

Amulet Way, Shepton Mallet. An Archaeological Evaluation on behalf of Tamarind Developments Ltd.



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RAB/17/06

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Contents

1.0.0	Abstract	1
2.0.0	Introduction	2
3.0.0	The Site	2
1.0	Location, Topography, Land Use & Geology	2
4.0.0	Evaluation Strategy & Methodology	3
1.0	Pre Evaluation Research	3
2.0	Strategy	3
3.0	Methodology	3
5.0.0	Results	5
6.0.0	Finds	8
1.0	Pottery	8
2.0	Objects of Iron	8
3.0	Flint	8
7.0.0	Discussion & Recommendations	9
	Acknowledgments	10
	References	10

List of Figures

Figure 1	Site Location & Detail	4
Figure 2	Trench Details	6
Figure 3	Site Photographs	7

List of Plates

Cover	General view of the site from the north
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1.0.0 Abstract

- 1.0.1** *A small scale archaeological evaluation has been undertaken on land within a vacant plot to the west of No. 2, Amulet Way, Shepton Mallet prior to the development of the site. The area is known to have suffered considerable disturbance during construction of the adjacent housing estate however the evaluation has shown that extensive and well preserved Romano-British remains survive upon the previously undeveloped land fronting the assumed line of the Fosse Way.*

2.0.0 Introduction

- 2.0.1** As a condition of planning approval and following consultation with the Development Control Archaeologist of Somerset County Council, a scheme of works was formulated to address the potential archaeological implications of proposals to construct a two bed roomed property on land adjacent to Fosse Lane in the town of Shepton Mallet. The site lies within an area considered to be of High Archaeological Potential as determined by Mendip District Council Local Plan Policy EN13 due to its location within a known or assumed area of extensive Romano-British occupation.
- 2.0.2** This report details the results of the subsequent small scale intrusive archaeological evaluation undertaken to assess the potential for archaeological survival upon the site. The evaluation was commissioned by Mr M. Mackenzie of Tamarind Developments and was conducted on his behalf by R. A. Broomhead with L. E. Berry and S Bailey. The field evaluation was undertaken in reasonable weather conditions between the 25th August and 1st September 2006.
- 2.0.3** In accordance with County Structure Plan policy AH5, Mendip District Council Local Plan Policy EN13 and advice given by central government as set out in *Planning Policy Guidance on Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16), the aims of the evaluation and the purpose of this report is thus to provide information about the archaeological resource within the proposed development area, its presence, absence, nature and extent. Full details of the methodology employed are given in section **4.0.0** of this report.

3.0.0 The Site

3.1.0 Location Topography, Land Use & Geology

- 3.1.1** The town of Shepton Mallet occupies the valley and hill slopes bordering the River Sheppey approximately 10km to the east of City of Wells at the foot of the southern slopes of the Mendip Hills. The course of the early Roman Fosse Way borders the eastern side of the town and excavations here have demonstrated this area to have been the focus of extensive early settlement. The proposed development site borders the assumed line of the Fosse Way on its eastern side at ST 63004298 occupying a vacant and derelict plot of approximately 176m². Formerly undeveloped grassland, land surrounding the site was developed for housing in the early 1990's during which period significant Romano-British material was recovered. The British Geological Survey shows the site to be underlain by horizontally bedded formations of the Jurassic Lower Lias comprising in the main well bedded, hard, fossiliferous limestones.

4.0.0 Evaluation Strategy and Methodology

4.1.0 Pre Evaluation Research

- 4.1.1** Minimal background research relating to the history of this site was undertaken as much relevant information has already been published (Leach., P et al 2001).

4.2.0 Evaluation Strategy

- 4.2.1** The strategy adopted for the evaluation was based upon a recommendation approved by the Development Control Archaeologist of Somerset County Council Environment and Property Department. The design allowed for two trenches totalling approximately 15m to be opened by machine and located to test the potential for archaeological survival within the proposed development area.

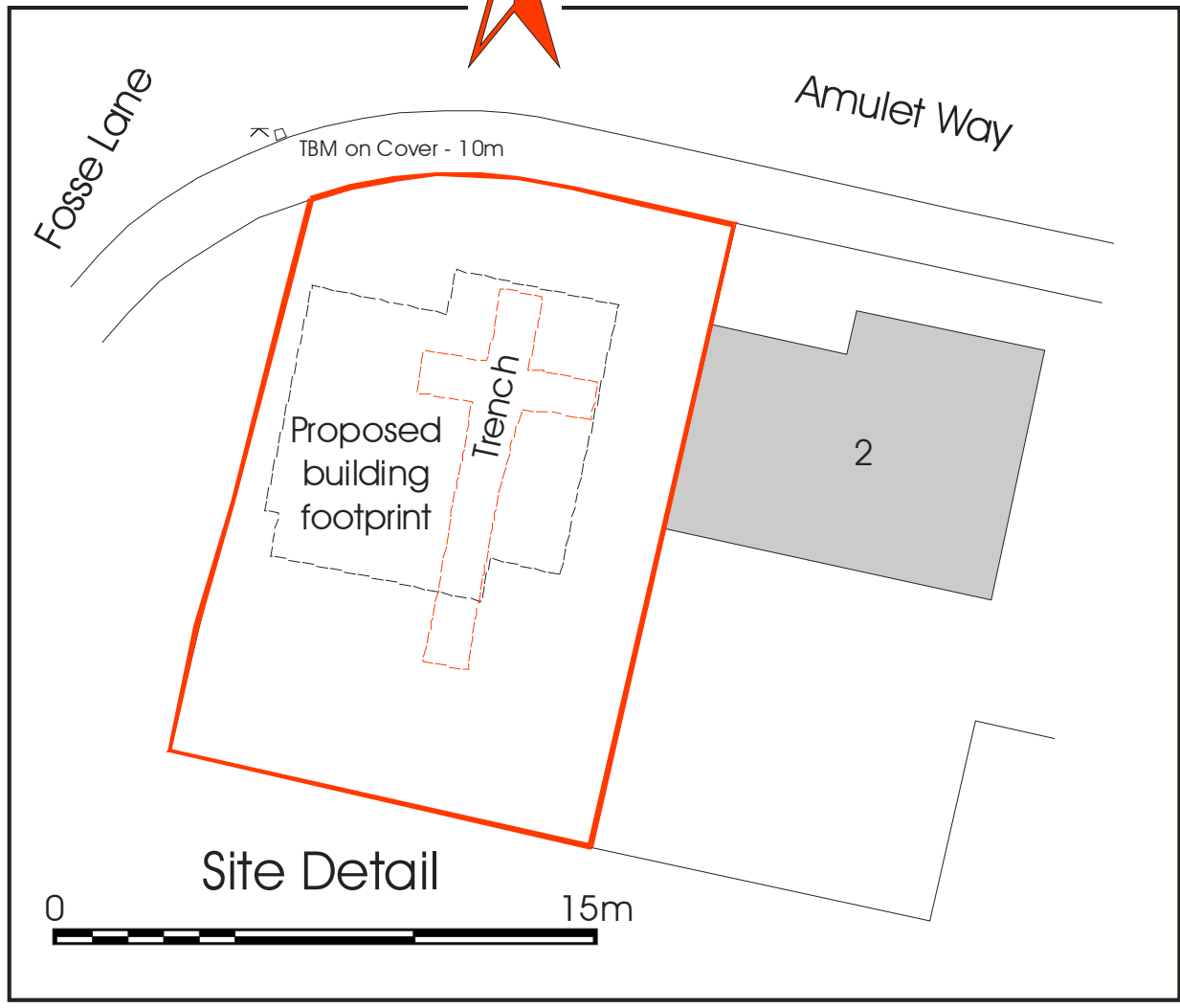
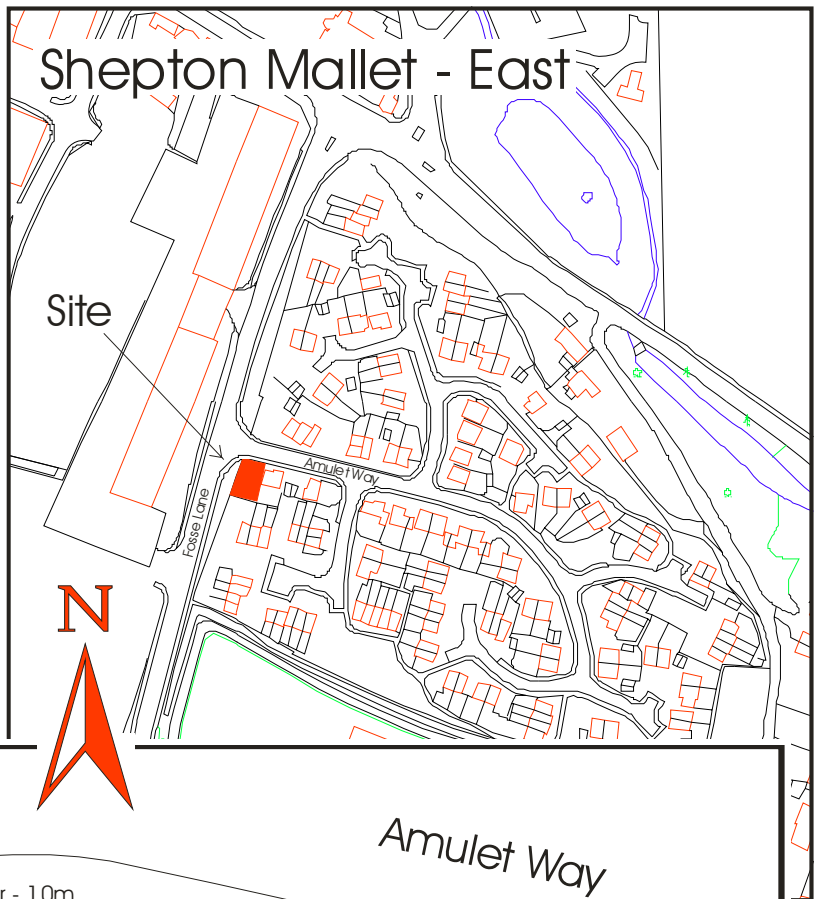
4.3.0 Evaluation Methodology

- 4.3.1** Initial excavation of the two trenches was conducted by machine under full archaeological supervision. Each trench being excavated in shallow spits until archaeological features were apparent or natural geology was encountered. Each trench was subsequently hand cleaned and a written contextual record was made using *pro-forma* context recording sheets under the site code RAB/17/06. As the two trenches bisected each other, contexts were numbered contiguously. Both trenches were also recorded photographically using 35mm colour slides, and digital media. Relevant sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and levelled to an arbitrary datum of 10m OD established on a cover in the road just outside the site.

RAB/17/06
Amulet Way
Shepton Mallet

Figure 1

Site & Trench
Location



5.0.0 Results

5.0.1 Initial machining indicated that the site had been subject to extensive modern disturbance. Modern materials intermixed with fragmentary disturbed archaeology and redeposited soils ([100], [101], [102], [104] and [105]) were observed to lie almost directly upon a distinct archaeological horizon at an average depth of 700mm and at one point had penetrated the archaeology [F112] to expose natural bedrock [113]. Only at the northern end of Trench 1 was the archaeology sealed by a minimal horizon of immediate post archaeological deposit [103].

5.0.2 The exposed archaeology comprised an extensive stone spread or cobbled surface [107] occupying almost the entire extent of the northern half of the two trenches. This was bounded to the south by a low wall footing [F106] orientated east – west, partially cut by a modern pit [F112]. Within [107], several potential features were noted including a possible post hole [F109] and a possible structure comprising vertically placed limestone blocks [F108]. At its northern end, the cobbling diminished to be replaced by large flat, laid and well worn limestone blocks [110]. South of [F106] a limited area of undisturbed natural light brown soils [111] was exposed though most had been removed by the cut of pit [F112] however south again archaeology reappeared as a small area of pitched limestone [F114] interspersed with redeposited modern soil [105].

RAB/17/06 Amulet Way - Site Photos



Far Left Above:
Detail of [T10] from
the south. Scales 1m



Far Left Below: [F108]
& [F109] from the east.
Scales 1m



Left Above: East - west
trench viewed from the
west Scales 1m



Left Below: Detail of east
end of east - west
trench. Scales 1m



Bottom Left: General
view of trench during
cleaning. Wall [F106] in
bottom foreground.
View from south-east.



Bottom Right: South end
of main trench showing
modern robbing (with
Styrofoam) & [T14] to
rear. View from north.



6.0.0 Finds

6.0.1 With the exception of a single unidentified Romano-British coin derived from mixed modern/archaeological layer [102] all retained material was obtained from clearance within and around [107].

6.1.0 Pottery

6.1.0 A total of 110 sherds of Romano-British pottery were recovered from the site. Most were heavily abraded All sherds were washed, weighed and sorted by type. In addition a single late Iron Age sherd was also identified.

Pottery Type	Number	Weight
Grey Wares	64	575g
Black Burnished	25	300g
Samian	6	50g
Misc. Colour Coated etc	15	100g

6.2.0 Objects of Iron

6.2.1 Three iron nails and an unidentifiable object of iron were recovered from clearance within and around [107].

6.3.0 Flint

6.2.1 A single small flint flake and a larger core fragment were recovered from clearance within and around [107].

7.0.0 Discussion & Recommendations

7.0.1 The evaluation has demonstrated that extensive and well preserved archaeological features survive relatively undisturbed at an average depth of 700mm below current surface levels across the proposed development area. All the exposed archaeology would appear to be Romano-British however most vertical and historical stratigraphy above it has been lost. The precise nature of the archaeology is uncertain but its location, adjacent to the assumed line of the Fosse Way would suggest a roadside building within an enclosure or perhaps a burial site. In view of the well preserved nature of the archaeology and its location, particularly with regard the Scheduled Areas to the south, the site must be considered to be of very high local or regional significance.

7.0.2 Current building legislation would require the footings of any building constructed upon the site to be dug to a depth that would considerably exceed the depth of surviving archaeology leading to its total destruction. Local and national planning policy requires that significant archaeology should, wherever possible, be preserved in situ. With planning permission upon the site granted, the Development Control Archaeologist of Somerset County Council has agreed that two possible options are thus available prior to any further development:

- i.)** Preservation by Record. This would require the full archaeological excavation of the footprint of any proposed structure upon the site with a 1m buffer surrounding. Under current design proposals this will involve an excavation of c90m².
- ii)** Preservation in situ. This would entail the entire site being stripped to the archaeological horizon which would then be recorded and minimally sampled. The site would then require to be reformed to an appropriate engineering level with sand/Terram/graded material before commencing development. (c176m²).

Acknowledgements

Plant was supplied and operated by Steve Bailey (Bobcat Services).

References

Printed Sources

- | | |
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