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Trinity Street, Dorchester, Dorset

Archaeological Evaluation Report



Ref: 89281.03 August 2013





Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Front cover: Working shot, opening Trench 3



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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by West Dorset District Council, to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Trinity Street, Dorchester (NGR 369140 090430).

A planning application will be submitted for the construction of a single structure comprising a church or community building within the site and the Dorset County Archaeologist, (adviser to West Dorset District Council) has recommended an archaeological evaluation be undertaken ahead of the determination of the planning application to assess the archaeological potential of the Site.

The evaluation, which consisted of three machine excavated trenches, confirmed that the Roman occupation deposits in this area of Trinity Street lie deeply stratified beneath post-medieval and modern made ground deposits. These were initially encountered at a depth of between 1.68m to 2.30m below modern ground level (approx. 62.4-63m aOD). The depth at which these deposits were encountered during this evaluation, is significantly deeper than recorded to both the north and south of the site, suggesting that this area of Dorchester lay at a lower level in the Romano-British period and has subsequently been levelled upwards.

The evaluation was undertaken between the 15th and the 17th July 2013.



Archaeological Evaluation Report

Acknowledgements

This project was commissioned by West Dorset District Council and Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Carly Galloway in this respect. Wessex Archaeology would also like to thank Steve Wallis (Dorset County Council) for all his help and advice.

The evaluation was undertaken by Oliver Good with the assistance of Alistair Black. This report was written and compiled by Naomi Brennan with illustrations prepared by Liz James. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Sue Farr.



Archaeological Evaluation Report

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

- 1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by West Dorset District Council ('the Client'), to carry out an archaeological trial trench evaluation of land at Trinity Street, Dorchester centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 369140 090430 (hereafter 'the Site', **Figure 1**).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken in advance of a planning application being submitted for the construction of a single structure, comprising a church or community building within the Site and followed the results of an archaeological desk-based assessment (WA 2013a).
- 1.1.3 The Dorset County Archaeologist, (adviser to West Dorset District Council) recommended that an archaeological evaluation be undertaken ahead of the determination of the planning application to assess the archaeological potential of the Site.
- 1.1.4 The fieldwork strategy and methodology was documented in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI, WA 2013b) submitted by Wessex Archaeology and approved by the County Archaeological Officer at Dorset County Council (DCC) prior to fieldwork commencing.
- 1.1.5 The evaluation was undertaken between the 15th and the 17th July 2013.

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The Site is located on the western side of Trinity Street in Dorchester, Dorset and comprises a rectangular parcel of land of c. 1570 sq. m. The Site is currently occupied by a public car park which is surfaced with tarmac (**Figure 1**). The eastern part of the Site contains a public toilet.
- 1.2.2 The Site is bounded by Trinity Street and commercial premises to the east, a car park to the north, the Firestation nightclub and an electrical substation to the south and residential buildings to the west.
- 1.2.3 The Site is located on relatively level ground at an elevation of approximately 65m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). The underlying geology is the Portsdown Chalk Formation (British Geological Survey).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A Desk-based Assessment (WA 2013a) has been completed, which details the archaeological and historical background to the Site. A summary is provided below.



- 2.1.2 The Site, lies within the Roman town of Durnovaria and within the area enclosed by the Dorchester Town Walls, a Scheduled Monument. A number of Grade II* and Grade II Listed Buildings, as well as two Grade II Registered Parks and Gardens are located within the vicinity, while the Site is located within the Dorchester Conservation Area South West Quadrant Sub Area E.
- 2.1.3 This assessment (*ibid.*) confirmed the potential for the presence of buried archaeological remains, in particular relating to Romano-British occupation within the Site. The extensive history of archaeological investigations within Dorchester has identified substantial evidence of Romano-British occupation in the area, while evidence for activity related to other periods is sparse, though in some cases nevertheless of considerable importance.

2.2 Romano-British activity

- 2.2.1 Although often deeply buried, the depth at which Romano-British deposits have been discovered varies considerably throughout the area. Work undertaken to the rear of 30 Trinity Street in 2006 located Romano-British demolition deposits less than 0.1m below the ground level (COAS 2007).
- 2.2.2 By contrast, recent archaeological monitoring of a geotechnical borehole undertaken prior to the redevelopment of the primary substation immediately to the south of the Site identified a sequence of made ground deposits, up to 0.90 m thick, overlying a well preserved post-Roman topsoil/ploughsoil horizon, of similar thickness (Wessex Archaeology 2012). This profile, dominated by post-Roman soils, is compatible with results recorded in three test pits excavated to the rear of the 'Firestation' and adjacent to the sub-station (COAS 2008), where deeply stratified post-medieval deposits, were documented.
- 2.2.3 A small evaluation undertaken by Wessex Archaeology (Wessex Archaeology 1991) immediately to the north of the Site, within Trinity Street Car Park, recorded considerable amounts of later disturbance. The deepest deposit recorded was potentially Romano-British in date and lay at a depth of 1.5m below the present ground surface.
- 2.2.4 Observation of foundation trenches in 1997 at 33 Trinity Street approximately 175m to the north of the Site, recorded Roman occupation deposits at between 0.7-1m beneath the ground surface, which contained material from the 1st-4th century (Sparey-Green 1997, 175).
- 2.2.5 Excavations to the rear of 34 Trinity Street in 1971 recorded not only a sequence of Roman buildings on the site, but also a possible road surface (O'Connor and Startin 1972). Later work on land to the rear of the Plume of Feathers on Princes Street confirmed the location of the south-west/north-east aligned road and located further Roman structures including a water pipe thought to be related to the aqueduct known to lie to the north-west of the town (Loverance 1976).
- 2.2.6 Further building remains were noted during work at 44 South Street comprising several phases of walls and floors, and included a tessellated pavement. Additionally a late 3rd century coin hoard and an urned cremation of an infant dated to the 1st or 2nd century AD were also found on the site (RCHM 1970, 564). Two infant inhumations were found within a Roman building during investigations at the junction of Trinity Street and Bowling Alley Walk (RCHM 1970, 562), to the south of the Site. Romano-British burials were normally beyond the town walls, as at Borough Gardens where workmen discovered the remains of three skeletons in 1921.



- 2.2.7 Extensive archaeological investigations associated with the re-development of the Dorset County Hospital to the west of the Site, and at Somerleigh Court have yielded significant and well preserved evidence of Romano-British occupation in the area, including a number of substantial buildings, mosaics and occupational material (Trevarthen 2008).
- 2.2.8 A sequence of investigations in advance of development at Charles Street to the east of the Site have uncovered similarly extensive evidence of well-preserved Romano-British archaeology underlying post-Roman deposits of up to 3m thickness (Wessex Archaeology 2012).
- 2.2.9 Fragments of the Roman street plan suggest a north-west/south-east and south-west/north-east alignment. Areas of metalling suggest a road near the junction of South Walks Road heading north-west across South Street and towards the junction of High West Street and Trinity Street. Another road may lie just to the west of Somerleigh Road. A south-west/north-east section of road was also identified at the junction of Trinity Street and Bowling Alley Walk where it was sealed by the later 2nd century defences. The putative routes of Roman roads lie immediately to the east and west of the Site (**Figure 1**). One of these may be present within, or located near to the western border of the Site.

2.3 Geotechnical works

- 2.3.1 Several geotechnical test pits and window samples have been completed within the Site. Although a detailed report has not been issued, the borehole logs indicate the tarmac (0.2m) overlies extensive made ground deposits within the Site.
- 2.3.2 In the west, four different made ground deposits were recorded to a depth of 2.4m below ground level, and overlaid a clay deposit, above the chalk recorded at 3.10m bgl. Similar deposits were recorded in the east of the Site. Made ground deposits were recorded to a depth of 2.8m, the deepest of which, was described as a possible relict topsoil. As in the west of the Site, clay deposits overlay the natural chalk.
- 2.3.3 An archaeological watching brief was not maintained during the geotechnical works and the results are therefore considered with a degree of caution, as it can on occasion be difficult to differentiate made ground and archaeological deposits.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and objectives

- 3.1.1 The aims of the archaeological field evaluation were to:
 - Clarify the presence/absence and extent of any buried archaeological remains within the Site that may be impacted by development.
 - Identify, within the constraints of the evaluation, the date, character and condition of any surviving remains within the Site.
 - Assess the degree of existing impacts to sub-surface horizons and to document the extent of archaeological survival of buried deposits.
 - Produce a report which will present the results of the evaluation in sufficient detail to allow an informed decision to be made concerning the Site's archaeological potential



3.2 Fieldwork methodology

- 3.2.1 The full detailed methodology of the archaeological works was set out in a Written Scheme of Investigation (WA 2013b), and is summarised below.
- 3.2.2 A total of three machine excavated trial trenches each measuring 15m x 2m wide were machine excavated. At either end of each trench deeper sondages were excavated to better characterise the deeper stratigraphic deposits.
- 3.2.3 The trenches were excavated using a JCB type mechanical excavator fitted with a wide toothless bucket, under constant archaeological supervision. Mechanical excavation continued in spits through topsoil and subsoil down to either the uppermost archaeological features or natural deposits, whichever was encountered first. Topsoil was separated from subsoil and any other arisings, and stored at a minimum of 1m from the trench edge. The spoil from the trenches was scanned for artefacts. The trenches were backfilled with the excavated spoil, topsoil last in order to preserve the soil stratigraphy.
- 3.2.4 Where archaeological features were encountered they were investigated by hand, with a sufficient sample of each layer/feature type excavated in order to establish, as may be possible, their date, nature, character, extent and condition.
- 3.2.5 Any archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's *pro forma* recording system with a unique numbering system for individual contexts. Archaeological features and deposits were hand-drawn at either 1:10 or 1:20, including both plans and sections, these were referred to the Ordnance Survey National Grid. The Ordnance Datum (OD) height of all principal features and levels were calculated. A representative section of each trench was recorded showing the depth of the overburden deposits.
- 3.2.6 A digital photographic record was compiled showing the trenches, the principal features, and the general context of the Site. Digital images have been subject to a managed quality control and curation process which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and ensures the long term accessibility of the image set.
- 3.2.7 The survey was carried out with a Leica Viva series GNSS unit using the OS National GPS Network through an RTK network with a 3D accuracy of 30mm or below. All survey data was recorded using the OSGB36 British National Grid coordinate system.
- 3.2.8 A unique site code **89281** was allocated to the Site, and was used on all records and finds.

3.3 Health and Safety

- 3.3.1 Health and Safety considerations were of paramount importance in conducting all fieldwork. Safe working practices will override archaeological considerations at all times.
- 3.3.2 All work was carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and the Management of Health and Safety Regulations 1992, and all other relevant Health and Safety legislation, regulations and codes of practice in force at the time.

3.4 Best practice

3.4.1 The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance given in the Institute for Archaeologist's *Standard and Guidance for archaeological field evaluation* (IfA 2008).



4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Site-wide stratigraphy

- 4.1.1 Three 15m by 2m trenches were excavated, two in the northern part of the Site and one in the south-eastern part of Site (**Figure 1**). The details of the full stratigraphic sequence are recorded in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.1.2 The general stratigraphic sequence was broadly similar in all three trenches and comprised between 0.45-0.54m of tarmac, sub-base and modern made ground. In Trenches 2 and 3, which lay in the eastern part of the Site, a further made ground layer (204 and 304) was recorded, most likely to raise and level the ground on this side of the Site (Plates 2 and 3).
- 4.1.3 The next layer encountered in all three trenches was a deep, humic garden soil thought to be post-medieval in date (**104**, **205** and **305**) (**Plates 1-3**). The depth of this deposit significantly increased within Trench 3 which lay in the southern part of the Site, suggesting that the ground level originally sloped southwards.
- 4.1.4 An additional layer (105) was recorded within Trench 1 and consisted of a mid brown silty clay deposit (Plate 1). An equivalent deposit was not seen in either of the other two trenches and is likely to reflect some localised variation within the Site.
- 4.1.5 Beneath **105** and the garden soils in Trenches 2 and 3, a dark humic deposit thought to represent a likely Roman deposit (**106**, **206** and **306**) was recorded, though this could not be confirmed by artefactual evidence (**Plates 1-3**). This was encountered at varying depths of between 1.68 and 2.30m below ground level. Stone and possible masonry fragments were noted, particularly in Trench 2 and the eastern part of Trench 3, suggesting possible demolition debris.
- 4.1.6 In both Trenches 2 and 3 this was the lowest deposit reached, but in Trench 1 a pale silty deposit **107** was encountered at 2.5m beneath ground level (**Plate 1**). This was considered to potentially represent the top of the weathered natural chalk. The boreholes driven near the western boundary of the Site located natural chalk at between 2.5 and 2.95m below ground level.
- 4.1.7 Within Trench 3 and cutting the post-medieval soil **304** was a north south aligned wall **309** (**Plate 4**). No other features were located.

5 ARTEFACTUAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

5.1 Finds

5.1.1 Due to the significant depth of deposits and undiagnostic nature of the material seen during the excavations, no artefactual material was recovered. Small fragments of Ceramic Building Material (CBM) and oyster shell were noted in a number of deposits but not retained. This is recorded in the stratigraphic summaries in **Appendix 1**.

5.2 Environmental

5.2.1 Due to the lack of artefactual material and the depth of the possible Roman deposits no environmental samples were taken during the course of this evaluation.



6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1.1 This evaluation has largely confirmed that the Roman occupation deposits in this area of Trinity Street lie deeply stratified beneath post-medieval and modern made ground deposits, first encountered at a depth of between 1.68 to 2.30m below modern ground level (approx. 62.4-63m aOD). However the depth at which these deposits were encountered during this evaluation is significantly deeper than deposits recorded to both the north and south of the Site, suggesting that it lay at a lower level in the Romano-British period and has subsequently been significantly raised.
- 6.1.2 Further information on the preferred foundation design will be necessary to determine the impact of the development on the archaeological deposits within the Site. The scope of any further archaeological mitigation which may be necessary should be discussed and agreed through consultation with the statutory authorities.

7 STORAGE AND CURATION

- 7.1.1 It is recommended that the project archive resulting from the excavation be deposited with Dorset County Museum. The Museum has agreed in principle to accept the project archive on completion of the project, currently under the project code 89281. Deposition of the finds with the Museum will only be carried out with the full agreement of the landowner.
- 7.1.2 An OASIS online record http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/projects/oasis/ will be initiated and key fields completed on Details, Location and Creators Forms. All appropriate parts of the OASIS online form will be completed for submission to the DHER. This will include an uploaded .pdf version of the entire report (a paper copy will also be included with the archive).

7.2 Archive

7.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics and artefacts, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Dorset County Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (Walker 1990; SMA 1995; Richards and Robinson 2000; Brown 2011).

7.3 Copyright

- 7.3.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the Site will be retained by Wessex Archaeology Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with all rights reserved. The recipient museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profitmaking, and conforms with the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations* 2003.
- 7.3.2 This report may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (e.g. Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which we are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferrable by Wessex Archaeology. You are reminded that you remain bound by the conditions of the *Copyright*, *Designs and Patents Act* 1988 with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of the report



7.4 Security Copy

7.4.1 In line with current best practice, on completion of the project a security copy of the paper records will be prepared, in the form of a pdf/a file, which will form part of the project archive.

8 REFERENCES

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9 APPENDICES

9.1 Appendix 1: Stratigraphic summaries

bgl= below ground level

TRENCH	TRENCH 1							
Dimensio	1-64.84m aOD							
Easting:	369122			Northing: 09	0438			
Context	Depth bgl (m)							
101	Layer	Tarmac su	Tarmac surface of car park.					
102	Layer	Sub-base	Sub-base for tarmac.					
103	Layer	Made grou	Made ground, levelling containing abundant demolition rubble.					
104	Layer	Garden so	Garden soil. Very dark grey-brown silty clay loam.					
105	Layer		n-grey silty clay. Mo rare CBM fragments.		fragments, sparse	1.61-2.10		
106	Layer		Dark grey-brown silty clay. Rare CBM, stone fragments and oyster shell.					
107	Layer	Pale yello	w-grey silty clay.			2.50+		

TRENCH	TRENCH 2								
Dimensio	Dimensions: 15.00x2.00m								
Easting:	369152			Northing: 09	0441				
Context	Description					Depth bgl (m)			
201	Layer	Tarmac su	Tarmac surface of car park.						
202	Layer	Sub-base	Sub-base for tarmac.						
203	Layer	Made grou	lemolition rubble.	0.24-0.45					
204	Layer	yer Made ground containing large amounts of re-deposited chalk.							
205	Layer		Garden soil. Very dark grey-brown silty clay loam. Moderate chalk fragments.						
206	Layer		Very dark grey-brown silty clay. Rare CBM and oyster shell. Sparse stone rubble.						

TRENCH	TRENCH 3							
Dimensio	1-64.81m aOD							
Easting:	Easting: 369149 Northing: 090421							
Context	Depth bgl (m)							
301	Layer	Tarmac su	Tarmac surface of car park.					
302	Layer	Sub-base	for tarmac.			0.12-0.29		
303	Layer	Made grou	Made ground, levelling containing abundant demolition rubble.					
304	Layer		Made ground. A mix of yellow sand, re-deposited chalk and dark grey-brown silty clay. Occasional brick and CBM.					
305	Layer		Garden soil. Very dark grey-brown silty clay loam. Rare chalk fragments.					
306	Layer	Very dark eastern so	2.30+					
307	Cut	Construct 308, 309 a	0.40-1.06					
308	Structure	Foundatio	0.17+ high					
309	Structure	Stone buil	Stone built wall. North – south aligned. Fill of 307. 0.48 high					
310	Deposit	Backfill of	construction cut for wall 3	09. Fill of	307.	0.40-1.06		

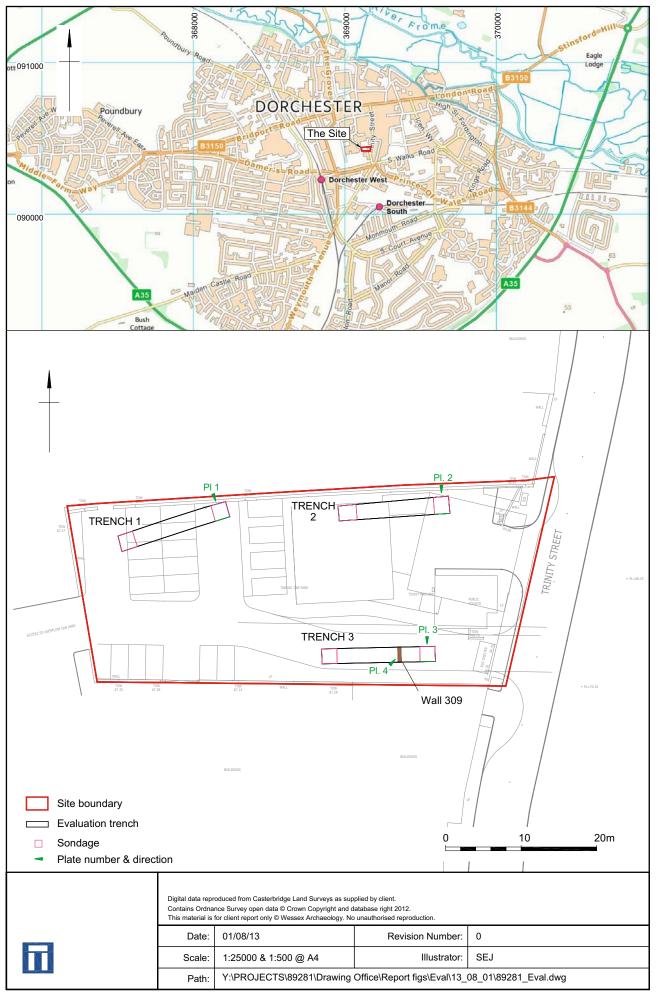


9.2 Appendix 2:OASIS form

9.3 Trinity Street, Dorchester, Dorset - Wessex Archaeology

OASIS ID - wessexar1-156679

Versions				
View	Version	Completed by	Email	Date
View 1	1	Sue Farr	s.farr@wessexarch.co.uk	7 August 2013
Completed	d sections in curr	ent version		
Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	1/1
Validated s	sections in curre	nt version		
Details	Location	Creators	Archive	Publications
No	No	No	No	0/1
File submi	ssion and form p	orogress		
Grey literat submitted?		No	Grey literature report filename/s	
Report rele specified?	ase delay	Yes	Release delay	Release into ADS library once signed off
Images sub	omitted?	No	Image filename/s	
Boundary f	ile submitted?	No	Boundary filename	
HER signed	d off?		NMR signed off?	



Site location Figure 1



Plate 1: North-west facing section, eastern sondage, Trench 1



Plate 2: North facing section, eastern sondage, Trench 2

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Plate 3: North facing section, eastern sondage, Trench 3



Plate 4: Oblique view of wall 309 and overlying deposits, view from the south-west

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