

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT:

DRUID HOUSE, 26 SOPERS LANE, CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET

Planning Reference: 8/12/0070

NGR: SZ 1561 9272

AAL Site Code: CHSL 13

OASIS Reference Number: allenarc1-149433



Report prepared for PB Lewis Builders

By
Allen Archaeology Limited
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May 2013



Allenarchaeology



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Executive Summary

- Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by PB Lewis Builders to carry out a programme of monitoring and recording during groundworks associated with the construction of an extension at Druid House, 26 Sopers Lane, Christchurch in Dorset.
- The site lies in an area of archaeological interest, to the west of the Saxon and medieval defences of the town. Prehistoric and Roman activity has also been recorded nearby.
- The watching brief uncovered no finds, features or deposits of archaeological significance, although archaeological deposits may survive on site below the limit of excavation.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Allen Archaeology Limited was commissioned by PB Lewis Builders to carry out a programme of archaeological monitoring and recording during groundworks associated with the construction of an extension to the rear of Druid House, 26 Sopers Lane in Christchurch, Dorset.
- 1.2 The excavation, recording and reporting conformed to current national guidelines, as set out in the Institute for Archaeologists '*Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (IfA 1994, revised 2008) as well as a specification prepared by Allen Archaeology Limited (AAL 2013). All relevant English Heritage guidelines on archaeological best practice were also followed.
- 1.3 The documentary archive will be deposited with The Red House Museum in Christchurch within twelve months of the submission of this report for long-term curation.

2.0 Site Location and Description

- 2.1 Christchurch is located in the administrative district of Christchurch Borough Council, approximately 7.5km to the east of the centre of Bournemouth, at the confluence of the Rivers Avon and Stour. The site is towards the centre of the town, on the southeast side of Sopers Lane, and to the southwest of Druitt Gardens. The extension is located at the rear of the property, centred on NGR SZ 1561 9272.
- 2.2 The local geology comprises bedrock deposits of Branksome Sand, overlain by superficial deposits of river terrace sand and gravel ([http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/home.html?Accordion1=1# maps](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience/home.html?Accordion1=1#maps)).

3.0 Planning Background

- 3.1 Full planning permission was granted by Christchurch Borough Council for the '*erection of first floor extension to side and rear following reduction of existing balcony. Extend accommodation at second floor to create additional bedroom and ensuite. Erect extension to ground floor at rear following demolition of existing timber outbuildings. Install roof lights at second floor*' (Reference 8/12/0070). Planning permission was granted subject to conditions, including a condition for the undertaking of a programme of archaeological observation and recording during all groundworks associated with the proposed extension. A short length of trench associated with a proposed change of a conservatory to a garden room was excluded from the scheme as the area was believed to be heavily disturbed by previous development.
- 3.2 The approach adopted is consistent with the guidelines that are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government 2012).

4.0 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 The site lies immediately to the west of Scheduled Monument 1002371, pertaining to 'Site of town walls in and east of Druitt Gardens'. The Scheduled site was previously investigated in 1972/3, when a 70m east – west trench was excavated across the putative Saxon defences of the town (Jarvis 1983: Site X5). This followed eight trial pits across the area and showed that there was approximately 1m of soil overlying the significant archaeological deposits.
- 4.2 The earliest deposit encountered was a small Iron Age pit that was cut into the natural gravels, and Romano-British activity was attested by a number of residual sherds of pottery (ADS Reference: MDO 19436).
- 4.3 The trench also identified the Saxon defensive ditch and showed that it had completely filled up by the 13th/14th century, evidenced by quantities of refuse in the top of the ditch. There was also some evidence for a timber revetment, and stone rubble within and adjacent to the ditch was identified as a further revetment that had been robbed out. It is believed the defences contracted in the medieval period to enclose a smaller area within the former Saxon burh as represented by a ditch exposed c.60m east of the earlier Saxon defences (Harding 1984).
- 4.4 The Anglo-Saxon name for Christchurch was *Tweoxneam* or *Twynham* meaning '(the place) between streams' (Davis 1983), and was one of the places listed in the 9th or early 10th century *Burghal Hidage* (Hinton 1977). Its known defences are presumed to date from this period, and the origins of the settlement may well date back to an earlier period, as it is probable that *Twynham* was the centre for a minster church from at least the 8th century. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle refers to a royal centre (*ham*) at *Twynham* c.901 AD (Cunliffe 1993). The place name is likely to have been changed to Christchurch on account of the development of the priory in the early 12th century, to the southeast of the site.
- 4.5 At the time of the Domesday Book of 1086 AD, Christchurch was a settlement of c.500 individuals, and was owned largely by the king, with a smaller proportion of the town held by the Canons of Twynham (Betley 1986 and Munby 1982). It remained a prosperous town throughout the medieval period, but had declined significantly by the 17th century, reviving again only with the arrival of the railway in the 19th century, which prompted the development of the town as a coastal resort (Betley 1986).

5.0 Methodology

- 5.1 Groundworks were monitored by Barry Hennessey of AAL over a single day; Monday 14th January 2013. Machine excavation was undertaken using a tracked excavator fitted with a toothless bucket, and hand excavation where machine access was not possible. All exposed plan and section surfaces were inspected for archaeological features and deposits to determine the stratigraphic sequence.
- 5.2 All archaeological deposits were recorded in plan and section and also photographically, with an identification number board, appropriate scales and a directional arrow. General site shots were also taken to show the location of the groundworks.
- 5.3 Standard AAL context recording sheets were used to record all context information (for example deposits, archaeological features and stratigraphic relationships).

6.0 Results

- 6.1 The uppermost deposit was a very dark greyish brown garden soil, 01, measuring c.0.22m thick. This sealed a similar thickness of dark greyish brown sandy silt with sparse gravel, 02, possibly representing a levelling layer. Below this was 03, a c.0.45m thick deposit of similar composition but with frequent root disturbance, interpreted as a possible buried topsoil. At the base of the trench, at a depth of c.0.9m, 03 sealed 04, a mid brown sand of possible alluvial origin.
- 6.2 No archaeological features, deposits or artefacts were revealed during groundworks.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The groundworks failed to identify any features or deposits of archaeological interest, exposing only a sequence of levelling layers and topsoil/garden soil horizons. Historic map evidence indicates the site was located within allotment gardens during the late 19th and early 20th century, and this use may account for the deep buried topsoil layer 03.
- 7.2 It was noted during archaeological works in DrUITT Gardens to the east of the site that significant archaeological deposits were sealed by c.1m of overburden (Jarvis 1983), and as such, it is possible that earlier deposits of potential archaeological significance survive on the current site below the 0.9m deep limit of excavation.

8.0 Effectiveness of Methodology

- 8.1 The archaeological watching brief methodology was appropriate to the nature and extent of the proposed development. It has demonstrated that the groundworks have had a negligible impact on the local archaeological resource.

9.0 Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Allen Archaeology Limited would like to thank PB Lewis Builders for this commission and for their cooperation during the fieldwork.

10.0 References

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Appendix 1: Colour Plates



Plate 1: General view of the groundworks, looking northwest



Plate 2: Southwest facing representative section, looking northeast. Scale is 0.5m

Appendix 2: Context Summary List

Context	Type	Description	Interpretation
01	Layer	Very dark greyish brown sandy silt. Seals 02	Modern garden soil
02	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy silt, sparse gravel. Seals 03, sealed by 01	Levelling layer
03	Layer	Dark greyish brown sandy silt, frequent root disturbance. Seals 04, sealed by 02	Buried topsoil
04	Layer	Mid brown sand. Sealed by 03	Possible alluvial sand

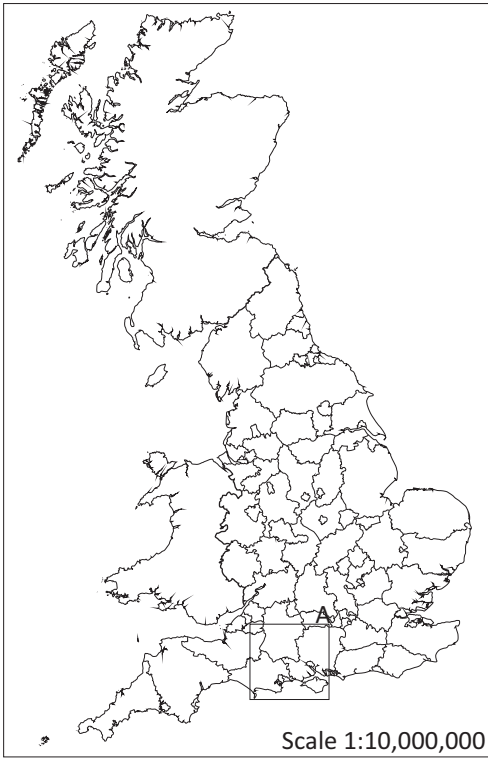


Figure 1: Site location outlined in red

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Site Code: CHSL 13
 Scales: 1:10,000,000
 1:1,000,000
 1:25,000 @ A4
 Drawn by: C. Clay
 Date: 29/04/13

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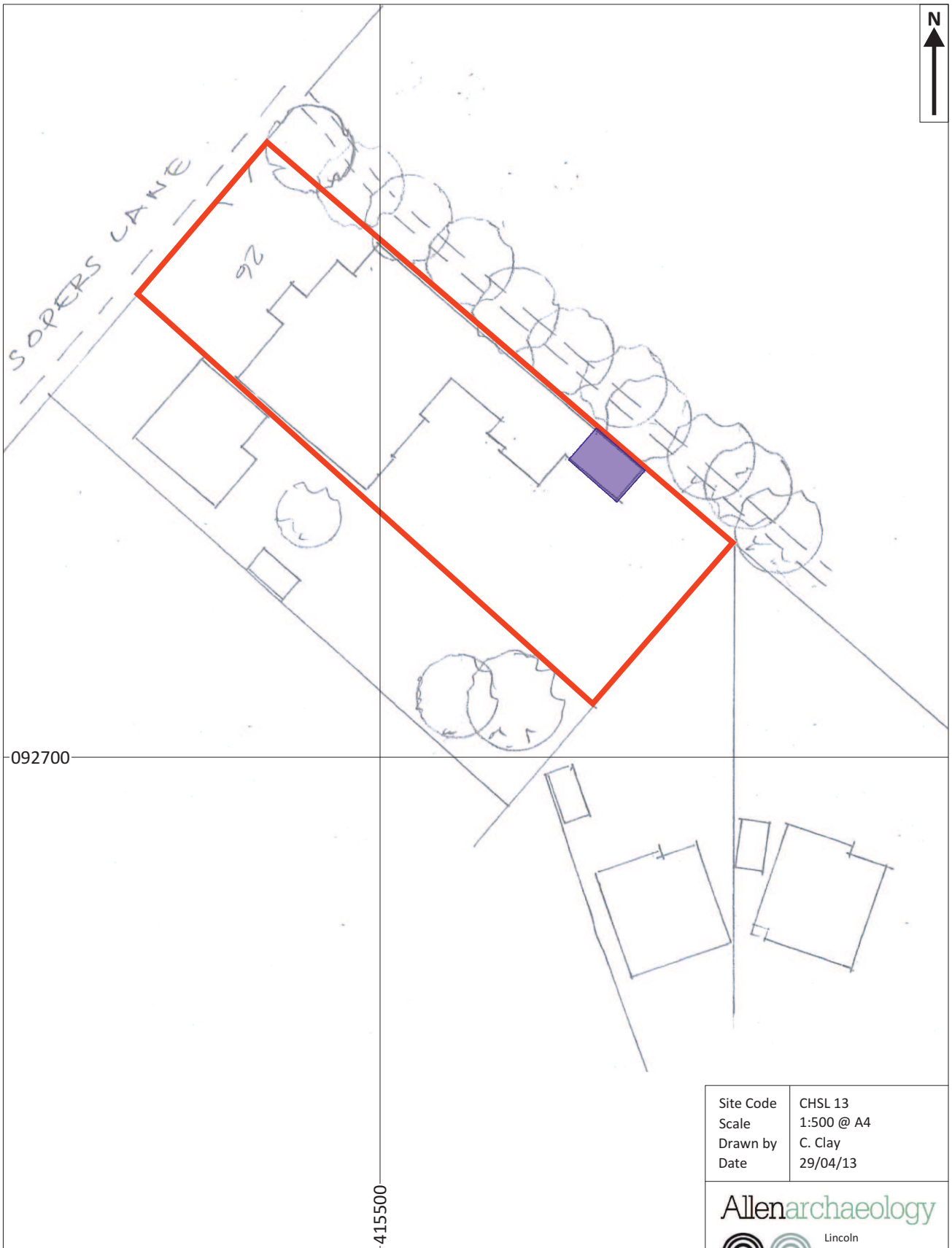


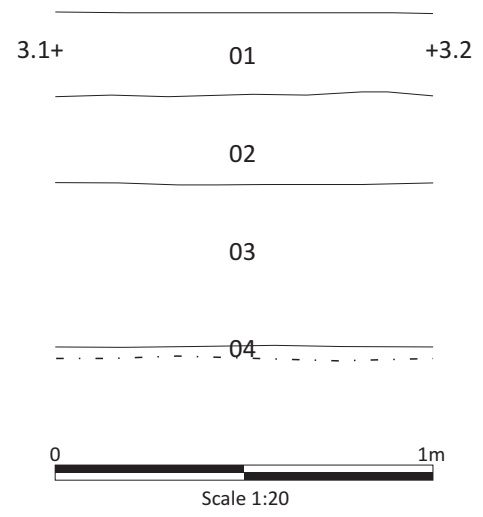
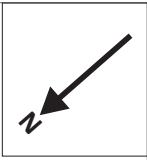
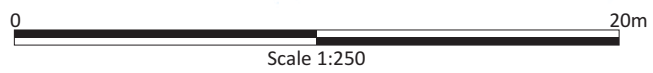
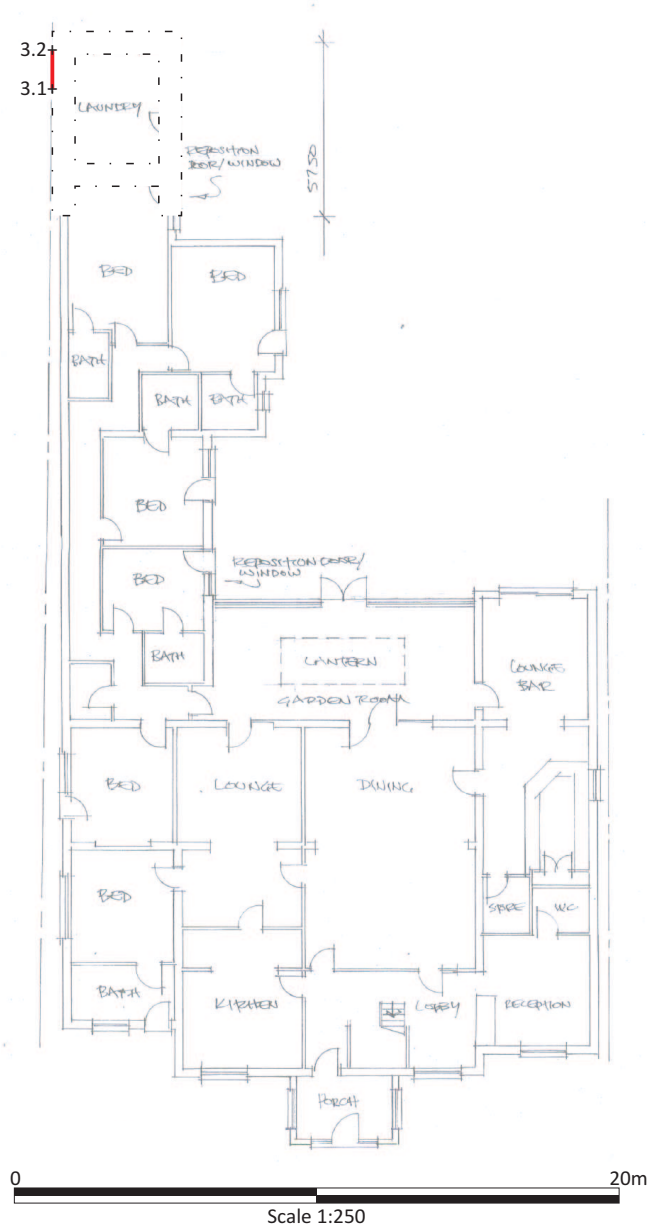
Figure 2: Site location in red with new extension in blue

Site Code	CHSL 13
Scale	1:500 @ A4
Drawn by	C. Clay
Date	29/04/13

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Site Code	CHSL 13
Scale	1:250 and 1:20 @ A4
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Figure 3: Plan of groundworks and representative section