



Archaeological Services & Consultancy Ltd

**WATCHING BRIEF:
65-75 HIGH STREET SOUTH
DUNSTABLE
BEDFORDSHIRE**

On behalf of Hearne-Holmes Developments Ltd



Calli Rouse BA

March 2005

ASC: 657/DHS/2

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Site Data

<i>ASC project code:</i>	DHS	<i>ASC Project No:</i>	657
<i>County:</i>	Bedfordshire		
<i>Village/Town:</i>	Dunstable		
<i>Civil Parish:</i>	Dunstable		
<i>NGR (to 8 figs):</i>	TL 0212 2168		
<i>Present use:</i>	Residential		
<i>Planning proposal:</i>	Extensions to existing buildings		
<i>Planning application ref/date:</i>	Not known		
<i>Local Planning Authority:</i>	South Bedfordshire		
<i>Date of fieldwork:</i>	14/03/05 – 21/03/05		
<i>Client:</i>	Hearne-Holmes Developments Ltd Exchange House 494 Midsummer Boulevard Milton Keynes MK9 2EA		
<i>Contact name:</i>	David Hearne		
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Internal Quality Check

<i>Primary Author:</i>	Calli Rouse	<i>Date:</i>	24/03/05
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<i>Edited/Checked By:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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<i>Revisions:</i>		<i>Date:</i>	
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Figure 1: General location (scale 1:25,000)

Summary

During March 2005, an archaeological watching brief was carried out at 65-75 High Street South, Dunstable. The watching brief recorded several pit-like features and pieces of Totternhoe clunch stone on the site. Other than this, no archaeological features were observed and no artefacts recovered.

1 Introduction

1.1 In March 2005 *Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd* (ASC) carried out a watching brief at 65-75 High Street South (Jane Cart's Almshouses), Dunstable (NGR TL 0212 2168: Fig. 1). The project was commissioned by *Hearne Holmes Development Ltd*, and was carried out according to a project design prepared by ASC (657/DHS/1), and a brief (BCC 2005) prepared on behalf of the local planning authority (LPA), *Luton Borough Council*, by their archaeological advisor (AA), Bedfordshire County Council (BCC). The relevant planning application reference is not known.

1.2 *Planning Background*

This watching brief has been required as a planning condition under the terms of *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG16), in response to proposals for the construction of extensions to the rear of 65-75.

1.3 *Location*

The site is situated in Dunstable, in South Bedfordshire district, in the historic county of Bedfordshire (Fig. 1). The site is located in the historic town centre, on the east side of High Street South and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference TL 0212 2168 (Figure 2).

1.4 *Description*

The site comprises a single approximately square plot of land fronting onto High Street South. Nos. 65-75 High Street South (Jane Cart's Almshouses) occupy the street frontage.

1.5 *Geology & Topography*

The site is situated in an urban area and the soils in the town centre have not been mapped. If the natural soils survive on the sites they are likely to comprise the *Upton 1 Association*, namely shallow well-drained calcareous soil (Soil Survey 1983, 342a) over Middle Chalk (British Geological Survey 1992, sheet 220). The site is essentially flat and lies at an elevation of c.144m OD.

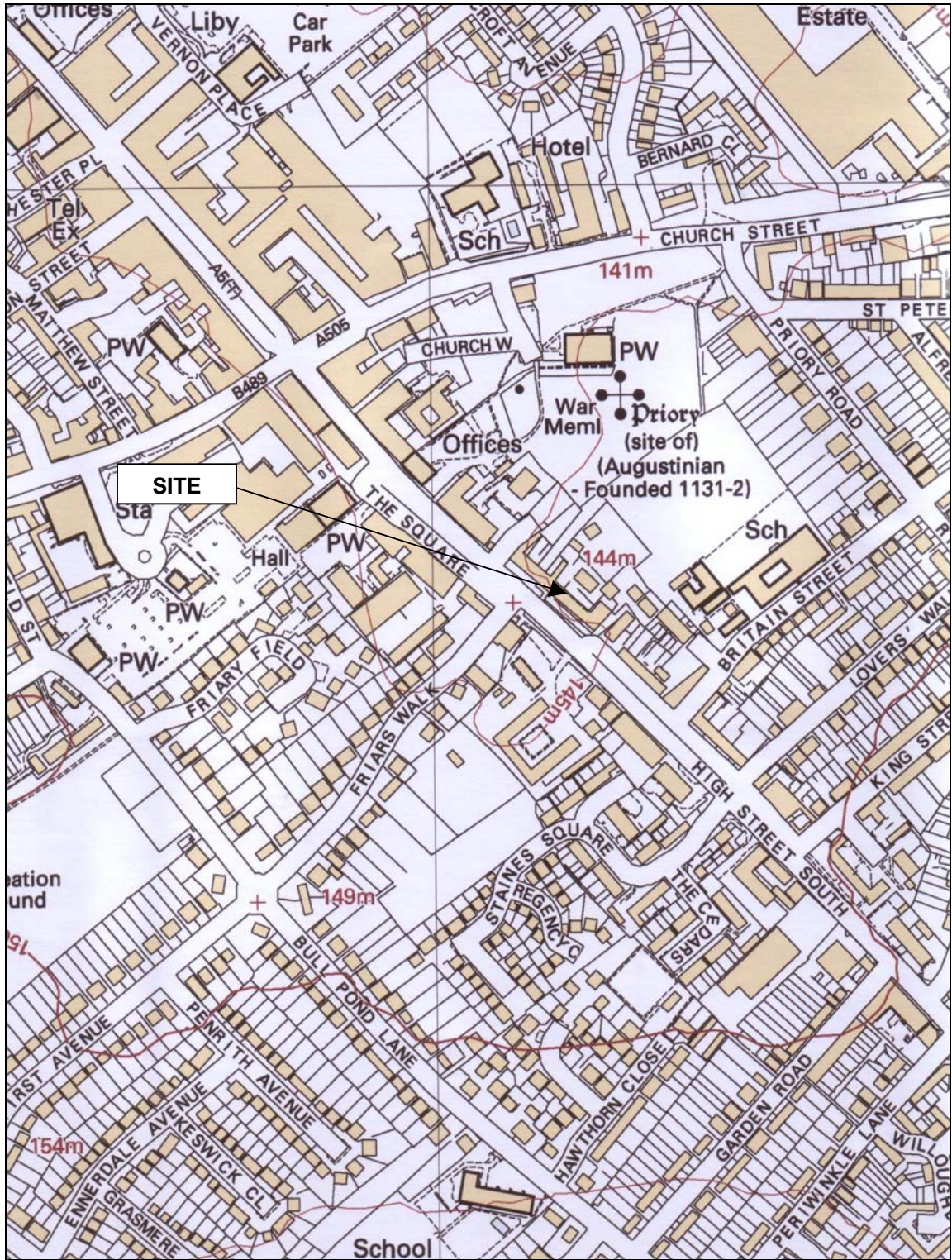


Figure 2: Site plan (scale 1:5000)

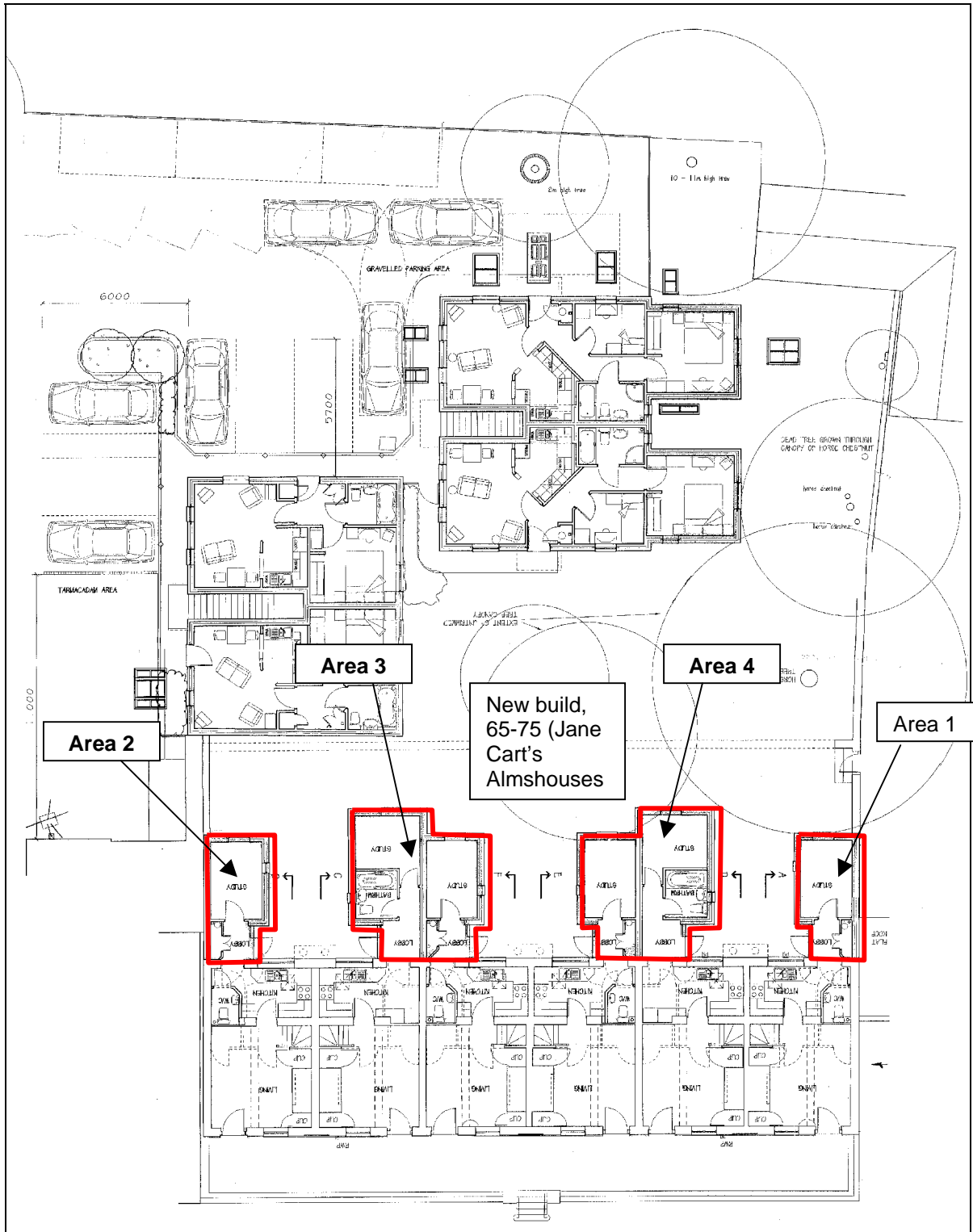


Figure 3: Proposed developments (not to scale)

2 Aims & Methods

2.1 Aims

As described in the brief (Section 4), the aims of the watching brief were:

- To establish the date, nature and extent of activity or occupation in the development site
- To establish the relationship of any remains found to the surrounding contemporary landscapes
- Recover artefacts to assist in the development of type series within the region
- Recover palaeo-environmental remains to determine local environmental conditions

2.2 Standards

The work conformed to the project design, to the relevant sections of the Institute of Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct* (IFA 2000) and *Standard & Guidance Notes* (IFA 2001), to the Association of Local Government Archaeological Officers East of England Region *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England* (ALGAO 2003), and to the relevant sections of ASC's own *Operations Manual*.

2.3 Methods

The work was carried out according to the brief (Section 5), which required:

- A programme of archaeological observation, investigation and recording will be undertaken during any development works likely to affect archaeological remains
- Any ground disturbance associated with the development will be undertaken under the supervision of a competent archaeologist

3 Archaeological & Historical Background

HER = Historic Environment Record

- 3.1 Dunstable is an area of considerable archaeological and historical importance and this has been recognized by the local authority through the production of the *Dunstable Extensive Archaeological Survey* (BCC 2001). The survey indicates that the area has been occupied since the prehistoric periods and that the site lies on the edge of the Roman and medieval town of Dunstable (*ibid*, figs. 3 and 12). The site therefore has the potential to reveal evidence of a variety of periods but the focus of interest lies in the prehistoric and Roman periods.
- 3.2 Dunstable was an area of considerable importance during the prehistoric periods and a variety of sites and artefacts are known in the area (Matthews 1989). A number of prehistoric sites are known on higher ground of the Chiltern ridge, notably an important group of round barrows (burial mounds) known as the Five Knolls, which lie outside the study area c.3km southwest of the site (Dyer 1991). A further significant site, known as Maiden Bower, is situated to the northwest of the town centre and is interpreted as an Iron Age fort overlying an earlier causewayed enclosure (Matthews 1989, 36-41). A number of prehistoric artefacts are known from the town centre (*eg* HER 157), but these are largely as a result of chance finds rather than controlled archaeological excavation.
- 3.3 During the Roman period the area was dominated by a major road, now known as *Watling Street* (Simco 1984; OS 1979). The present High Street South follows the line of this road, which ran to the west of the almshouses. A small town, known as *Dvrocobrivis*, developed at the junction of *Watling Street* and the *Ickniel Way*. Little large scale archaeological work has taken place within the Roman town (Matthews 1989, 68) and the layout of the settlement is not well understood. Part of the Roman period cemetery has been excavated to the west of the sites, at Friary Field (Gardner 2004) and a possible defensive ditch has been excavated north of the sites (HER 11281; Hagen 1972). The latter may indicate the southern limit of the town and as excavations to the east of the sites at Wellington Terrace (HER 15813; Warren 1992) failed to locate evidence of Roman activity, the sites probably lie to the south of the main area of Roman settlement. The *Extensive Archaeological Survey* shows the southern limit of Roman occupation on the northern edge of the site (BCC 2001, fig. 12).
- 3.4 There is currently little evidence for Saxon occupation in Dunstable, but remains of this period have been excavated at Puddlehill, c.3km north of the town centre, and a Saxon cemetery was excavated at Marina Drive, on the north side of the present town.
- 3.5 A new settlement was founded at Dunstable in 1119 by Henry I, who built a new royal residence which was regularly visited until the 16th century. It has been suggested that this residence was located around Kingsbury Court and Old Palace Lodge, to the northeast of the sites.
- 3.6 An Augustinian priory was founded in Dunstable in c.1131. The priory, dedicated to St Peter was situated to the north of the sites and is a *Scheduled Ancient Monument*

(SAM; no. 131). The site is situated close to the southern edge of the SAM, but is not within the scheduled area.

- 3.7 Little large scale excavation has taken place within the monastery but the west wall of the monastic precinct was recorded at the *Saracens Head* public house to the west of the sites (Warren 1984). The *Manshead Archaeological Society* have conducted a number of small scale archaeological projects in the area, but in general, little is known of the archaeology of the priory. An archaeological evaluation has recently been carried out at Montpelier House, which lies between the site and the monastic complex, but archaeological remains were not revealed in this area (Bolderson 2002). Consequently, it is likely that the site lies beyond the southern limit of the priory.
- 3.8 Religious institutions played an important part in the life of medieval Dunstable and a Dominican friary was founded in 1259 on the west side of High Street South (Clark and Maull 1989; Green & Horne 1991; Gardner 2004). A number of cross-shaped pits, perhaps garden features associated with the friary have recently been recorded (Gardner 2004).
- 3.9 The almshouses (HER 4294) were constructed in c.1723 and are Grade II Listed. The front terrace wall (HER 6261) is also listed. The first edition Ordnance Survey map (1887) shows the site of nos. 63A-B (to be subjected to a watching brief at a later date) as open ground, divided into small land parcels, probably garden plots. They remained open in the early part of the 20th century and the present buildings of 63 High Street south were probably constructed during the mid 20th century.

4 Results

4.1 Introduction

Five visits were made to the site between the 14th and 21st of March 2005, in both overcast and sunny conditions. Full cooperation was received from the building contractors, although due to the disturbed conditions of the ground, conditions for observation were not ideal.

4.2 Results

The removal of the topsoil from the development area was observed. This was typically 0.3m thick. The excavation of the footing trenches was also monitored. The trenches were typically 0.7m wide and between 1m and 1.7m deep. All were cut into natural chalk.

4.2.1 Area 1

Below the topsoil the ground was too dirty to clearly see the subsoil, although there were occasional patches of chalk visible through the disturbance (Area 1, Fig. 3). Artefacts recovered from this disturbed layer (Context 1) all dated from the 19th century or later, e.g. willow pattern pottery.

4.2.2 Area 2

Upon excavation of Area 2 (Fig. 3) a linear feature was observed (Context 2). This feature was c.0.3m deep and at least c.1.2m wide. Blocks of Totternhoe clunch stone were observed on the southern side of the feature (Plate 1).

4.2.3 Area 3

In Area 3 (Fig. 3), the second extension from the western side of the site, the footing trenches were mostly cut into the natural chalk. However, a rectangular piece of clunch (310 × 390 × 190mm) was excavated from a feature (Context 3), on the north eastern side of the trench. The stone was broken on one side, with tooling featured on the remaining three sides. The worked stone was probably a window mullion (Plate 2) from the medieval or late medieval period. An area was also noted to the north west of the extension (Context 5), outside of the footprint of the building, which was observed to have contained oyster shell and occasional fragments of tile. As the feature was located outside the outline of the extension its existence was noted, but it was not fully excavated. In addition to this, an area of brown chalky material with occasional tiles (Context 4) was detected in the cut of the footing trench, in the centre of Area 3.

4.2.4 Area 4

The final extent of footing trenches to be excavated in Area 4 (Fig. 3) revealed another patch of disturbed ground (Context 6). This was situated in the southeast corner of the extension, and contained brown chalky material with occasional tile fragments.



Plate 1: Clunch blocks *in situ*, Area 2



Plate 3: Window mullion, Area 3

5. Conclusions

- 5.1 As is mentioned earlier in this report, Dunstable was a place of significance during the Roman period, and then again during the medieval period. The site is situated close to the southern edge of the SAM, but not within the scheduled area.
- 5.2 The present High Street South follows the line of *Watling Street*, which ran to the west of the site. The southern boundary of the core of the Roman town of *Dvrocobrivis* ran just to the north of the site, but this was by no means a definite boundary. The nucleus of the town was undoubtedly located *c.*200m to the north west of the site, but it is more than likely that occupation spread further south along the line of *Watling Street*. If there had been any such presence on this site, the remains would certainly been evident in the natural chalk of the area. However, given the close proximity of *Watling Street*, even though nothing was observed during the excavation of footing trenches in this area, this does not rule out the possibility that there was Roman activity close by.
- 5.3 The medieval town of Dunstable was founded by Henry I in 1119. This settlement was again centred *c.*200m to the north west of the site, at the modern day central cross roads of the town. Henry also founded the Augustinian Priory to the north of the site in 1131. The boundaries of the Priory are defined by the SAM, and this site falls just to the south of its southern boundary. Nevertheless, as with the Roman period, this does not mean that occupation was exclusively to the north of the site. The presence of architectural fragments on the site, in particular the medieval or late medieval window mullion, indicate that there was activity in the vicinity of the site, even if it was not taking place on the site itself.

6. Acknowledgements

The writer is grateful to Hearne Holmes Development Ltd for commissioning and funding the watching brief. Thanks are also due to Mrs Lesley-Ann Mather, Archaeological Officer of the Heritage and Environment Section of Bedfordshire County Council, who acted as curatorial officer.

The fieldwork was undertaken for *ASC Ltd* by Jonathan R Hunn BA PhD MIFA. The report was prepared by Calli Rouse BA and edited by David Fell BA MA MIFA.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive will comprise:

1. Brief
2. Project Design
3. Initial Report
4. Clients site plans
5. Site Monitoring Sheets
6. List of photographs
7. B/W prints & negatives
8. CDROM with copies of all digital files.

7.2 The archive will be deposited with Luton Museum.

8. References

Standards & Specifications

- ALGAO 2003 *Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England*. East Anglian Archaeology Occasional Paper **14**.
- EH 1991 *The Management of Archaeological Projects*, 2nd edition. English Heritage (London).
- EH 2002 *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-Excavation*. English Heritage (London).
- Ferguson L.M. & Murray D.M. 1997 *Archaeological Documentary Archives: Preparation, Curation and Storage*. Institute of Field Archaeologists' Paper **1** (Manchester).
- IFA 2000a Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Conduct*.
- IFA 2000b Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*.
- IFA 2001 Institute of Field Archaeologists' *Standard & Guidance documents (Desk-Based Assessments, Watching Briefs, Evaluations, Excavations, Investigation and Recording of Standing Buildings, Finds)*.
- McKinley J.I. & Roberts C. 1993 *Excavation and Post-Excavation Treatment of Cremated and Inhumed Human Remains*. Institute of Field Archaeologists Technical Paper **13**.

Secondary Sources

- BCC 2001 *Bedfordshire Extensive Urban Survey: Dunstable Archaeological Assessment*. Bedfordshire County Council
- Bolderson J 2002 *Land adjacent to Montpelier House, High Street, South, Dunstable, Beds. An Archaeological Evaluation*. Archaeological Services and Consultancy Ltd report no. **DMH02/2**
- Clark R & Maul A, 1989 'Dunstable Friary Excavations 1988' *Manshead Magazine* **29**, 26-28
- Dyer J., 1991 'The Five Knolls and Associated Barrows at Dunstable, Bedfordshire' in *Bedfordshire Archaeology* **19**, 25-29
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- Green M & Horne B., 1991 'Analysis of the medieval pottery from Friary Field, Dunstable', *Manshead Magazine*, **31**, 1-31
- Hagen R., 'A Roman Ditch in Dunstable Priory Meadow' *Bedfordshire Archaeological Journal* **7**, 35-38

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Warren D 1992., 'Wellington Terrace' *South Midlands Archaeology* **22**, 9-10

Warren D., 1984 'Excavations in Dunstable: The Saracens Head Hotel, High Street South, Dunstable' *Manshead Magazine* **26**, 1-26



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: 65-75, High Street South Dunstable, Beds.		Project No/Code: 657 1 DHS	Sheet: 2 of 5
Client/Developer:		Date of visit: 16/3/05	
Contact: David Heavn		Phone: 07779-020408	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: 10.10	Finish:	
Completed by: JRAA			
Development Type:			
Footings	Services	Roads	Levelling <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: Dry & overcast.			
Observations: Observed the entire back yard area of the site in a reduced level condition. About 300mm residual of a dark organic topsoil. The area adjacent to the abn house (about 1 to 1.5m) stony had been heavily disturbed. Elsewhere the ground was too dirty to see the sub-soils, although there were occasional patches of chalk. The artefacts were of 4 century and later - witness pattern pottery etc. No apparent sign of anything earlier. The bricks in the boundary wall were unforged dark red (210mm x 100mm x 60mm) - thin ends were vitrified. Some bricks were 210mm long on west wall header/3 stretch/header + buttress; ditto on the north wall and east wall (some partly demolished) bricks contemporary with above (horizontally) - similar bond (header-stretch) - bonded with lime mortar.			
Comments:			

For sketch plan, use reverse

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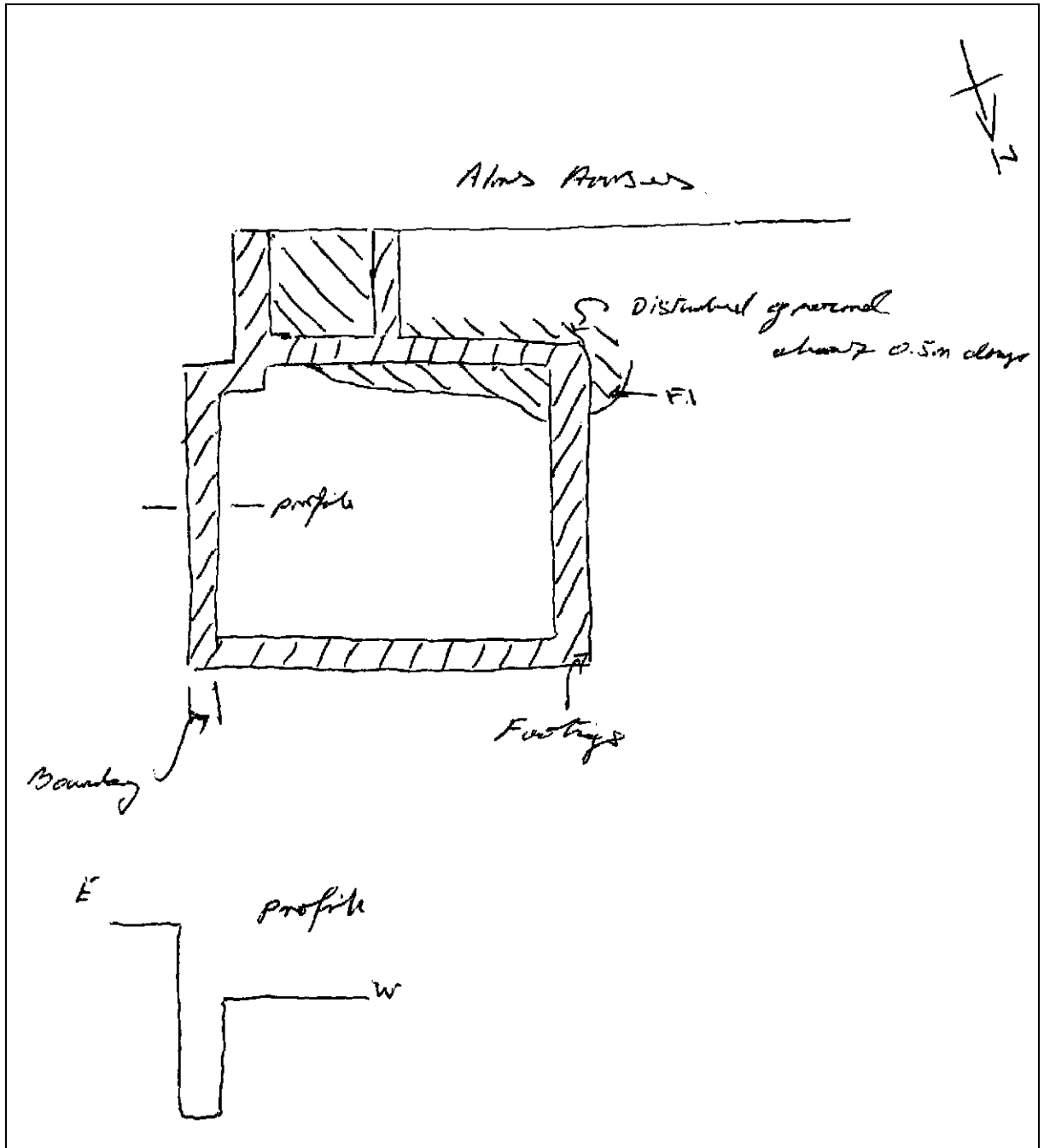
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: <i>65-75 High Street South</i>		Project No/Code: <i>657 1D14</i>	Sheet: <i>3 of 5</i>
<i>Dunstable</i>		Date of visit: <i>17/3/05</i>	
Client/Developer <i>Daniel Heam</i>			
Contact: <i>ditto</i>		Phone: <i>0779-020405</i>	
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):	Start: <i>12 00</i>	Finish:	
Completed by: <i>JPH</i>			
Development Type:			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: <i>Dry & Sunny - S. mainly v. warm.</i>			
Observations: <i>Footings of eastern most extension about 0.7m wide at top and 1m below the reduce level. The eastern section, on the boundary, is 1.7m deep (ie about 0.8m of overburden though could be exaggerated by a drainage run. The foundations were mostly cut into the natural chalk except at the extension SW corner where there is an area of brown (Hum 10 yr 5/3) cherty clay containing one flint (2-3cm max) and one flint of tile, unrelated. No artefacts observed.</i>			
<i>See contact sheet.</i>			
Comments: <i>Foundations of Alm House on chalk about 0.3m deep below reduced level.</i>			
<i>See contact sheet</i>			

For sketch plan, use reverse

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17/3/05

CONTEXT RECORD

Site Name/Code 657/DHS		Co-ordinates	Context Number 2
Site Sub-division	Type <i>Feature</i>	Category <i>wall/gully</i>	

SOILS (& Bonding Agents)

Texture	Consistency
Colour	
Coarse components	

CUTS		MASONRY
Plan	Profile	Constituents

DIMENSIONS

Length 2.7m	Width 0.6m	Diameter	Depth	Alignment
--------------------	-------------------	----------	-------	-----------

DESCRIPTION

*see over for description + sketch
+ description of architectural fragment/blocks.*

STRATIGRAPHY

PHYSICAL RELATIONSHIPS		STRATIGRAPHICAL RELATIONSHIPS
Below <i>Overburden.</i>	Above	
Cut By	Cuts <i>not chalk</i>	
Butted By	Butts	
Within	Contains <i>same</i>	
Filled by	Fill of	
	Same as	
Division of	Divided into	

INTERPRETATION

Feature - undated but possibly medieval.

Part of	Provisional date/period	Phase	Matrix
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REFERENCES

FINDS	Object record
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SAMPLES

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PHOTOGRAPHS	Colour	B/W
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DRAWINGS	Section	Plan	Site plan
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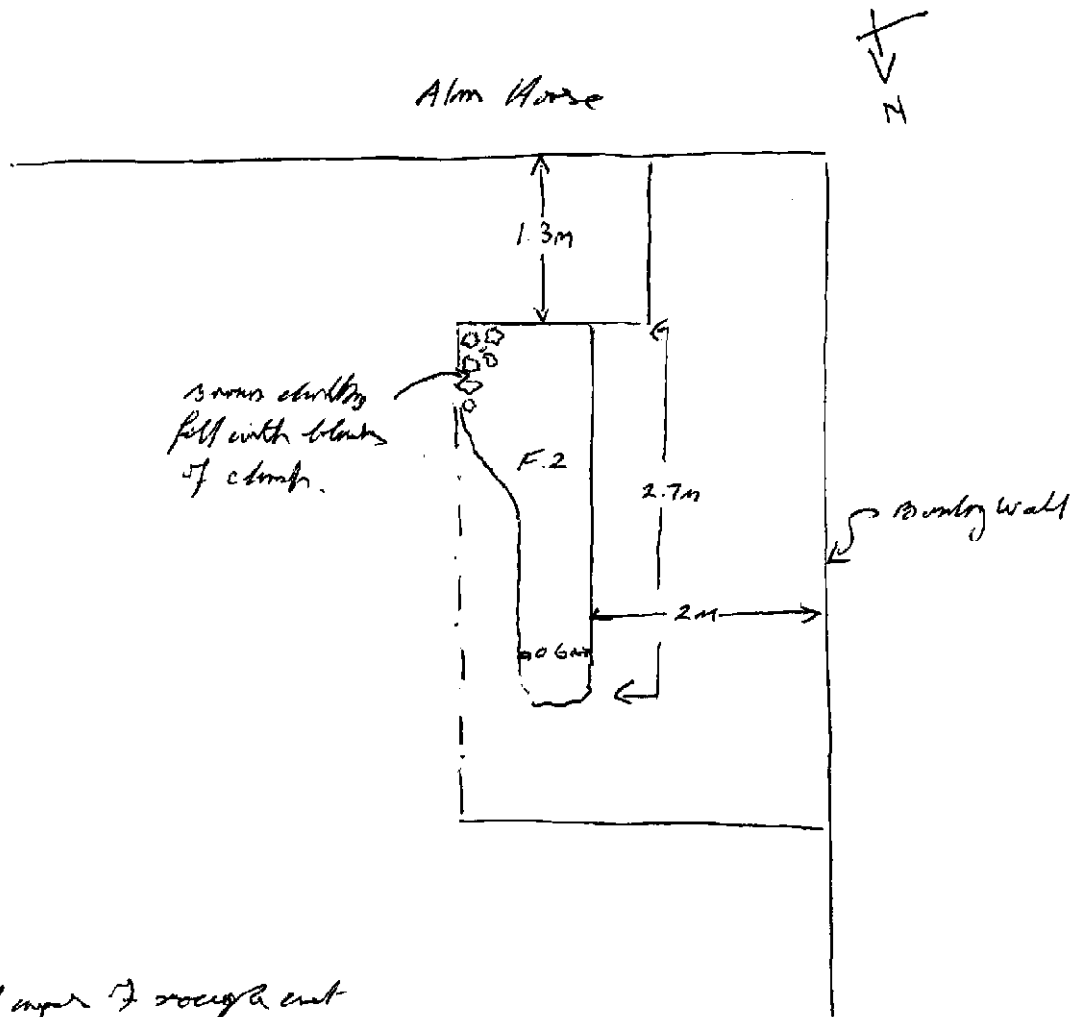
RECORDING NOTES

Excavation method & Conditions	Recorded by	Date	Checked
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CONTINUED OVER

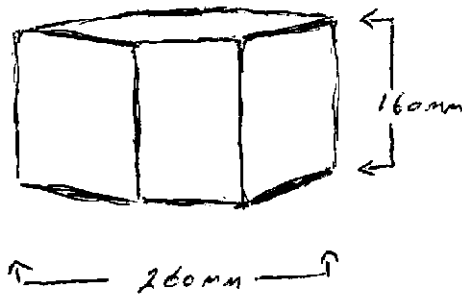
CONTINUATION SHEET

Version 1 (1998)



F.2. Layer of rough cut
clunch c.o. 20 dia.

one piece has been carved. Possible window mullion
260mm x 1 mm x 160mm





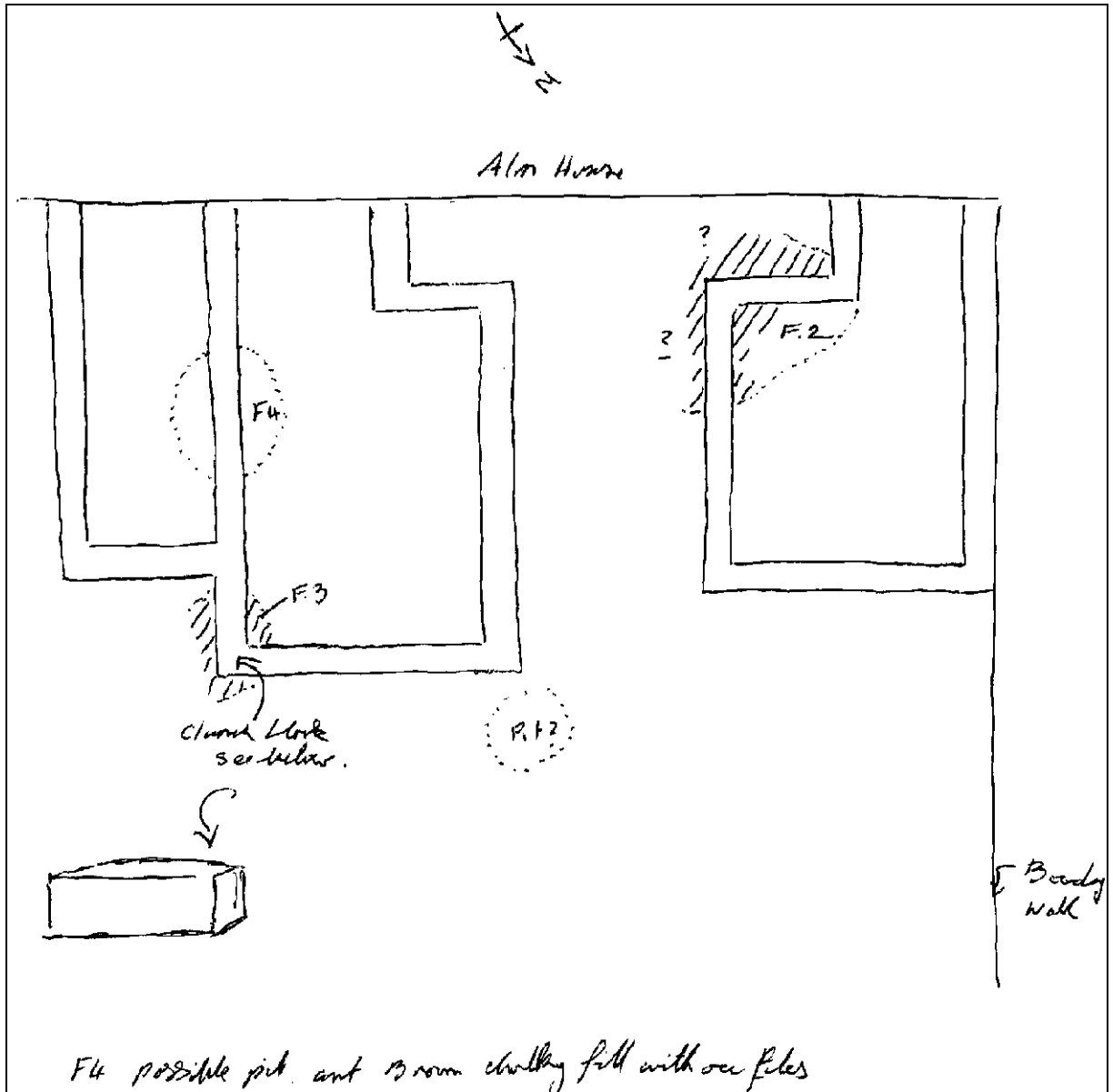
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ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: 65-75, High St South		Project No/Code: 657 1 DHS		Sheet: 4 of 5		
Dunstable		Date of visit: 18/3/05				
Client/Developer David Hearn						
Contact:				Phone: 0779-020408		
Duration of Visit (inc. travel):		Start: 10 am		Finish:		
Completed by: JPH						
Development Type:						
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling	Quarrying	Pipelines	Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: Dry and Sunny						
Observations: The 1st extension from the western side of the site (ie the one that had been reduced by a further 0.1m). No other features observed other than F2 seen the previous day. F2 is about 0.3m deep and at least 1.2m wide. Church observed on S side (See over for sketch) Foundation depth 0.7m.						
The 2nd extension from the western side of site and 6m x 4m approx. Foundation 0.57m wide by 0.9m deep. Mostly cut into natural chalk though at the NE side a bump of ashlar clunk was machine excavated (310mm x 390mm x 190mm) - rectangular shaped with tooling on all sides except one side where broken. There is in addition an area to the NW outside the footprint that has oyster shell and one fragment of tile indicating a possible pit.						
Comments:						

For sketch plan, use reverse

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD MONITORING RECORD

Project: 65-75 High Street South Dunstable		Project No/Code: 657 1 DHS	Sheet: 5 of 5
Client/Developer Daniel Hearn		Date of visit: 21/3/05	
Contact: ditto	Phone: 0779-020408		
Duration of Visit (Inc. travel):	Start: 10 am	Finish:	
Completed by: JMH			
Development Type:			
Footings <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Services	Roads	Levelling
			Quarrying
			Pipelines
			Other (specify):
Site & weather conditions: Dry, sunny & cool.			
Observations: Saw the 2 second extension from the east. Foundations on before (ie about 1m deep & 0.55m wide). This nothing cut into the hard natural chalk. There was another patch of disturbed ground at the SE corner of the extension. This contained a brown chalky fill with occasional tile fragments.			
Comments: No significant features observed. No artefacts			

For sketch plan, use reverse

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