

DORSET COUNTY HOSPITAL (W346)

ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AT
THE COUNTY HOSPITAL SITE,
DORCHESTER, DORSET

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TRUST FOR WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY 1990

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT AT
THE COUNTY HOSPITAL SITE,
DORCHESTER, DORSET**

1 Introduction

An area covering c. 1.1 hectares which is currently part of the County Hospital, is being considered for redevelopment (Figure 1). As part of this process, an evaluation of the archaeological deposits was commissioned by The Planning Practice, on behalf of the Wessex Area Health Authority. It was suggested, and subsequently agreed, that an appropriate response would be the excavation of a small number of trial trenches across the proposed first stage of the development area (see Appendix 1, the Project Design), in order to assess the extent, quality and preservation of archaeological deposits in the area, and the effect any development plans would have on any such deposits. No previous archaeological work on the site has been published, but after the assessment excavation had commenced, information on earlier archaeological trenches came to light, and the fieldwork was modified to take account of the earlier work; this report includes a summary of previous work (information from Jo Draper).

2 The Archaeological and Historical Background

Dorchester is an area of considerable archaeological importance, not only because of its urban development, but also because of the underlying prehistoric remains. The earliest known activity in the area dates to the Late Neolithic, c. 2600 BC, when a major monument was constructed some 200m to the east of this development site. Excavations on the site of the Waitrose supermarket in 1984 located an arc of 21 sockets for 1m-diameter wooden posts and a further five post positions were found to the north-east in Church Street. In recent excavations adjacent to Acland Road (in advance of the Wessex Court Development), more post-positions were found which belong

COUNTY HOSPITAL, DORCHESTER

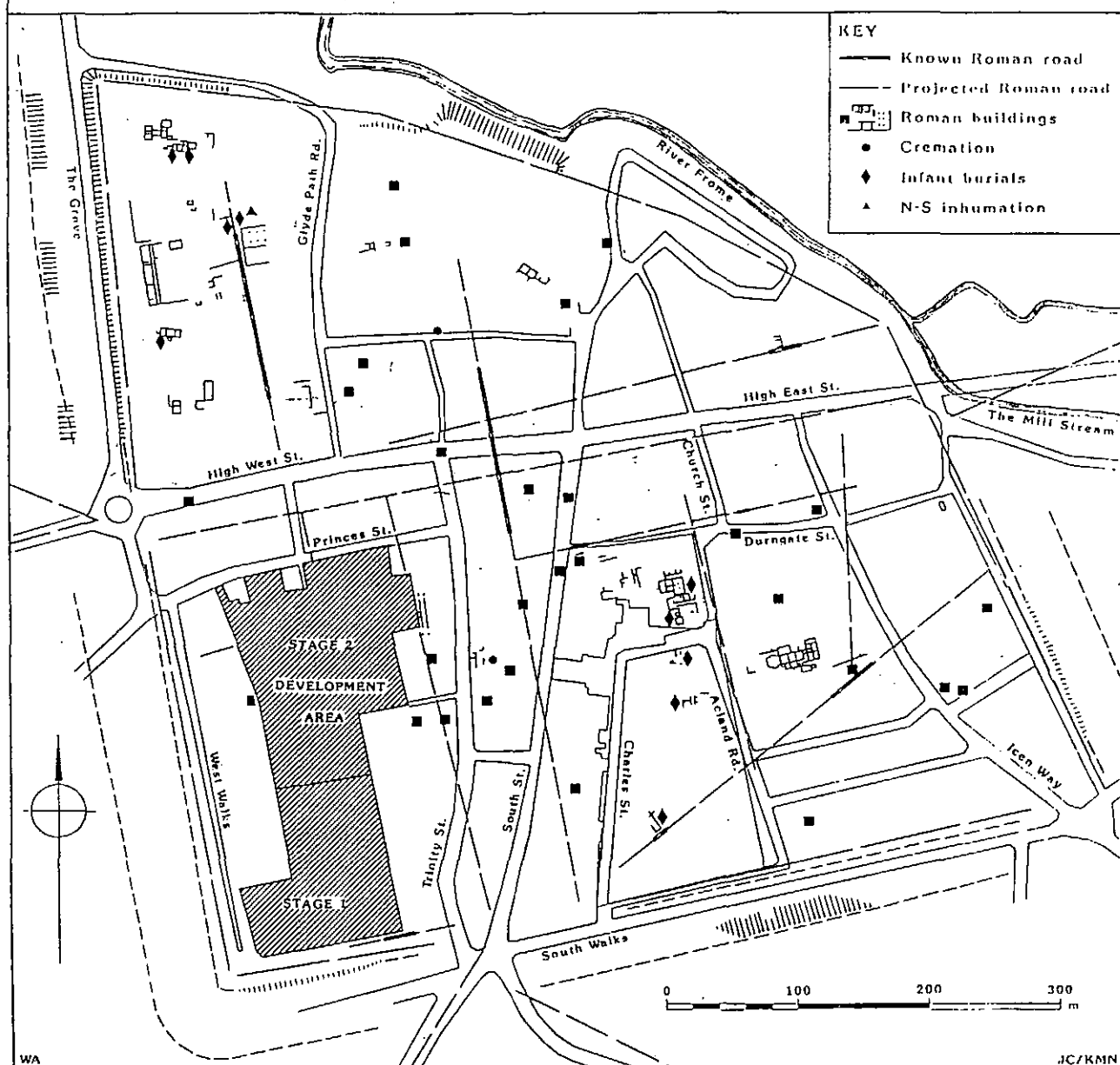


Figure 1: Location of Development Area within the Roman town

to this massive stockaded enclosure.

During the later prehistoric period, evidence from soils preserved under the urban deposits suggests that the area within and around the town centre was used for mixed farming, until the Roman conquest in the mid 1st century AD.

Following the Roman conquest a military fort was probably established somewhere in the vicinity, but its precise location is unknown. The Roman town of Durnovaria was established c. AD 60, as an administrative and marketing centre for the territory of the Durotriges. Some aspects of the Roman town are known and relatively well-understood, including parts of the street pattern, individual buildings, and the town defences which have had a major influence on the layout and development of the later urban topography (Figure 1). Similarly, the wealth and importance of the Roman town is well-demonstrated by the quantity and quality of artefacts and buildings already known from other sites, such as the Waitrose site, and the bath-house site under Wollaston Fields, preserved after limited archaeological work in 1977. Despite the amount of previous archaeological work relatively little is known of the Roman street plan in detail, or the positions of some of the major urban features, such as the forum, which probably lies under Cornhill/High West Street. The known Roman cemeteries lie outside the town defences, some immediately adjacent to the ramparts, but occasionally burials are encountered within the walls. These are usually those of newborn infants, interred under floors of buildings, or under the eaves, but rarely cremation burials are found, as at Trinity Street (RCHM 1970, 572).

Little is also known of the period following the cessation of Roman administrative control and there is no firm archaeological evidence within the town, although the bath-house excavations produced 5th-century material and occupation surely continued in some form. Isolated finds of Saxon metalwork within the town have been made, but the focus of Saxon settlement, between c. AD 500-900, probably lies to the

east in Fordington, which documentary evidence suggests may have been the site of a royal residence.

The medieval and post-medieval town was centred on two principal thoroughfares, the High Street and South Street, and around the area occupied by the castle, to the north of the High Street, under the present gaol (see Penn 1980).

The area proposed for redevelopment lies in the south-western corner of the Roman town, immediately adjacent to its western and southern defences. Some elements of these defences lie within the development area, notably part of the chalk/clay rampart and the rear retaining wall, and the area should contain several roads, associated buildings and other features, including infant burials. To the east, adjacent to Trinity Street, several buildings with mosaic pavements are recorded, and the general quality of known remains is high. In the medieval period, documentary evidence suggests that all the area was part of the open fields and market gardens and not filled with buildings. It is therefore likely that the underlying Roman remains are relatively well-preserved (see below section 3). No substantial rebuilding took place until well into the post-medieval period and the construction of Somerleigh Court in the 19th century.

3 Previous Archaeological Work on the Site

3.1 Observations

Roman buildings and other features have been sporadically recorded on the site since 1862 and the construction of Somerleigh Court (RCHM 1970, 561 ff). Remains include mosaic pavements adjacent to Somerleigh Court (which lies within Stage 2 of the proposed development area), fragments of a hypocaust system, pits containing decorated wall plaster just south of Princes Street, and a substantial quantity of artefacts. Of particular interest are fragments of early Roman, Claudian (c. AD 43-54), pottery which suggests that the site was in use from the earliest post-conquest period, possibly as a military site.

3.2 Excavations

Within the area proposed as Stage 1 of the development programme, three excavations were carried out in the late 1960s/early 1970s (Figure 2, 1-3; note: these excavations were not carried out by the Trust for Wessex Archaeology). No detailed information is available at the time of writing on the north-western trench (Figure 2, 1), but it is thought that a series of large quarry pits, probably associated with the construction of the defensive rampart, was found. Some of these are reputed to be in excess of 4m deep (information from Jo Draper).

The southern excavation in 1969 (Figure 2, 2) comprised a narrow cutting across the south rampart of the town defences. The dumped chalk rampart was extant to a height of c. 2m, and there is some evidence for a narrow retaining wall at its rear and an intramural road (W.G. Putnam, pers. comm.).

In the third excavation (Figure 2, 3), evidence was found for an occupation sequence from the mid 1st to the late 4th or early 5th century AD (information from Jo Draper). The earliest occupation consisted of one small ditch and three or more pits of mid-1st century AD date. In the late 1st century a large quarry pit was dug, which was backfilled in the early 2nd century. A substantial building (Figure 3, Building 1) lay in the centre of the area. Its construction date is not clear, though there is slight evidence to suggest it may have been contemporary with the large quarry pit. It is more likely, however, that this stone building was of later Roman date, as pottery from a series of six ovens inside it contained material of late 3rd-/4th-century date. The substantial nature of late Roman occupation is clearly demonstrated by the presence of late pottery, unusual quantities of the latest Roman coins and two bronzes of late 4th- or early 5th-century date. Other late Roman features include two cess pits to the north of the building, and a well backfilled in the late 3rd century, in addition to a fenced boundary.

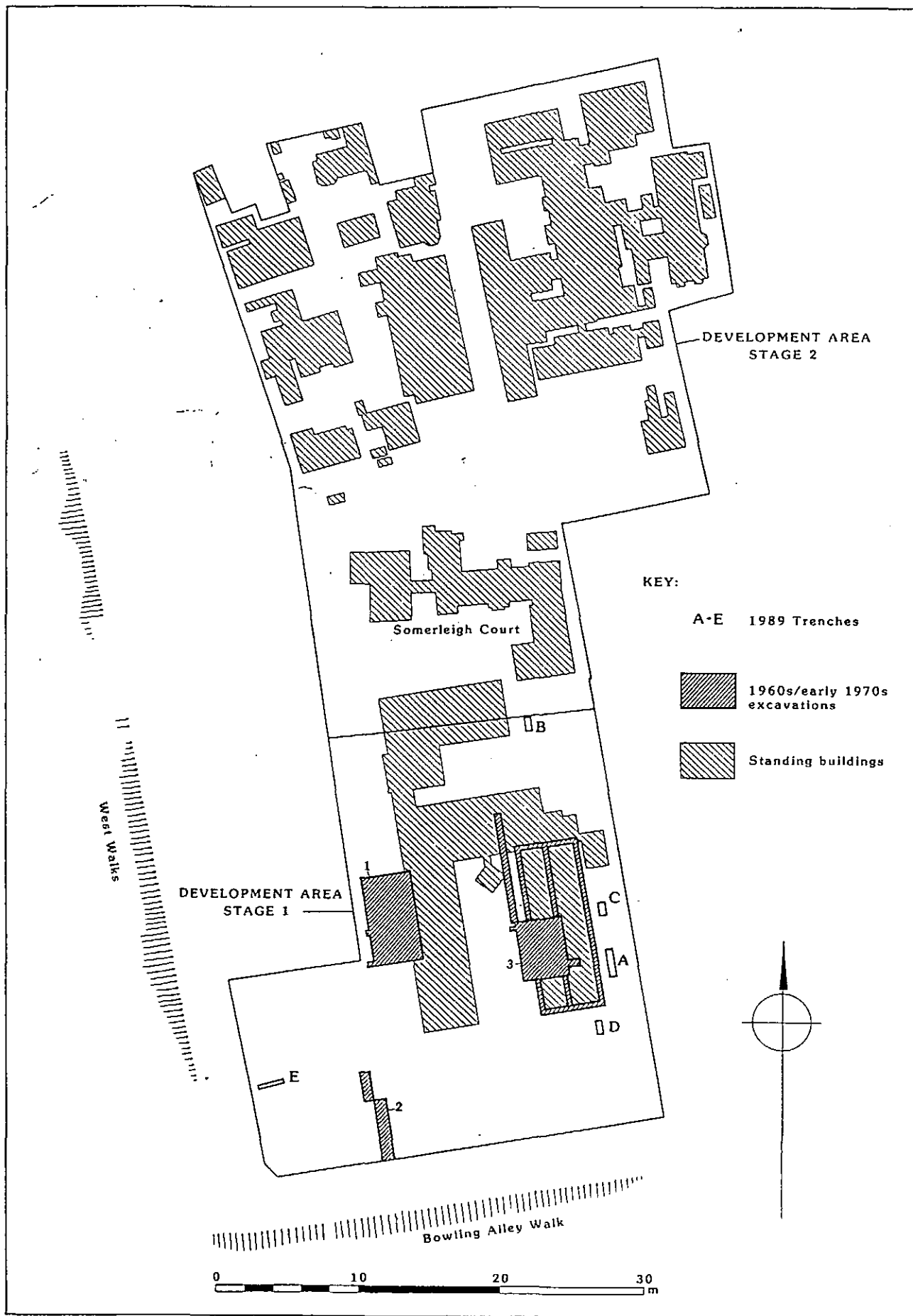


Figure 2: Location of 1989 assessment trenches and previous excavations

4 The 1989 Assessment Trenches

Five small trenches were excavated, four (Figure 2, A-D) by hand, and one by machine (E). Their location was determined primarily by the need not to disrupt the available car parking, nor to cause unnecessary disturbance to the hospital patients and staff. This restricted the areas available to the fringes of the site which are currently under grass. The results of this assessment, however, complement the previous work, and when all the information is combined, provide an adequate evaluation of the site's archaeological potential.

4.1 Trench A

Aligned approximately north-south, 2m wide and 8m long (Figures 2 and 3). Under the turf was a 0.85m-deep deposit of dark greyish-brown garden soils, of 18th-century or later date, which overlay a series of Roman and earlier post-medieval layers and features.

Roman Features

The two principal Roman features lay in the southern half of the trench, both were wall footings from a stone building (Figure 3, Trench A, 16 and 20; and Figure 4, section 1). Footing 16, aligned approximately north-west to south-east, consisted of large flint nodules packed tightly together, with compacted chalk filling in the gaps, set in a foundation trench (28) 1.1m wide and 0.55m deep into the bedrock. The other footing, 20, ran parallel to 16 some 1.2m to the south. It also comprised flint nodules and crushed chalk, but set in a trench only 0.65m wide and 0.35m deep, again cut into bedrock. Both these footings align with the stone building found in earlier excavation and are presumably part of that structure.

Between the two wall footings, overlying natural chalk, was a layer of flint, demolition rubble (17), 0.15m thick. To the south of 20 was a similar demolition layer (21), but including fragments of tile, plaster and mortar.

The foundation trenches or footings both produced sherds of later Roman coarse pottery (9 in total), and the only material from these demolition layers was also Roman in date.

Post-Roman Layers ?

Above the Roman features, and above the natural, chalk in the northern half of the trench, was a series of layers and patches of mortary rubble and soil of indeterminate plan, but no more than 0.1m thick. None of these layers (7, 10, 11, 13 and 14) contained any artefacts, and it is therefore difficult to date their deposition with any precision. Nevertheless, if they are of immediate post-Roman date, their presence is significant.

Post-Medieval Features and Layers

The various demolition and soil layers, and the Roman features were sealed by approximately 0.9m of 'garden soil' deposits, excavated as a series of arbitrary spits (2-6, Figure 4, section 1). This soil also sealed a small post-medieval pit, 22, and two possible postholes, 23 and 26, which all cut through the post-Roman layers listed above. The two possible postholes contained no finds, but their fills were identical to those of the pit, 22, which produced three 19th-century sherds of pottery as well as clay pipe and glass fragments, and a small amount of Roman pottery.

The overlying garden soil produced substantial quantities of finds (Table 1), of mixed period, the latest being later 19th century.

4.2 Trench B

Aligned approximately north-south, at the northern edge of the proposed Stage 1 development area, and 3.7m long by 2m wide (Figures 2 and 3). Trench location was determined by the presence of a number of service trenches elsewhere in the immediate area, but even so the southern 0.5m of the trench was taken up with a modern service trench.

Roman Features and Layers

Overlying the natural chalk and patchy clay-with-flints was a layer of mid-brown clay-loam, 0.5m deep (56). This produced a small number of early Roman pottery sherds (Table 1), of late 1st- to early 2nd-century date. These included a stamped sherd of South Gaulish samian.

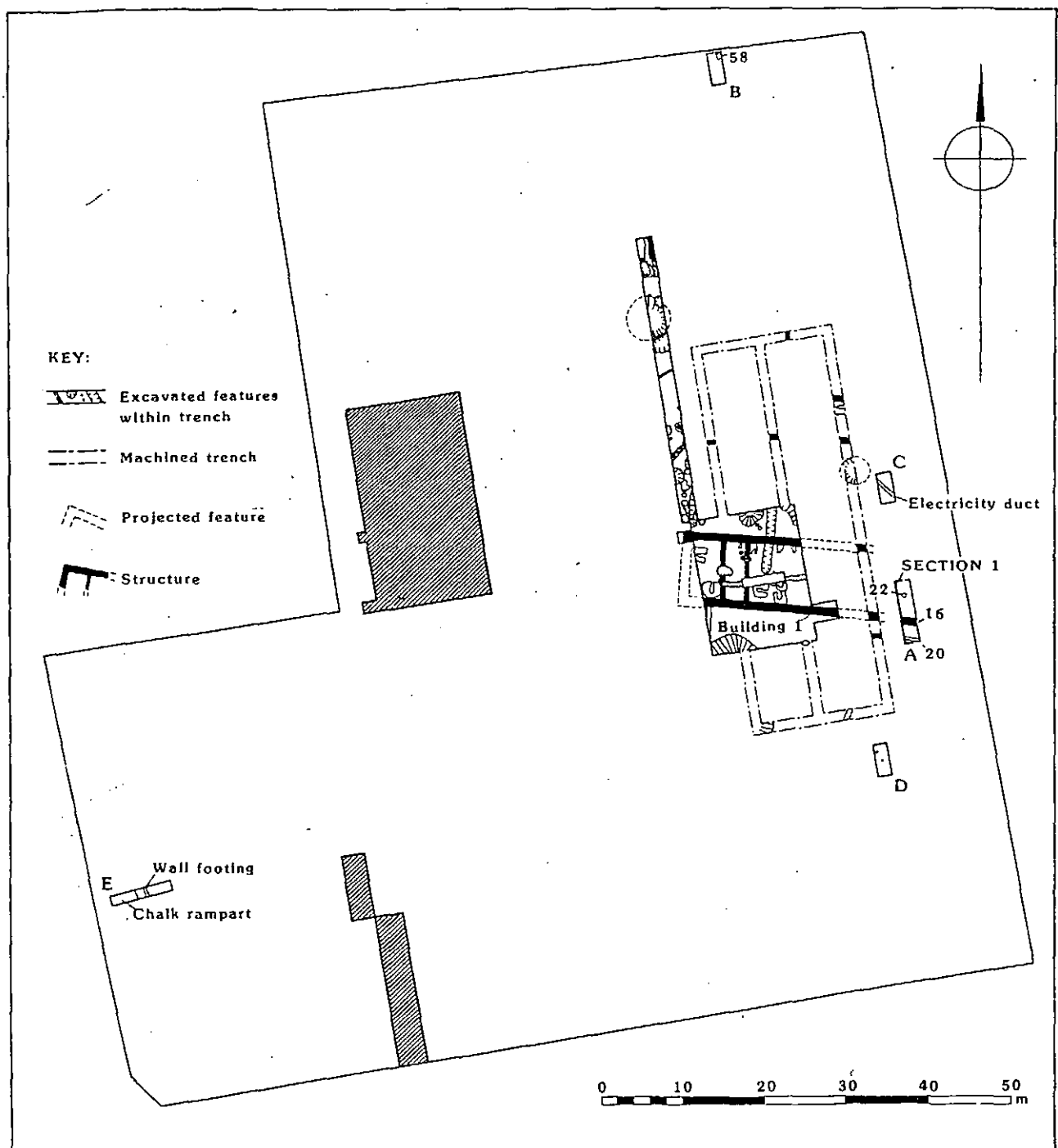


Figure 3: Located archaeological features (except post-medieval and modern, apart from duct)

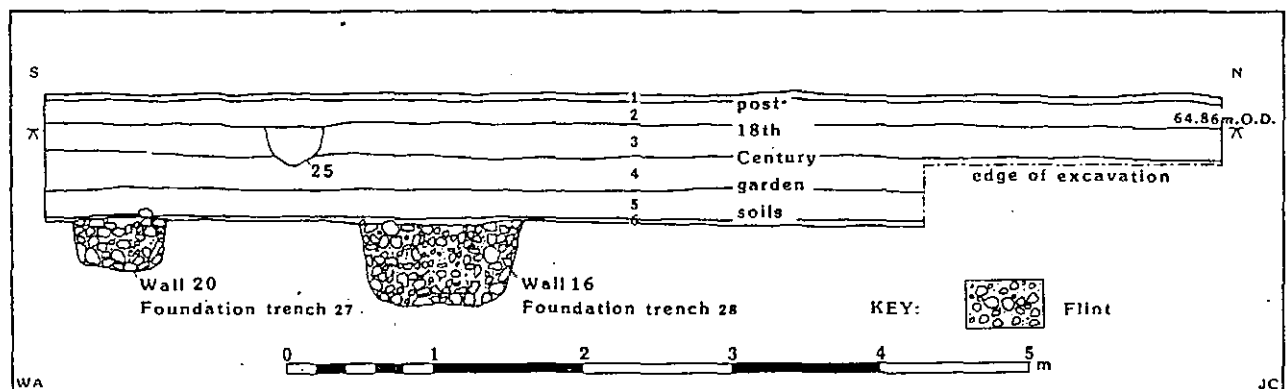


Figure 4: Section 1

Cutting through this clay-loam was a substantial circular pit or well (Figure 3, 58), approximately 1.2m in diameter. This feature was not investigated for safety reasons, but its plan and the fact that overlying layers (notably 54) had slumped into it, suggest that it is of some depth and is likely to be late Roman in date.

Post-Medieval Layers

Partially overlying these probable Roman features was a 0.4m deep layer of mixed limestone and brick rubble (55), probably contemporary with the construction of Somerleigh Court, which lies immediately to the north. Above that layer and the rest of the Roman features, was a 1.55m accumulation of dark, greyish-brown garden soils and the modern turf and topsoil. These layers were again dug as a series of spits (50-54), which produced a large and varied number of artefacts of Roman and later date.

4.3 Trench C

Alignment as A and B; 4m long and 2m wide, maximum depth 1.4m. Unfortunately, just below the turf and crossing diagonally from the north-west to south-east corners of the trench, was a 1.3m wide concrete electricity duct. This severely restricted the area available for excavation. However, sufficient was available to indicate a similar sequence to that in trenches A and B: approximately 0.9m of dark, greyish-brown garden soils (layers 70-72), overlying intact Roman levels (layers 74, 77, 80 and 82).

Roman Levels

Underneath the post-18th century garden soils in the north-eastern part of the trench, was a 0.2m thick layer (74) of grey-brown silty loam containing large quantities of Roman building debris. This layer also produced nine sherds of late Roman pottery, including an Oxfordshire mortar of post-AD 240 date.

Layer 74 lay over another similar layer (80), also 0.2m thick, and again containing a small quantity of Roman material of 2nd- to 4th-century date. This layer covered a deposit of

reddish-brown silty clay, containing flint and chalk fragments (82), though no finds were present. Layer 82 was only excavated for 0.2m of its depth. However, a borehole was augered down through this deposit for a further 0.8m (from where manual excavation had stopped), making a total depth of c. 1m for layer 82. The lower 0.8m of layer 82 contained fragments and flecks of charcoal and ash. Below that the auger sample produced a further 0.2m of clean reddish-brown clay, but thereafter a flint or other obstruction prevented deeper investigation. Total depth reached below present ground surface was c. 2.5m.

In the south-western corner, under about 1.25m of modern and post-medieval turf, garden soils and rubble, was a layer (78) of grey-brown silty loam and rubble, 0.2m thick, and very similar, if not the same as layer 74. Two sherds of Roman pottery were found in it. This layer overlay a layer of light grey-brown clayey-loam (81), which was cleaned and then a borehole was augered through it. The auger penetrated a further 0.5m (ie to 1.95m below the present ground surface) solely through layer 81, until stones or rubble prevented deeper investigation.

The earlier archaeological levels therefore appear to extend to 2.5m below the present ground surface in this area, and it is possible that pre-urban, as well as Roman deposits are preserved here.

4.4 Trench D

Alignment as previous trenches, 4m long (north-south) by 2m wide (Figures 2 and 3).

Following removal of turf, some 1.35m of late post-medieval and modern deposits were found (layers 100-103, pit 108 layer 107). Below these layers were a small number of features and layers which are probably Roman in date.

Roman Features and Layers

In the north-west corner of the trench, sealed by layer 103, was a 0.10m thick patch of hard-packed flint rubble (109), which did not produce any datable material. South of this

approximately in the middle of the trench, were two postholes (106 and 113), also sealed by layer 103.

Posthole 106 had a well-defined post-pipe (104), surrounded by flint and limestone packing (105) from which three pieces of late Roman pottery were recovered. Posthole 106 was approximately 0.5m in diameter and 0.4m deep. The other posthole (113) was of similar diameter, but only 0.2m deep. No post-pipe was visible, but the fill (112), a mixed greyish brown loam, contained flint and limestone fragments, and ten scraps of Roman pottery. The pottery was too abraded for an accurate date to be assigned.

Both postholes cut through two earlier layers (110 and 111), also in part sealed by layer 103. The upper layer (110) was a 0.1m thick deposit of grey-brown silty loam, present only in the southern half of the trench, which produced three sherds of coarse Roman pottery and a quantity of Roman building debris. The lower layer (111), which covered most of the trench, varied between 0.05 and 0.08m in thickness, and consisted of greyish-brown silty loam, with abundant flint and chalk fragments. No datable finds were present, and this layer directly overlay the natural chalk and periglacial clays.

The most notable find in this trench was the very large number of Roman tesserae, or mosaic fragments, although most of them occurred in later layers. In total 153 stone or ceramic tesserae were found, indicating the presence of a substantial building in the immediate vicinity.

4.5 Trench E

This trench was the only one excavated by machine, and was situated in the south-west part of the development area (Figure 2). Its dimensions were 7m west-east, by 2m north-south. No datable finds were recovered.

The sequence of deposits in the western half of the trench was as follows: 0.3m of modern turf and topsoil, over 0.9m of greyish-brown silty loam, over 0.5m of redeposited chalk, which petered out c. 3m from the west end of the trench.

Immediately east of the chalk, at a depth of c. 1.7m, was a

substantial wall footing, made of large flint nodules set in a yellow sandy mortar. The wall footing was 0.8m wide and appeared to be laid in a trench cut into the natural clay with flints/chalk bedrock, but its full depth was not investigated.

To the east of this wall footing, the stratigraphic sequence comprised 0.3m of modern turf and topsoil, over 0.9m of greyish-brown silty loam, over 0.4m of reddish-brown clay and flints (probably a naturally-formed deposit. The chalk bedrock was c. 1.6m below the present ground surface.

The redeposited chalk in the western part of the trench is probably part of the chalk rampart of the Roman town defences. The wall footing is likely to be the rear retaining wall of these same defences, and is probably of late Roman date.

5 The Finds

5.1 Metalwork and Metalworking Debris

A total of 19 iron objects, two fragments of scrap lead and four pieces of iron slag was found (Table 1). Apart from one piece of slag, all were from post-medieval contexts, and none in those levels appears to be of Roman date. Most of the iron objects were nails, apart from one corroded buckle pin from layer 52 (Trench B) and one bar or strip from layer 103 (Trench D).

5.2 Pottery

Some 692 sherds of pottery were recovered from four trenches (Table 1), the greater proportion being post-medieval ware of the 17th-19th centuries, though a fairly substantial amount of Roman pottery was also present, mostly residual in later deposits. No medieval sherds were identified.

Post-medieval ceramics included the full range from coarse earthenware to fine creamwares and salt-glazed wares, but no complete examples were recovered. Details of individual layers and contexts are listed in archive only, however, much of the material, particularly that from Trench A, appears to be contemporary with the construction of Somerleigh Court and the various landscaping and gardening activities that ensued

thereafter.

Twelve contexts produced only Roman pottery, though much Roman material was found throughout all deposits, presumably disturbed by later digging and building on the site. Again a full chronological range of material is represented, from 1st-century types to very late 4th-century ones. The majority of the Roman pottery is coarse Black Burnished ware, from the potteries at Poole Harbour, and includes a variety of cooking pots, storage jars, dishes and bowls of 1st- to late 4th-century date, predominantly later rather than earlier. Some fine tablewares are also present; these include seven sherds of samian, of late 1st- or early 2nd-century date, from both South and Central Gaul; and late Roman tablewares and specialist vessels such as mortars, from the New Forest and Oxfordshire kilns (post-AD 270). The range, both chronological and of vessel forms and production centres, is entirely in line with other evidence for activity on the site, though the range of wares present is limited as might be anticipated from a small sample excavation.

5.3 The Glass

All 88 fragments of glass were from post-medieval contexts (Table 1) and all are post-medieval or modern pieces of vessel or bottle glass; no Roman fragments were noted. No fine imported pieces were present.

5.4 Clay Pipe

One hundred and one fragments of clay pipes, almost all pieces of stem, were found, mostly from deposits in Trench A. The majority are probably of mid to late 19th-century date, but a few 18th-century types are also present. None are attributable to a specific factory or maker.

5.5 Building Material

The building material fragments from Trenches A to C consisted in general of a relatively small number of post-medieval brick and tile fragments, and approximately double the number of Roman pieces, mostly ceramic roof tiles, but occasionally painted wall plaster, particularly from Trenches A and C.

These Roman fragments presumably come from the demolition of the Roman buildings already identified in these trenches. In total 125 fragments came from Trench A, 159 from Trench B and 38 from Trench C.

The Roman material from Trench D, however, was markedly different from the previous three trenches. Of the total of 284 fragments of building debris, some 95 were post-medieval, the remainder (189) Roman, but of these 153 were stone or ceramic tesserae (ie mosaic tiles). Nine pieces of Roman painted wall plaster were also present, the rest of the material being fragments of ceramic roof tile. Although many of the tesserae were recovered from the post-medieval garden soil buildup, their presence indicates another substantial Roman building in the immediate vicinity.

5.6 Worked Flint

A very small number (5) of pieces of struck flint were found in Trenches A and B. All are waste flakes from the preparation of tools, and all are prehistoric, but cannot be more closely dated. All were residual in later deposits.

5.7 Faunal Remains

Some 128 fragments of animal bone were found in Trenches B to E; surprisingly none were found in Trench A, which otherwise provided most of the finds. Most of the bones are very fragmentary, but species represented include sheep/goat, cattle and pig. Few were found in uncontaminated Roman levels (Table 1), but the material from the post-medieval layers undoubtedly again includes Roman pieces.

Fragments of oyster shells were present in all trenches in Roman and later levels, the majority of Roman ones coming from the oyster beds in Poole Harbour.

6 Summary and Conclusions

The 1989 assessment and previous archaeological work or observations, suggests that most of the area contains substantial Roman deposits of 1st- to 4th-century date, under a late post-medieval and modern overburden up to c. 1.5m thick.

The Roman remains include evidence for timber and stone buildings, at least some with mosaic or tessellated pavements, internal features like ovens, associated pits, wells, ditches and gullies. Features relating to the Roman defences include parts of the actual chalk ramparts, retaining wall and (from earlier excavations) substantial quarry pits behind the walls inside the town area. These Roman remains probably extend over all the site, but in places where modern services have been inserted, some damage to the archaeological features will have occurred. It appears, however, that damage is not extensive and that most of the Roman remains survive reasonably well intact.

No evidence for any major post-Roman or medieval activity has been recorded; but there are stray finds of post-Roman date and that, in addition to the very large number of the latest 4th-century coins previously found, suggests that some activity must have taken place on the site during the c. 5th to 7th centuries AD.

Should proposals for redevelopment come to fruition, the surviving archaeological deposits would obviously be at risk, though the extent of potential damage could not be fully assessed without full information on the building design, footings and services. Any development proposal (for a single phase or staged development) should include full consideration for either preservation of important archaeological deposits in situ, or for a comprehensive record of them to be made by archaeological excavation prior to redevelopment. The scale of the archaeological response would have to be determined in close liaison with the detailed development plans, in order to minimise destruction of archaeological deposits either by the development, or by unnecessary archaeological excavation.

7 References

- Penn, K.J., 1980, Historic Towns in Dorset, Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society Monograph Series No. 1 (Dorchester)
- RCHM 1970, Dorset Volume II: South-East, Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England)

Table 1: Summary of All Finds (excluding Building Materials)

(Number/Weight in grammes;

‡ indicates only Roman; + mixed Roman and later; # post-medieval only

Trench	Context	Pottery	Clay Pipe	Glass	Flint	Iron	Lead (not weighed)	Slag	Animal Bone	Shell
A	1	52/680 +	10/28	7/88 #	-	4	1	-	-	3/98
A	2	49/700 +	11/43	3/47 #	-	2	-	3/23	-	3/102
A	3	43/452 +	8/23	9/138 #	-	-	-	-	-	3/38
A	4	34/352 +	10/41	9/190 #	1/5	1	-	-	-	1/10
A	5	16/366 #	9/30	8/254 #	2/340	2	-	-	-	6/148
A	6	11/88 +	2/9	9/204 #	1/11	-	-	-	-	-
A	8	4/12 +	2/95	15/534 #	-	-	-	-	-	2/47
A	16	3/43 ‡	-	-	-	-	-	1/122	-	-
A	20	6/29 ‡	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
A	21	4/18 +	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
B	50	23/242 +	2/10	2/14 #	1/10	-	1	-	-	3/60
B	51	16/706 ‡	10/34	6/130 #	-	-	-	-	3/15	7/88
B	52	56/844 +	4/11	1/9 #	-	1	-	-	7/120	2/34
B	53	43/576 +	14/45	4/36 #	-	1	-	-	5/66	1/3
B	54	36/468 +	4/8	2/9 #	1/7	-	-	-	10/120	1/20
B	56	5/106 ‡	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/10	-
B	59	6/138 ‡	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
C	71	11/126 #	7/26	3/98 #	-	-	-	-	-	-
C	72	22/457 +	4/26	4/66 #	-	1	-	-	8/128	2/74
C	74	9/126 ‡	-	-	-	1	-	-	8/92	-
C	77	2/6 ‡	-	1/68 #	-	-	-	-	-	-
C	78	2/34 ‡	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
C	80	3/32 ‡	-	-	-	-	-	-	3/78	-
D	100	5/152 +	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
D	101	18/320 +	4/16	1/112 #	-	-	-	-	-	-
D	102	44/602 +	2/6	1/12 #	-	3	-	-	19/282	3/68
D	103	149/1637 +	-	1/5 #	-	3	-	-	59/752	16/1
D	105	3/11 ‡	-	-	-	-	-	-	1/4	1/21
D	107	6/28 ‡	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
D	110	3/33 ‡	-	-	-	-	-	-	2/16	-
D	112	10/92 ‡	-	-	-	-	-	-	2/8	1/2

TRUST FOR WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY
COUNTY HOSPITAL, DORCHESTER (T0626)

Archaeological Assessment of Proposed Redevelopment Area:
Stage 1

Nature of Threat

The area outlined in Figure 1, which covers approximately 1.1 hectares of the County Hospital site, Dorchester, Dorset, is being considered for redevelopment. Whatever form this may take, the ensuing building footings, foundations and service trenches are likely to damage any below ground archaeology. The extent, quality and preservation of archaeological deposits within the proposed development area is not yet known.

Archaeological and Historical Background

The origin of the town of Dorchester lies in the first century AD, when the Roman civitas capital (administrative centre) of Durnovaria was laid out. Some aspects of the Roman town are known and understood, including parts of the street plan, nature of buildings in the centre and the defences (RCHM 1970). However, the area under consideration has been little explored archaeologically. Occupation of the town continued throughout the Roman period, but the nature of post-Roman occupation is uncertain; the main focus of settlement at this time was probably around Fordington. In the later medieval period occupation moved back to within the Roman walls centring on the castle area, north of High East/West Street. The development of the medieval town is documented in Penn (1980).

The area proposed for development lies in the south-west corner of the Roman town, and is adjacent to its western and southern defences. Although some features of the Roman town rampart are known, the overall street layout is unclear. The area between Princes Street, Trinity Street and the defences should contain several roads and insulae (building block divisions). Buildings which fronted onto these streets have been found with mosaic and tessellated pavements (Fig. 2 nos. 189 and 192), and the general quality of known remains in the area is high. In addition, infant burials have been located under the floor of one late Roman building in the area (Fig. 2 no. 191 - RCHM 1970).

A number of other burials have been found in the more traditional location, outside the town defences in accordance with Roman law. One group of burials to the south, flanked the Weymouth road to the harbour at

Radipole. Another, larger group of burials lay to the south of the west gate of the town (Fig. 2 no. 222a)

In the medieval period this part of the town was open fields. It is therefore likely that archaeological levels survived undisturbed until modern construction took place.

The archaeological potential of any area in Dorchester is high given its history. The proposed redevelopment site is situated in an area where few archaeological remains have been recorded, but the number and quality of known sites in close proximity indicates the likelihood of features which merit investigation.

References

Penn, K. J., 1980. Historic Towns in Dorset. Dorset Natural Historical & Archaeological Society Monograph No.1.

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Dorset Volume 2: South-East

PROPOSED ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

In order to assess the quality and integrity of the archaeological deposits, it is proposed that auger boreholes are sunk to test the nature and depth of deposits, followed by a series of trenches excavated across stage 1 of the development area, where access is feasible. It is suggested that a 2% sample of area is appropriate to determine the nature of archaeological remains. The total area of the site is 1.1 hectares; a 2% sample would therefore be 225m². This estimate takes account of the fact that a significant amount of ground disturbance has taken place in this area. Figure 1 shows the proposed layout of trenches (though this may vary depending on ground conditions and services). Boreholes will be positioned to cover areas not available for trench excavation, but where deposits are likely to exist. The trenches vary in size according to access and surface. The topsoil/upper levels of most trenches will be removed by machine where possible. Thereafter, archaeological levels will be dug by hand and recorded using standard T.W.A. recording systems. All artefacts will be kept and catalogued.

It is suggested that if substantial archaeological remains are encountered, the assessment should identify but not investigate them in detail at this stage. Recommendations for further archaeological investigation can be defined after the assessment, taking into account the type of construction proposed and the nature of the archaeological remains. If preservation in situ is

possible then that would be the preferred archaeological option.

ESTIMATE OF COSTS

It is anticipated that the fieldwork would take 4 weeks to complete, and the assessment report 2 weeks.

Field work

Staff:	Project manager	4 days	
	Project officer	20 days	
	Project supervisor	20 days	
	2 temp. assistants	20 days (each)	
	sub-total		£3208
	Van hire		£400
	Petrol		£160
	Plant hire		
	(JCB & mini-excavator)		£440
	Central staff & premises		£1494
	Services		£379
	Equipment		£168
	gross total		£6249

Report Production

Staff:	Project manager	2 day	
	Project officer	10 days	
	Drawing office	6 days	
	sub-total		£980
	Central staff & premises		£348
	Services		£88
	Equipment		£39
	gross total		£1455

Maximum cost of assessment £7704



Stage 1
Stage 2
Archaeol. Assessment trenches

FIGURE 1

CONTRACTOR MUST CHECK
ALL DIMENSIONS ON SITE
AND REPORT ANY DISCREPANCIES
TO THE ARCHITECT
BEFORE PROCEEDING
THIS DRAWING IS COMMON
AUTHOR

DATE

DESK

TITLE

DRAWING NO

CORRECTION

PLAN THE
DIG





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