

Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit

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**An Archaeological Watching Brief  
at Maud Road, Dorchester**

by  
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# An Archaeological Watch Brief at Maud Road, Dorchester

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## 1.0: Summary

An archaeological watching brief adjacent to Maud Road and between Coburg and Edward Roads, Dorchester, during redevelopment of the site of Maud Road school, found no evidence of any activity or occupation before the 20th century.

## 2.0: Introduction

An archaeological watching brief was proposed for this site due to the proximity of a substantial Roman building approximately 100 metres to the northeast (RCHM, Dorset II, pt. 3, pp 570 and 581).

The watching brief was carried out (by Charles Hollinrake on behalf of the Birmingham University Field Archaeology Unit (BUFAU)) when new foundation and service trenches were cut, at intervals, between Monday 7 September and Tuesday 22 September 1992.

## 3.0: Methods

19th-century tithe maps were studied for the recent historical background of the site.

A photographic record using colour slides and black and white prints of the excavations was carried out.

Due to the total absence of finds and features it was not considered necessary to draw any sections of the trenches.

## 4.0: The Site

The site lies on ground sloping gently from south to north at approximately 76 metres AOD above solid chalk bedrock. The topsoil depth varied from 0.4 metres adjacent to Maud Road on the west to 0.6 metres on the eastern edge of the development. No clay was seen below the topsoil.

The site originally contained the buildings and playgrounds of Maud Road School; these had been demolished before the watching brief

began leaving only the concrete and brick pads of the buildings and walls.

## 5.0: Historical Background

The Fordington Tithe Map of 1840 (T/FOR) shows the area occupied by Maud Road as being within East Home Field, an open strip field which was then still unenclosed.

An addition to the same tithe map dated 1877 shows the area of Maud Road school still being farmed in open strips. Strip fields 451 and 452, the area now occupied by the development site, were described as 'close' and under arable cultivation.

A further addition, dated 1913, shows this open field now being developed with new roads and building plots being laid out. The area enclosing Maud Road School was still blank.

## 6.0: The Watching Brief

The contractors removed the topsoil and overburden of rubble from the southwest quarter of the Maud Road school site; this was the only area of the site to be developed (plan B). No finds, other than modern pot and debris, were seen during this operation.

Thereafter the drainage and foundation trenches were cut as shown on plan C. The top of the chalk bedrock was uneven and loose but no features earlier than modern services trenches or walls were seen.

The whole area had been disturbed by numerous cuts, of water and electricity services, drains and sewer pipes plus the brick foundations of the school buildings.

There were no other features of earlier date and no finds of either the Roman, medieval or post-medieval periods.

## **7.0: Discussion**

The development site was relatively level. As the ground should be gently sloping, and as there was a drop of about one metre between Coburg Road to the south and the plot undergoing development, the most probable explanation of the total absence of finds is that the Maud School plot had been levelled prior to the erection of the buildings. This might also explain the absence of any subsoil and the disturbed nature of the bedrock surface.

## **8.0: Conclusions**

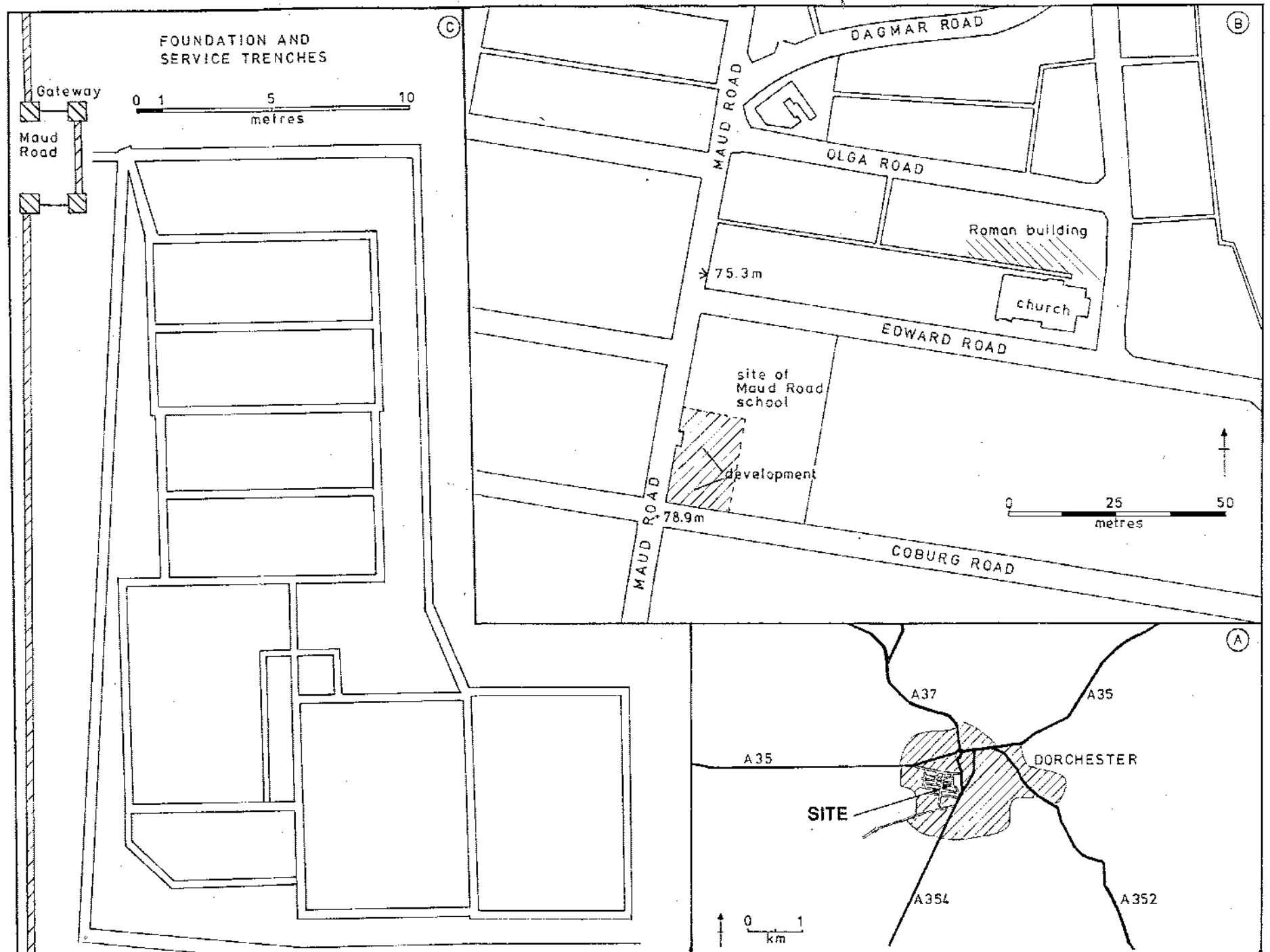
The school originally occupied the southern two-thirds of the development site, north of Coburg Road. In view of the complete lack of finds and features and the profusion of modern service trenches and building foundations in the

area of the school buildings, it is felt to be unnecessary to monitor any further development work in this part of the site.

The northern third of the site, however, south of Edward Road, may be less disturbed, and if any future development work occurs there then a further watching brief might be thought desirable.

## **9.0: Acknowledgements**

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