

Land adjacent to Vine Passage, Honiton, Devon

NGR ST 16200 00727

Results of an archaeological watching brief

Planning ref. East Devon District Council 10/1837/FUL

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Prepared by:  
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On behalf of:  
DRD Construction

Report No: ACD290/2/0

Date: November 2012



archaeology

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HONITON, DEVON**  
(ST 16200 00727)

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*East Devon District Council planning ref: 10/1837/FUL*

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## **Summary**

*An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by AC archaeology between April and May 2011, on land adjacent to Vine Passage, Honiton, Devon (ST 16200 00727) during groundworks associated with a new housing development. The watching brief was carried out as a condition of the planning permission for residential development (East Devon District Council planning consent ref: 10/1837/FUL).*

*Monitoring during the groundworks demonstrated that clay was being extracted from the site during the post medieval period, probably for brick-making. A small structure in the eastern corner of the development appeared to pre-date this activity. During the early/mid 19th century the plot was redeveloped (probably in several phases) when a terrace of small workers cottages was constructed on the site.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1** This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief, which was undertaken on land adjacent to Vine Passage, Honiton, Devon (ST 16200 00727). The archaeological works were commissioned by DRD Construction and carried out by AC archaeology between April and May 2011. The fieldwork was undertaken as a condition of the East Devon District Council planning consent 10/1837/FUL, and as advised by the Devon County Council Historic Environment Team (hereafter DCCHET). The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.

**1.2** The archaeological watching brief was undertaken throughout the duration of the groundworks associated with the construction of eight new dwellings on land adjacent to Vine Passage.

**1.3** The development site is situated towards the southern end of a former, narrow burgage plot, which is aligned on the main High Street. The southwest boundary of the development site is formed by a concrete block wall, while the northwest and southeast ends comprise the walls of adjoining properties. The northeast side of the site abuts an access track (also a public footpath), which leads through to the Vine Inn and the High Street. The plot covers an area of approximately 210m<sup>2</sup> of generally level waste ground. It lies at around 110mOD, with the underlying solid geology comprising mudstones from the Branscombe Mudstone Formation (British Geological Survey online 2011).

## **2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

**2.1** An initial desk-based appraisal has been undertaken to inform this report. This has comprised a review of:

- Archaeological and historical data held by Devon County Council's Historic Environment Record (hereafter DCCHER);
- The English Heritage National Heritage List website; and,
- Historical cartographic and documentary information at Devon Record Office (DRO) and Westcountry Studies Library (WCSL), both in Exeter.

**2.2** The main archaeological interest in the site is that it is located in the historic core of the town occupying the southern end of a narrow medieval burgage plot, which extends northwest from the main High Street. The site occupies land, which would originally have been situated to the rear of a tenement fronting the High Street. The settlement of Honiton once formed part of a Saxon estate

centred on Axminster (DCCHER ref no. 17552). The settlement (from which the present town developed), is believed to be founded during this period, being one of a number of farmsteads established along the sides of the Otter Valley. The location of the Domesday settlement *Honitona*, held by Drogo, while currently unknown, is thought to lie to the south of the town. The borough of Honiton was awarded to William de Vernon, 5th Earl of Devon by Robert Count of Mortain (brother of William the Conqueror) following the Norman conquest. In 1193 William de Vernon granted Honiton borough status. The present settlement pattern is typical of a 13th century medieval town, with narrow burgage plots being established on both sides of the main High Street. By the early 15th century the pattern of long narrow burgage plots was well established and fossilised within the town plan.

- 2.3 The 1842 parish tithe map (*Fig. 2*) depicts the site as being occupied at that time by what appear to be a terrace of six small worker's cottage. These buildings are still present on the 1888 and 1903 Ordnance Survey 25-inch maps, with the latter depicting a total of seven cottages (*Figs. 3a-3b*). These houses are still present in 1959, but had been removed by 1970, when a printer's workshop was built on the site. This workshop was subsequently demolished and the site left as open waste ground used for *ad-hoc* parking. The house occupying the frontage of the plot dates to c. 1820.

### 3. AIMS

- 3.1 The aim of the watching brief was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during groundworks associated with the development, with particular reference to any evidence for the former buildings, which are known to have occupied the site, together with any evidence for earlier medieval settlement or industry.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Valentin 2011), which had been previously agreed with DCCHET. Attendance by the site archaeologist was 'comprehensive' in accordance with the Institute for Archaeologists document *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (published 1994, revised 2008) Section 3.2.10 *i.e. present during all relevant groundworks*.
- 4.2 All groundworks were undertaken by a mechanical excavator, using a wide toothless bucket under the control and direction of the Site Archaeologist. The watching brief was carried out during the initial reduction of ground levels, the removal of the existing drainage pipes and the excavation of the foundation trenches for the eight new dwellings. The ground was reduced over most of the site by a depth of c. 0.4m. The principle foundation trenches were c.0.6m wide and varied in depth, with internal trenches being generally c.0.5m wide and also varying in depth.
- 4.3 Field observations were recorded using the full range of the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system. All site levels were related to Ordnance Survey datum and spoilheaps were scanned for displaced artefacts.

### 5. RESULTS

**5.1** The results from the archaeological watching brief are described in detail below, with relevant plans included in this report as Figs. 4-5.

**5.2 Reduction of ground levels – results (Fig. 4)**

Following the reduction of the ground levels across the central and southeast end of the site, the remains of at least three buildings (Building Nos. 1, 2 & 3) formed by foundation walls F105, F108, F109, F111 & F112, were exposed (Fig. 4). All were constructed from pieces of local chert, which were laid transversely. The foundations were generally very shallow in depth, being only one or two courses and between 0.5m and 0.8m wide. All three buildings were sealed by a modern overburden layer (100), which comprised a dark blackish-brown, silty clay with frequent inclusions of fragments of modern breeze block, brick and chert. A dark blackish-brown silty clay containing frequent chert inclusions, with patches of redeposited natural yellow clay, containing chert gravels (101) was noted to the southwest of all three structures. Layer 101 is also associated with the demolition of the cottages.

**5.2.1 Foundation F105 - Building Nos. 1 & 2 (Fig. 4)**

Foundation F105 lay at the very southeast end of the site and was L-shaped in plan, with the northeast to southwest aligned section measuring 6.4m long and the northwest to southeast section some 7m long. It comprised chert, bonded by a yellow, sandy clay and appears to have formed the northwest and a short section of the southwest wall of Building No. 1 and the southeast and a short section of the southwest wall of Building No. 2. The northwest section of Foundation F105 was abutted *c.* 0.8m from the east corner of Building No. 1 by feature F106, which appeared to be a fireplace. Fireplace F106 was *c.* 2m long by *c.* 0.75m wide in plan. Its abutment with F105, suggests that it was a later addition and that the structure was in domestic use. Fireplace F106 was also different in construction to foundation F105, comprising fragments of chert bonded by a mid brown, silty clay.

The interior of Building No. 1 was infilled with demolition layer (102), a dark brown a mixed deposit of dark blackish-brown, silty clay containing frequent chert inclusions. A small patch of compacted chert (104) bonded by red sand *c.* 2m by *c.* 1m wide was identified to the southeast of foundation F105, below demolition layer 102. It appeared to comprise a crude metalled surface, which may be contemporaneous with Building No. 1. It was not clear whether it is the remains of a primary floor surface or a later floor bedding material.

While the northeast, southeast and much of the southwest sides of Building No. 1 had not survived, cartographic evidence combined with the presence of the surviving boundary walls to the southeast and southwest suggest that the originally structure must have been some 7m by 7m in plan.

**5.2.2 Foundation F108 - Building Nos. 2 & 3 (Fig. 4)**

Foundation F108 was an inverted L-shape in plan, with the main northeast to southwest aligned section measuring 7.2m long and the shorter northwest to southeast section some 4.15m long. It appears to have formed the northwest wall and a short section of the southwest wall of a former building some 12.50m long by *c.* 7m wide and the southeast wall of Building No. 3. Foundation F108 comprised chert and occasional brick fragments, bonded by a gritty yellow, silty clay, with frequent lime mortar flecks.

The northeast to southwest aligned section of F108 had been disturbed some 4m from the west corner of Building No. 2, while the northwest to southeast section appears to be as slightly offset

from F105, which lies to the southeast. The area between foundations F105 and F108 had been disturbed by modern services and it was therefore not possible to establish the relationship between these two foundations.

Foundation F105 (described previously) partially forms the southeast and southwest sides of Building No. 2. Two short stubs of northwest to southeast aligned foundation on the northwest side of F105, located c. 0.8m from the southern corner of Building No.2, form a fireplace (F107), which appears to be c. 2m long by c. 0.5m wide in plan, forming a back-to-back fireplace with feature F106 in Building No. 1. A third very short northwest to southeast aligned section of foundation which lay c. 1m to the northeast of fireplace F107 may represent the remains of an internal division within Building No. 2. It appeared to be an integral part of foundation F105. Building No. 2 was infilled with demolition layer (103), which was identical to demolition layer (102) in Building No. 1. No floor surfaces were identified.

#### 5.2.3 Foundations F109, F111 & F112 - Building No. 3 (Fig. 4)

Foundation F109 was 6.7m long and aligned northwest to southeast, forming the southwest wall of Building No. 3. It clearly abutted foundation F108, suggesting that the two were not contemporaneous. Foundation F109 comprised large pieces of chert bonded by with a lime mortar. While the eastern corner of the structure have not survived, part of the northern corner was present, formed by foundations F111 and F112. Both were very fragmentary and only partially exposed, with the northeast to southwest aligned foundation F111 being c. 2m long, and the northwest to southeast aligned foundation F112 being c. 1m long. Building No. 3 was infilled with demolition layer (110), which was the same as demolition layers 102 and 103. A mid to dark brown, silty clay with frequent chert inclusions and fragments of brick and glass (113) was noted in the area to the northwest of Building No. 3. It was clearly associated the demolition of the cottages.

No internal fireplaces or subdivision were noted within Building No. 3 and neither were there any clear entrances through foundation F109, suggesting that the entrances to all three buildings maybe on the northeast side of the terrace. Building No. 3 appears to be similar in dimension to Building No. 1.

Post medieval pottery was recovered from the demolition layers (101, 102, 103 & 110), confirming the 19th century date of the cottages.

### 5.3 Excavation of foundation trenches - results

Following the reduction of the ground levels, (which involved the removal of the foundations associated with Buildings Nos 1-3), observations during the trench excavations demonstrated that the site had been heavily disturbed prior to the construction of the 19th century cottages. One small structure, which apparently predated the 19th century terrace, was recorded in the very southeast corner of the site. A large number of probable extraction pits were also identified.

#### 5.3.1 Foundations F117 & F119 - Building No. 4 (Fig. 5)

Foundations F117 and F119 were located in the eastern corner of the site and comprised pieces of chert bonded by a yellowish-brown, silty clay. They were 0.55m wide and 0.6m deep and appear to represent the western corner of a small building. The interior of the structure contained three layers. Layer 118 comprised mixed brown and grey clays some 0.35m thick, which sealed a possible contemporary deposit some 0.15m thick of silty dark brown organic material (115). This layer produced a single sherd of 18th century pottery. Layer 115 overlay a natural subsoil layer (116). Layer 122 was exposed in the foundation trench to the southwest of Building No. 4. It comprised a

mixed brownish-grey clay with charcoal and mortar flecks, and fragments of slate and chert, with a maximum depth of 0.80m. Layer 122 did appear to incorporate elements of demolition layer 102, which lay immediately above it.

### 5.3.2 *The extraction pits (Fig. 5)*

A large number (11) of probable extraction pits (features F120, F123, F125, F127, F130, F133, F135, F137, F143, F145 & F147) were noted in the foundation trench sections across the whole of the site, cut into the natural orange and grey clay (*Fig. 5*). At the southeast end of the site, there was evidence that one of these extraction pits feature (F120) had been re-excavated prior to the construction of Foundation F105 and infilled with stone rubble (layer 121) to underpin the wall (*Plate 1*). This deposit also contained some large, overfired, brick fragments which may indicate the purpose of the pits.

The pits varied in depth from c.0.7m to c.1.3m and varied considerable in size, with the largest F137, being some 5m in length. The fills (121, 124, 126, 128, 131, 134, 136, 138, 144, 146 & 148) were generally grey to mid-brown, loose silty clays containing building rubble (stone and brick), plaster and mortar fragments as well as charcoal flecks and fragments. The nature of these fills suggests that they were deliberately backfilled with little evidence for slow natural silting. Post medieval pottery was recovered from five contexts (121, 131, 134 & 136), the fills of Pits F120, F130, F133 & F135. A number of demolition layers were noted across the site (layers 122, 129, 132, 139 & 140-142); several contained post medieval pottery

## 6. THE FINDS *Kerry Dean*

### 6.1 Introduction

All the finds recovered on site have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate, then quantified according to material type within each context. The assemblage, which has been examined by context to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented, is further discussed below. Finds totals by material type are given in Appendix 1.

### 6.2 Pottery

A total of twenty-eight sherds of pottery, weighing 1359g were retained. The majority of the sherds date to the 18th-19th centuries. One piece, a jug handle from an unstratified context, weighing 43g dates to c. 15th-16th century, while several pieces from demolition layer 102 and layer 115, within Building No. 4, weighing 103g date to c. 17th century. There are also two sherds from demolition layers 101 (west of Buildings Nos. 1-3) and 132, weighing 30g that are 20th century in date.

The pottery assemblage contained a minimum number of 21 vessels. All are common domestic forms, dominated by dishes, bowls and jars. Several of the sherds exhibit evidence of domestic use in the form of exterior sooting. This is particularly evident on an unstratified, residual, 15th-16th century fragment of cooking jar handle.

The majority of the pottery, some 85%, is South Somerset lead-glazed earthenwares. The assemblage includes two sherds of sgraffito forms; one from an unstratified context and another from demolition layer 101. Both are c. 18th century in date. Other pottery types in the assemblage from these demolition layers include a fragment of a Bristol or Staffordshire derived yellow earthenware ribbed cup, sherd of a slipware cup with comb decoration both 18th-19th century in date and two sherds of 20th century industrial white ware, one with colour printed decoration.

One sherd, from an unstratified context comprises a fragment of a South Somerset lead-glazed skillet with incised decoration, which has firing cracks on the interior of the vessel. Such distinctive cracks suggest that it is a waster. It is difficult to determine whether the vessel was used despite the defects.

### 6.3 Ceramic building material

Six fragments of ceramic building material weighing 1972g, were recovered during the groundworks from foundation F105 and context 121, the fill of pit F120. These consist of four hand-made, reddish-brown brick fragments. One has perforated holes while another has large firing cracks right the way through the brick, indicating that it is a waster. The presence of these brick fragments is of note as it appears that prior to the development of the site for residential purposes, it was covered by a number of clay extraction pits.

### 6.4 Clay pipe

One fragment of plain clay pipe with stem and bowl (weighing 12g) was recovered from demolition layer 102 in Building No. 1. The bowl is undecorated but has charring on the exterior surface, the foot is also undecorated and there are no maker's stamps visible. While the origin is undeterminable, the fragment of pipe dates to between 1700 and 1770.

## 7. COMMENT

- 7.1 Observations made during the groundworks have suggested that the site was originally being used to extract clay, probably for brick-making during the medieval period. A small structure (Building No. 4) in the eastern corner of the site may represent the remains of an earlier building pre-dating this activity. A single sherd of 17th century was recovered from context (115), a sealed layer within the interior of the structure, suggesting that it was 17th century in date. No other stratified evidence for medieval or early post medieval activity has survived.
- 7.2 Eleven probable extraction pits (F120, F123, F125, F127, F130, F133, F135, F137, F143, F145 & F147) were noted across the remainder of the site, cut into the natural orange and grey clay. Pit F120 had been re-excavated and infilled with stone rubble prior to the construction of Foundation F105. The pits varied considerably in both depth and size; all had similar fills comprising grey to mid-brown, loose silty clays containing building rubble (stone and brick), plaster and mortar fragments as well as charcoal flecks and fragments. The nature of these fills suggests deliberate backfilling with little evidence for slow, natural silting. Post medieval pottery was recovered from the fills 121, 131, 134 & 136 of pits F120, F130, F133 & F135.
- 7.3 During early to mid 19th century the plot was redeveloped when a terrace of small workers cottages was constructed on the site. This is confirmed by the Ordnance Surveyors drawing of 1806 (not reproduced), which shows the rear of the tenement as being undeveloped at that time, yet by the time the 1842 Honiton tithe map was produced, the site is shown as being occupied by buildings. The foundations of three of these cottages (Building Nos. 1-3 & foundations F105, F108, F109, F111 & F112) were identified following the initial ground reduction (*Fig. 4*).
- 7.4 Building Nos. 1 & 3 are similar in dimension, while Building No. 2 is almost twice their size suggesting that it represents the amalgamation of two properties shown on the 1842 tithe map and later Ordnance Survey 1st and 2nd edition 25-inch maps of 1889 and 1905 (*Figs. 2, 3a & 3b*). This is



further suggested by the slight offset in alignment between foundations F105 and F108. The same offset is also shown on the Ordnance Survey 1st and 2nd edition maps of 1889 and 1905 (Figs. 3a & 3b). Foundation F105 forms a common boundary between Buildings Nos. 1 & 2 suggesting that they are contemporaneous in date. A review of the composition of the remaining foundations together with their relationships suggests three phases of construction. Post medieval pottery was recovered from demolition layers 101, 102, 103 & 110 in Buildings Nos 1-3.

7.5 The finds assemblage consists of mostly domestic pottery with typical forms such as dishes, jars and jugs. All appear to be derived from the South Somerset kilns apart from the industrially produced pieces, which were produced in the Bristol region. A single residual sherd of pottery dating to c. 15th-16th century was present from an unstratified context. The assemblage suggests a concentration of domestic activity within or close to the vicinity to the site from the 17th-18th century onwards.

## 8. ARCHIVE AND OASIS

8.1 The paper and digital archive and finds are currently held at the offices of AC archaeology, at 4 Halthaies Workshops, Bradninch, near Exeter, Devon, EX5 4LQ. It will continue to be stored under controlled conditions at the offices of AC archaeology in Bradninch, but will ultimately be deposited under the accession number at the RAMM, Exeter, at the earliest in 2013 when the current museum non-acceptance policy will be reviewed.

8.2 The OASIS (Online AccesS to the Index of Archaeological InvestigationS) number for this project is 108151.

## 9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

9.1 The evaluation was commissioned by Scott Harris on behalf of Heritage Homes South West Ltd. The watching brief was carried out by Jerry Austin and Peter Weddell and the illustrations for this report were prepared by Sarnia Blackmore. The advice and collaboration of Stephen Read of DCCHEs is duly acknowledged.

## 10. REFERENCES

### Unpublished sources

Valentin, J., 2011, *Land adjacent to Vine Passage, Honiton, Devon (ST 16200 00727), Method Statement for an archaeological watching brief, Planning ref. East Devon District Council 10/1837/FUL*

### Historic maps

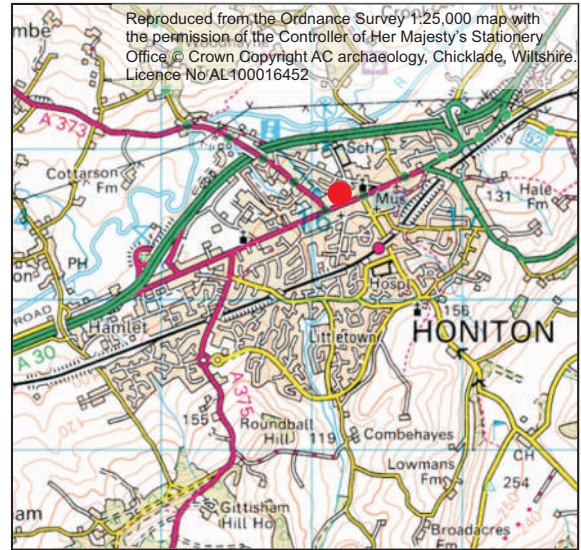
Honiton tithe map 1842 and apportionment 1842

Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25-inch map, sheet 70:4, surveyed 1888, published 1889

Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25-inch map, 70:4, surveyed 1888, revised 1903, published 1904

### Internet sources 2012

British Geological Survey online [www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience](http://www.bgs.ac.uk/opengeoscience)



ST 15 16 17



Scale 1:50,000@A4



Development site

PROJECT

Land adjacent to Vine Passage, Honiton

TITLE

Fig. 1: Location of site



Fig. 2: Extract from the Honiton title map of 1842



Development site

PROJECT

Land adjacent to Vine Passage, Honiton



Fig 3a: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 1st edition 25-inch map, sheet 70.4, surveyed in 1888, published in 1889

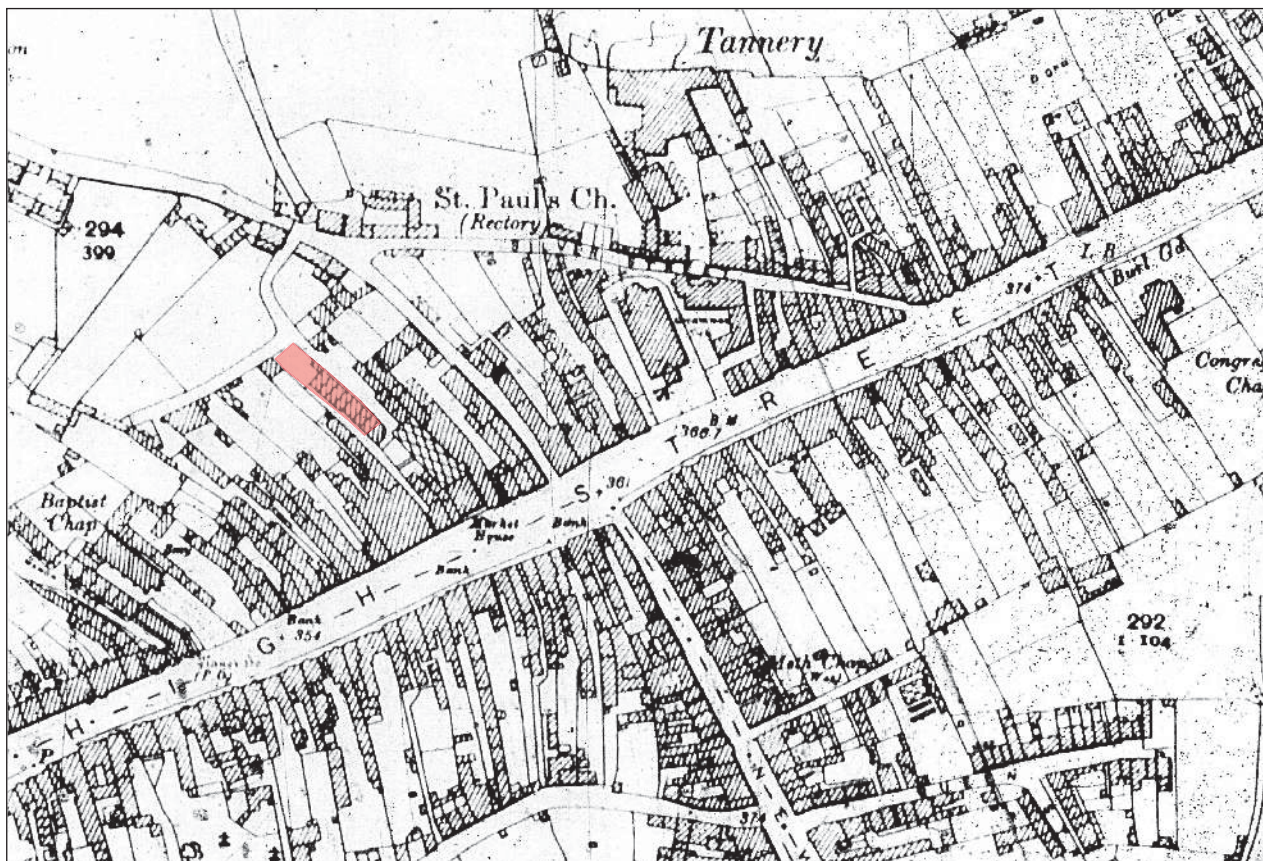
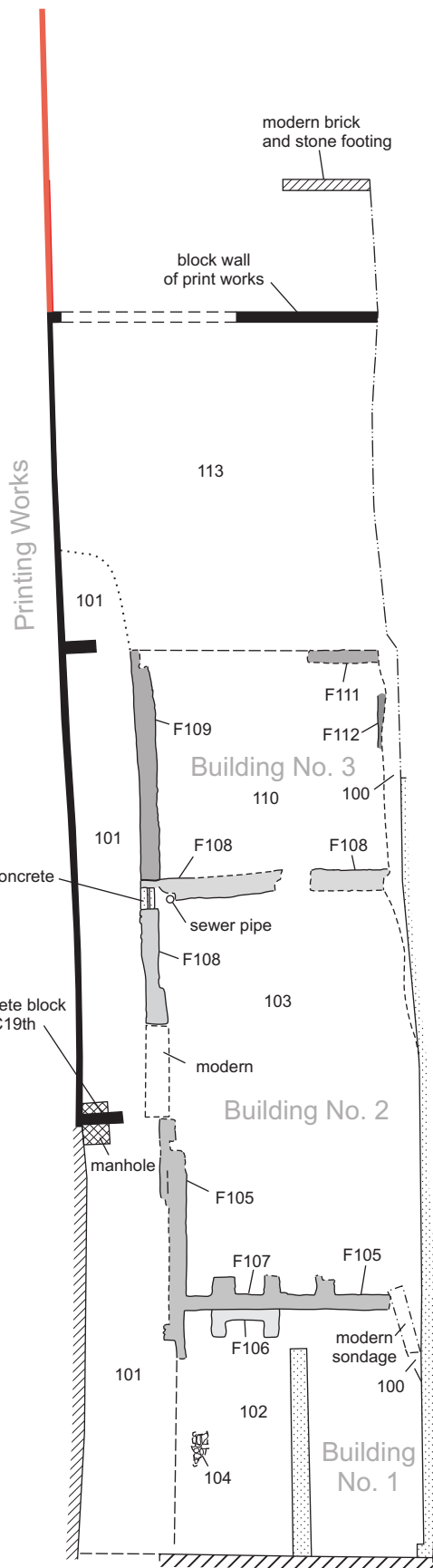


Fig 3b: Extract from the Ordnance Survey 2nd edition 25-inch map, sheet 70.4, surveyed in 1888, revised in 1903, published in 1904

PROJECT

Land adjacent to Vine Passage,  
Honiton



**Key**

- Brick bonded wall
- Stone wall
- Concrete block wall (print works c. 1970)
- Modern concrete block footings



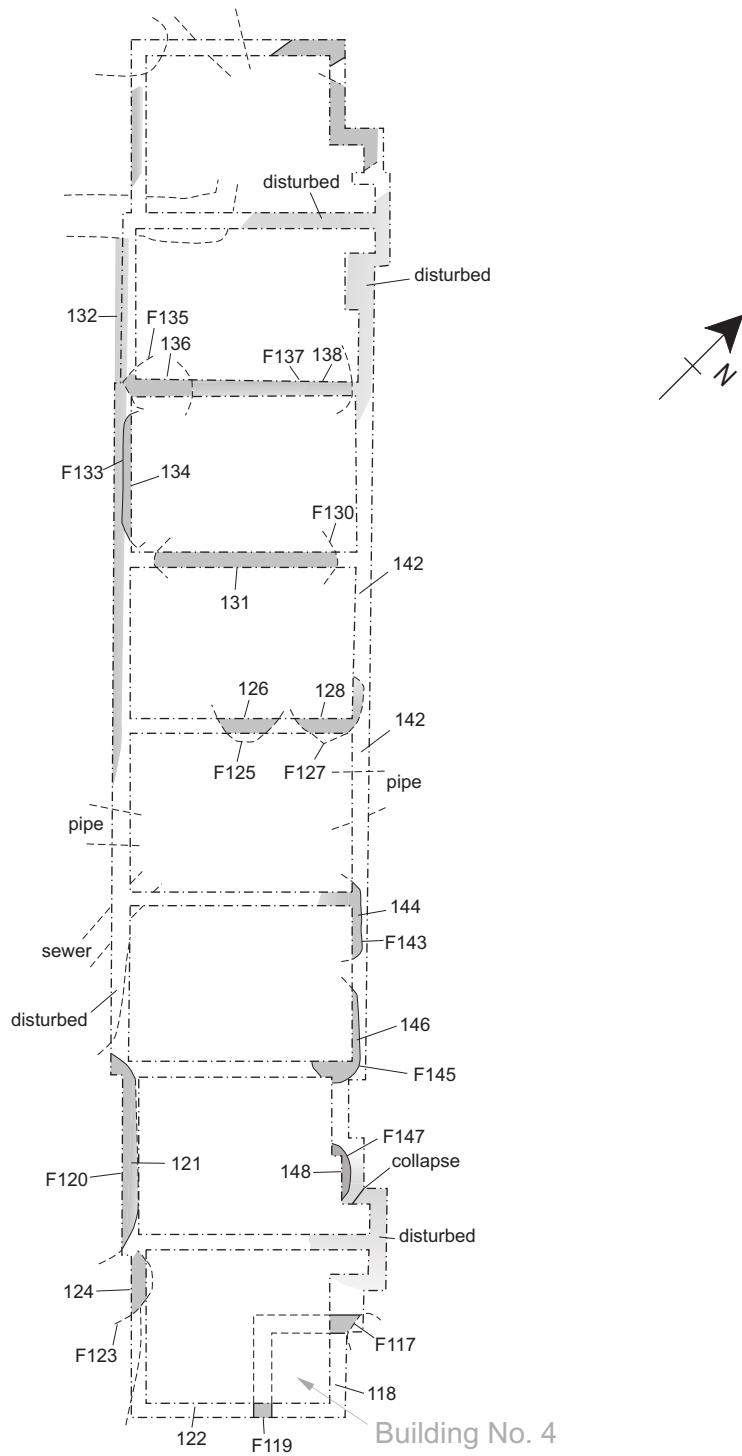
PROJECT

Land adjacent to Vine Passage, Honiton

TITLE

Fig. 4: Plan of the foundations of Building Nos. 1-3





PROJECT

Land adjacent to Vine Passage, Honiton

TITLE

Fig. 5: Plan of foundation trenches showing the positions of recorded features and layers





Plate 1: Pit F120 and rubble infill 121 (view to north)

# Appendix 1

Table 1: Finds quantification





**Table 1: Finds quantification**

Context	Description of context	Medieval Pottery		Post Medieval Pottery		Ceramic Building Material		Clay Pipe	
		No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)	No	Wt (g)
Unstratified		1	43	11	874				
101	Demolition layer			2	47			1	12
102	Demolition layer			2	59				
103	Demolition layer			1	5				
F105	Foundation wall					1	69		
110	Demolition layer			2	71				
115	Layer within Building No. 4			1	44				
121	Fill of Pit F120			1	32	5	1903		
131	Fill of Pit F130			2	52				
132	Layer			1	17				
134	Fill of Pit F133			3	105				
136	Fill of Pit F135			1	50				
<b>Total</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>1316</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1972</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>12</b>

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