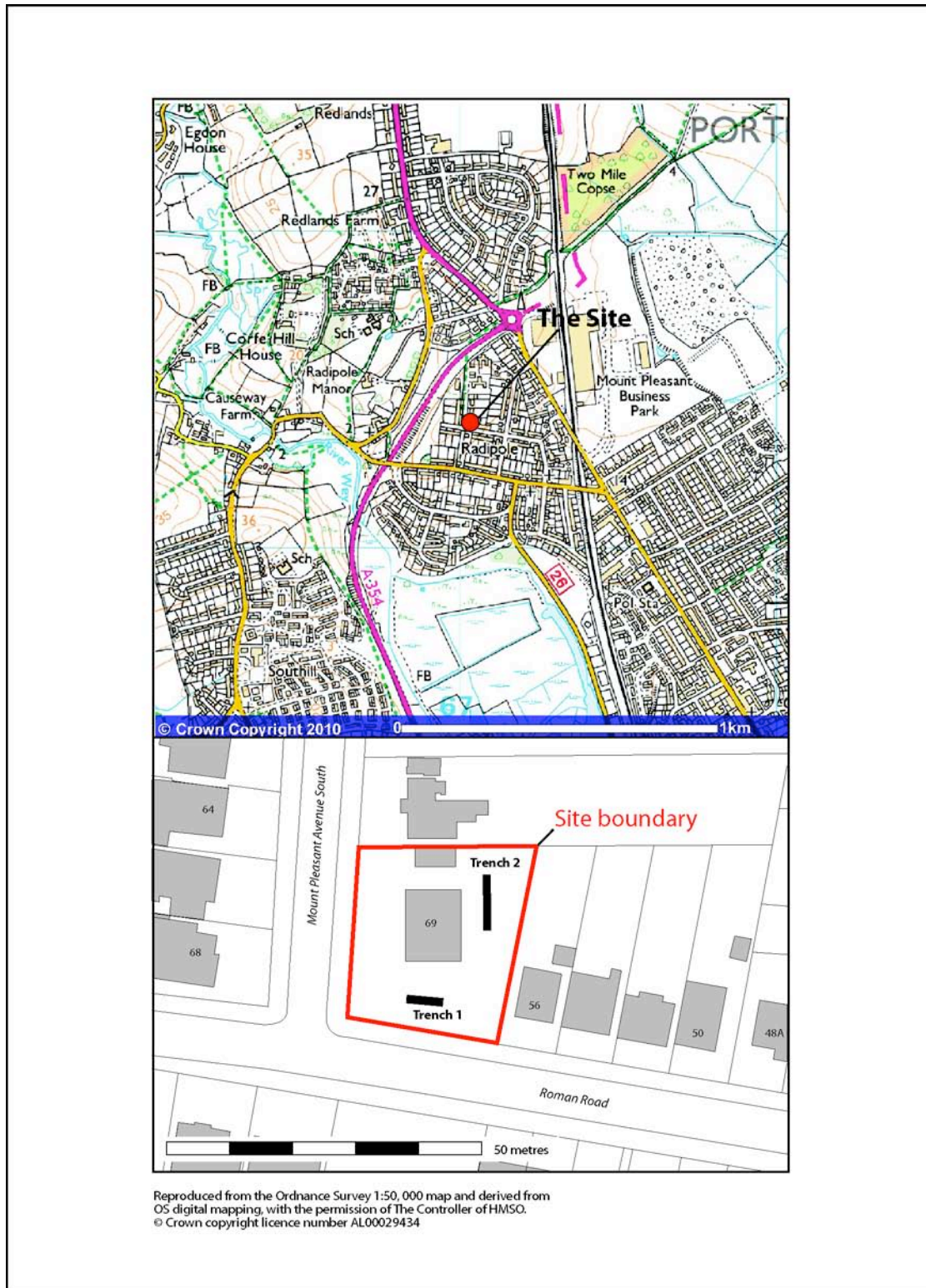


Figure 1: Location map.

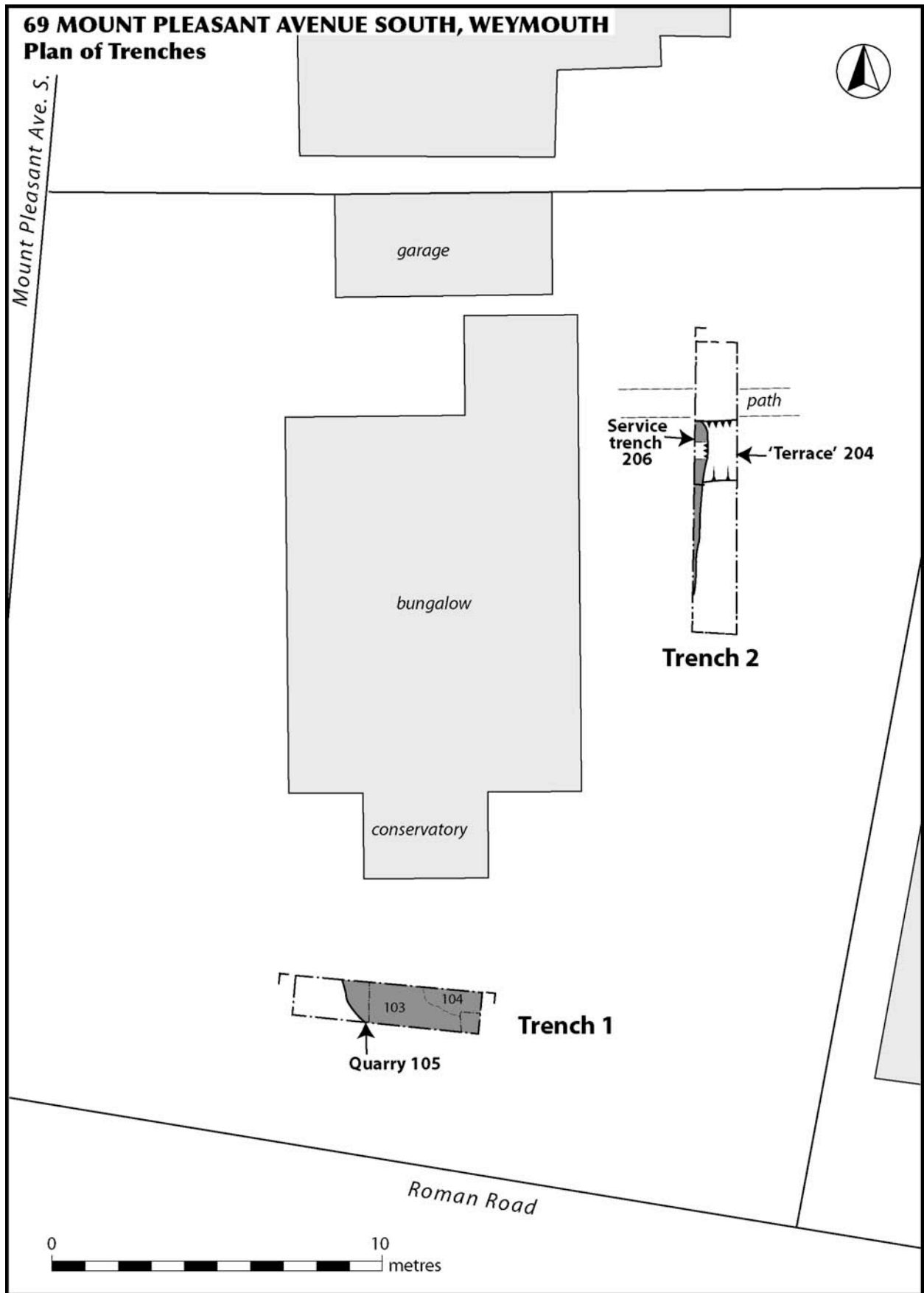


Figure 2: Site plan showing location of trenches

69 MOUNT PLEASANT AVENUE SOUTH, WEYMOUTH, DORSET Sections

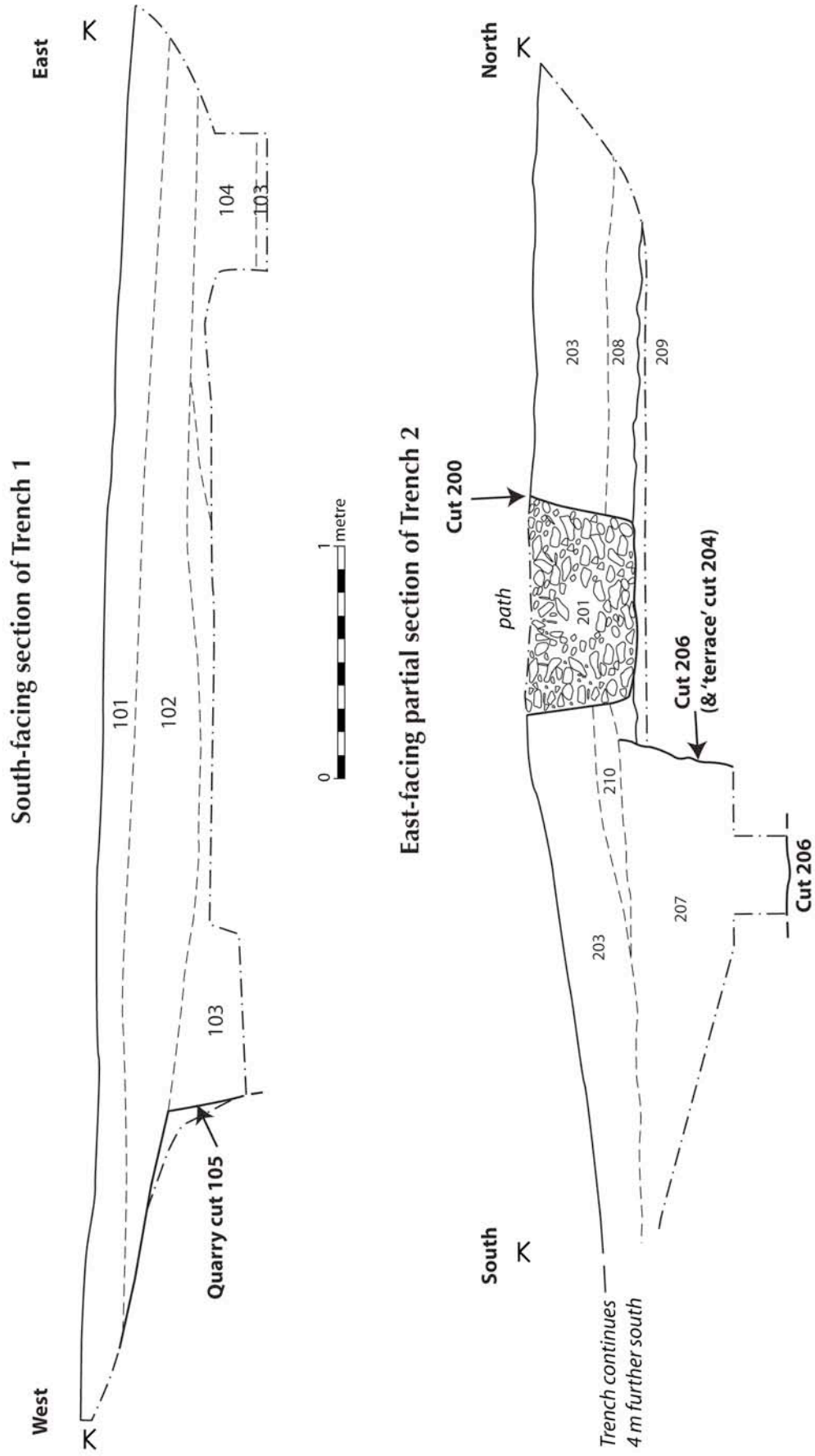


Figure 3: Sections of Trenches 1 and 2.



Plate 1: 69 Mount Pleasant Avenue South prior to evaluation trenching. View from north west.



Plate 2: Overview of Trench 1 from the west, showing quarry pit 105. 1m scale.



Plate 3: Detail of eastern edge of quarry pit 105 and upper fills. View from south, 1m



Plate 4: Overview of Trench 2 from the south. 1m scale.



Plate 5 Detail of Trench 2, showing garden path foundation 200, terrace cut 204 and service trench 206. View from east, 1m scale