

Land West of Roman Road and north of Spa Road, Weymouth, Dorset:

Results of an archaeological evaluation

NGR SY 66931 81396

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On behalf of:
Devon &
Dorset
Properties Ltd

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AC archaeology

LAND WEST OF ROMAN ROAD AND NORTH OF SPA ROAD, WEYMOUTH, DORSET (NGR: SY 66931 81396)

Results of archaeological site investigations

SUMMARY

Archaeological investigations, consisting of the machine-excavation of seven trenches, on land west of Roman Road and North of Spa Road, Weymouth, Dorset (SY 66931 81396) were undertaken by AC archaeology Ltd during September 2019. The investigation was undertaken ahead of the determination of a planning application for the construction of twelve new detached and semi-detached houses, along with ten 1-2-bedroom flats with associated access road, parking and landscaping. The investigation area has been subject to a previous Magnetometer Survey.

Of the trenches excavated across the site, three revealed evidence for archaeological deposits (Trenches 4-6). This activity comprised middle to late Iron Age and Romano-British cut features, spanning the period 3rd century BC through to the 4th century AD. The features were present on a higher and level piece of land within the eastern and south-eastern extent of the application area (Fig. 1). With the exception of two linear features revealed in two of the trenches (Trenches 4 & 6) and recorded on the geophysical survey, none of the remaining archaeological activity on the site was evident on the geophysical survey results.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of archaeological investigations on land west of Roman Road and north of Spa Road, Weymouth, Dorset (SY 66931 81396). The evaluation was commissioned by Devon & Dorset Properties Ltd.
- 1.2 The investigations were undertaken in order to provide supporting information ahead of the determination of a planning application for residential development (WP/19/00516/FUL). It was requested by Dorset Council, as advised by the Council Senior Archaeologist (DCSA). The location of the site is shown on Fig. 1.
- 1.3 The proposed application area is situated approximately 2km north-north-west of Weymouth and some 9km south-south-west of the centre of Dorchester. The development area comprises 0.85 hectares on a moderate southwestern facing slope, that slopes downwards from over 30m OD along the east to under 25m OD in the south-west corner. The underlying geology in the eastern half of the site is recorded as limestone deposits of Cornbrash Formation with the lower western half recorded as Mudstone deposits of the Forest Marble Formation. Both types of geology were formed during the Jurassic Period

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Archaeological remains dating from the Roman period have been recorded at several locations in Radipole, generally in the area to the east of the site of the proposed development. These include a Roman brooch found in the garden of 60 Mount Pleasant Avenue in 1936 and what appeared to be

a Roman floor, with associated coins, pottery and brooch, recorded in 1937 to the rear of 112 and 114 Spa Road.

- 2.2 A Roman road running south of Dorchester was heading in the direction of this area, leading to the interpretation that there was a port at Radipole, perhaps originally intended to bring supplies in for the Roman settlement at Dorchester.
- 2.3 To the west of the site, beyond the bypass known as Weymouth Way, lies Humpty Dumpty Field which is believed to be the location of a deserted/shrunken medieval settlement or manorial complex. This is based on earthworks visible on aerial photographs. The nearby Grade II listed church of St. Anne's at Radipole is noted as having 13th century origins.
- 2.4 There are records of post-medieval sites within a 1km radius of the site, and include landscape features like water meadows, gardens and allotments, as well as listed buildings.
- 2.5 A gradiometer survey was undertaken in August 2019 on available areas within the site. Two linear anomalies and several small, pit-like, responses of uncertain origin were recorded (Lefort 2019).

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 The aims of the investigations are:

- To provide an initial assessment of the principal magnetic anomalies recorded in the geophysical survey and to ascertain whether they are of archaeological origin;
- To assess the presence/absence, function, date and chronology of any archaeological deposits present on the site;
- to enable a description of the significance of any heritage assets present;
- to enable an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on any heritage asset, and;
- to enable further evaluation/mitigation strategies to be designed.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The investigation was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation prepared by AC Archaeology (Trott 2019) and approved prior to commencement on site.
- 4.2 The application area comprised a former pony paddock that had been neglected and partially overgrown with brambles and small wild fruit trees. The access was off Roman Road to the east (Fig. 1). All spoil removal was undertaken under the control and direction of the Site Archaeologist. Topsoil and overburden were removed by mechanical excavator, using a wide toothless bucket, and ceased at the level at which archaeological deposits or natural subsoil was exposed. Site levels relate to Ordnance Survey Datum.
- 4.3 Each trench was recorded using the full range of the standard AC archaeology *pro forma* recording system.
- 4.4 The archive has been prepared using the site code ACW1222 and will be deposited at Dorset County Museum, Dorchester, Dorset.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Trenches 1-3, 6 & 7 measured 15 x 1.6m in plan, with Trench 5 measuring 20 x 1.6m and Trench 4 30 x 1.6m in size. Three trenches (4-6) contained evidence for archaeological deposits, this included the two linear features identified on the gradiometer survey (Lefort 2019).

5.2 The layer sequence across the site generally comprised topsoil directly overlying subsoil that in turn overlay the natural sub-strata. Except for trenches containing negative results, the trenches are described below in text. Negative trenches are described in table form in Appendix 1.

Trench 4 (Plan Fig. 2a; sections Fig. 2b; Plate 1)

5.3 This trench was aligned northeast to south-west and situated on the level ridge. A maximum depth of 0.10m was excavated through topsoil composed of dark brown soft loam (401), which overlay the subsoil consisting of medium brown soft silty clay (402). This in-turn sealed the natural sub-strata composed of light yellowish-brown firm silty clay (403). A single sub-linear feature was revealed cutting through the natural sub-strata.

Linear ditch F404

5.4 This feature was aligned approximately north-west to south-east with a length of 1.6m exposed within the trench. Excavation revealed a width of 0.68m and a depth of 0.4m, with a steep U-shaped profile and flat base. This feature contained two fills; the upper fill (405), composed of medium brownish-grey clay-silt, containing occasional limestone brash fragments. The lower fill (406) was composed a similar medium brownish-grey clayey-silt with larger sub-angular fragments of limestone brash. This feature appears to represent a former ditch where the upper fill (405) contained a small quantity of mid to late Iron Age pottery, although three sherds from a single vessel of Roman date were also present. A small quantity of animal bone, two flint flakes and a water-worn pebble were also present within this upper fill.

Trench 5 (Plan, Fig. 2c; Plate 2)

5.5 This trench was aligned approximately north-east to south-west and situated on a south-west facing slope within the south-western portion of the field. A maximum depth of 0.10m was excavated through topsoil, composed of dark brown soft loam (500), which overlay the subsoil consisting of medium brown soft silty clay (501). This in turn sealed the natural sub-strata composed of light yellowish-brown firm silty clay (502). A single pit feature was partially revealed at the southwestern extent of the trench cutting the natural sub-strata.

Pit F503

5.6 This feature continued outside the limits of the trench to the south-west. Excavation revealed only the basal portion of this feature surviving, with a width of 0.75m and a depth of 0.1m, with an almost flat base. This feature contained a single fill (504), composed of a firm medium yellowish-brown silty clay containing common sub-angular limestone. This feature appears to represent part of a heavily truncated pit. A small sherd of Romano-British pottery was recovered from this fill.

Trench 6 (Plan Fig. 2d; sections Fig. 2e-g. Plates 3-6)

- 5.7** This trench was aligned approximately north-east to south-west and situated in the southeast portion of the field. A maximum depth of 0.20m was excavated through topsoil, composed of dark brown soft loam (600), which overlies the subsoil comprising medium brown, soft silty, clay (601) and sealing the underlying natural sub-strata which was composed of yellowish-brown, firm silty, clay (602). A single linear feature and two pits cut the natural substrata. A small quantity of dateable pottery and animal bone was recovered from each feature.

Ditch F603

- 5.8** This feature was aligned approximately north-west to south-east with a length of 1.6m exposed within the trench. Excavation revealed a width of 1.02m and a depth of 0.42m, with a U-shaped profile. This feature contained a single fill, composed of medium yellowish-brown silty clay, containing common sub-angular limestone brash fragments. This feature appears to represent a former ditch and contained a small quantity of late Roman pottery and animal bone (Plate 3).

Pit F605

- 5.9** This feature was sub-circular in plan and continued outside the limits of the trench excavation. The excavation exposed steep sides that had been distorted by the roots of a nearby cedar tree. The excavation ceased at a depth of 0.84m due to the depth and the nature of the excavated fills. This feature contained two fills, the upper fill (606), was composed of a medium brown silty clay, containing subangular limestone fragments and rounded flint. The secondary fill (607) was a brown silty clay containing sub-angular limestone and flint pieces. This feature contained mid to late Iron Age pottery, animal bone. A small quantity of vesicular slag and a crucible fragment were also found in these fills. This feature represents a former pit of unknown function (Plates 4 & 5).

Pit F608

- 5.10** Where exposed this feature was sub-circular in plan with a slight linear element extending eastwards. Although only partially exposed within the limits of the trench the excavation suggested a diameter of 2.20m+ and an excavated depth of 1.40m+, with a steep near-vertical profile. This feature contained a single fill (609), composed of mid-brownish-grey silty clay containing very frequent and large pieces of angular limestone. Mid to late Iron Age pottery, animal bone, a flint waste flake, two pebbles and a near-complete Purbeck limestone grinding stone (SF 1) was recovered from the excavated fill. This feature appears to represent a former pit of unknown function (Plate 6).

6. FINDS

Introduction

- 6.1** An assemblage of finds was recovered from the trench evaluation, comprising predominately mid to late Iron Age and Romano-British pottery and a small amount of animal bone. A small number of vitrified pieces of slag and two crucible fragments were recovered from Iron Age deposits along with three pieces of worked flint and a single worked stone object (Table 1).

ACW1222 Land west of Roman Road and north of Spa Road, Weymouth																
	Animal Bone		Burnt Flint		Flint		Iron Age Pottery		Roman-British Pottery		Stone		Vitrified Material & crucibles		Total Count	Total Weight
Context	Count	Weight	Count	Weight	Count	Weight	Count	Weight	Count	Weight	Count	Weight	Count	Weight		
405	23	140	1	2	2	14	10	94			5	100			41	350
504									1	6						
604	18	180							13	53					31	233
606	5	20					10	73			2	10	1	6	19	109
607	18	55					18	172					8	15	43	242
609	7	129			1	4	30	364			6	77			43	574
Grand Total	71	524	1	2	3	18	68	703	14	59	13	187	9	15	175	1503

Table 1. Summary of Finds by Context

Note: The weight of the stone object SF1 from (609) has not been included in the above table.

. Methodology

6.2 All finds from the site have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. Finds were then quantified according to material type within each context. The assemblage was then scanned by context to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. This information is briefly discussed below. Table 1 quantifies finds by context and material type.

Pottery

by Kevin Trott based on discussions with Mark Corney

6.3 A total of 82 pottery sherds were recovered from the evaluation trenches, the bulk of the pottery recovered from soil-cut features such as ditches and pits. Most of the pottery sherds are in relatively worn condition, probably due to the local soil conditions.

6.4 The pottery has been scanned by Mark Corney and broad details of fabric types and broad dates were noted. 68 sherds were from middle to late Iron Age vessels, with 14 sherds from Romano-British local and imported wares.

6.5 The assemblage comprises largely coarse wares of local or regional origin. Activity may have commenced in the early Iron Age based on several early looking sherds from Pit [605]. The bulk of the pottery derives from Middle to late Iron Age vessels in both shell and flint tempered wares. Diagnostic sherds include saucepan pots, jars and large storage vessels. There is a small proportion of sandy wares and Durotrigian types of later Iron Age date present in Ditch [404] and Pit [608]. These fabrics are characteristic of types identified from Hengistbury Head (Brown 1987) and Maiden Castle (Brown 1991).

6.6 The pottery from ditch [404], pit [503] and ditch [603] spans the Romano-British period, but the rarity of diagnostic sherds, fine wares and imports from [404] and [503] limits precise dating. Ditch [603] contained an East Gaulish Samian base sherd from a Form 18/31, as well as a New Forest Parchment type vessel with internal decoration. The chip from an Oxford red-coated vessel and BB1 sherd would suggest a 4th century date for the fill of this ditch.

Animal Bone

By Royston Clark

6.8 A total of 71 animal bone fragments weighting 524gm was recorded from five contexts. Most of the bone was in good condition, with two being burnt fragments. This small assemblage was subject to a rapid scan to determine bone type and animal species.

6.9 Most of the material consisted of sheep/goat and cattle long bones, as well as pelvic and vertebrae fragments. Dog bones in the form of a mandible and loose teeth were recovered from one context (405). A bird bone, possibly chicken, was also recorded from (606).

6.10 This assemblage, although small, is very typical of animal bone assemblages dating from the Iron Age into the Roman period.

Slag

By Kevin Trott

- 6.11** Pit [605] produced a small amount of vitrified slag, along with two rims from two conical crucibles. The pottery recovered from the fills of this pit indicate a mid to late Iron Age date, although the overall quantities of vitrified slag were small, any conclusions should be treated with caution. The presence of two crucibles suggest metal working was in evidence on site.

Worked Stone

By Kevin Trott

- 6.12** A single near-complete perforated rotary Purbeck millstone was recovered from Pit [608]. The stone has been shaped from a large block with a circular perforation 0.18m in diameter, with an overall diameter of 0.65m. Its thickness is 0.17m with striations suggestive of a vested rotary action., This type of stone is reminiscent of a stone crusher utilised in a circular stone trough powered by draft animals for the crushing of food produce like apples (Plates 7-8).

Flint

By Royston Clark

- 6.13** Three fragments of flint were recovered from two contexts, weighting in total 18gm. Two fragments were primary flakes containing cortex material. A third flake was formed from a cherty flint, dark grey in colour. Although the flint is likely to be of late prehistoric date, it is probably residual material.

7. COMMENT

- 7.1** The trench evaluation has revealed evidence for the presence of elements of a previously unrecorded Iron Age and Romano-British site with dating evidence spanning the period 3rd century BC through to the late 3rd to 4th century AD. This activity was limited in three trenches within the application area that were sited on a relatively flat area of land adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site.
- 7.2** In an area of Trench 4 and 6 there is evidence for two ditched boundaries of late Roman date and the base to a heavily truncated pit (Fig. 2), these ditches may relate to field systems to the nearby Roman settlement off Spa Road to the south-east. The discovery of two large middle to late Iron Age pits within Trench 6 and the residual quantity of pottery within the later Roman ditch within Trench 4, indicate an unknown Iron Age element to this area of Radipole. There is evidence from the fill of one pit for former small-scale industrial activity, indicated by the presence of small quantities of slag and crucible fragments. The presence of a rotary millstone associated with the crushing of foodstuffs indicates another element of processing.
- 7.3** No evidence for any structures was revealed in any of the trenches, although the presence of domestic pottery, animal bone suggests the settlement activity is not far away, possibly located off-site to the east, along the relatively flat ridge between Roman Road and Spa Road.
- 7.4** With the exception of the three pits and two ditch features, no further archaeology or finds were evident in the area that was evaluated. The discovery of Iron Age features that did not appear on the gradiometer survey (Lefort 2019) is of note as these were masked by ferrous areas indicated on the survey.

8. REFERENCES

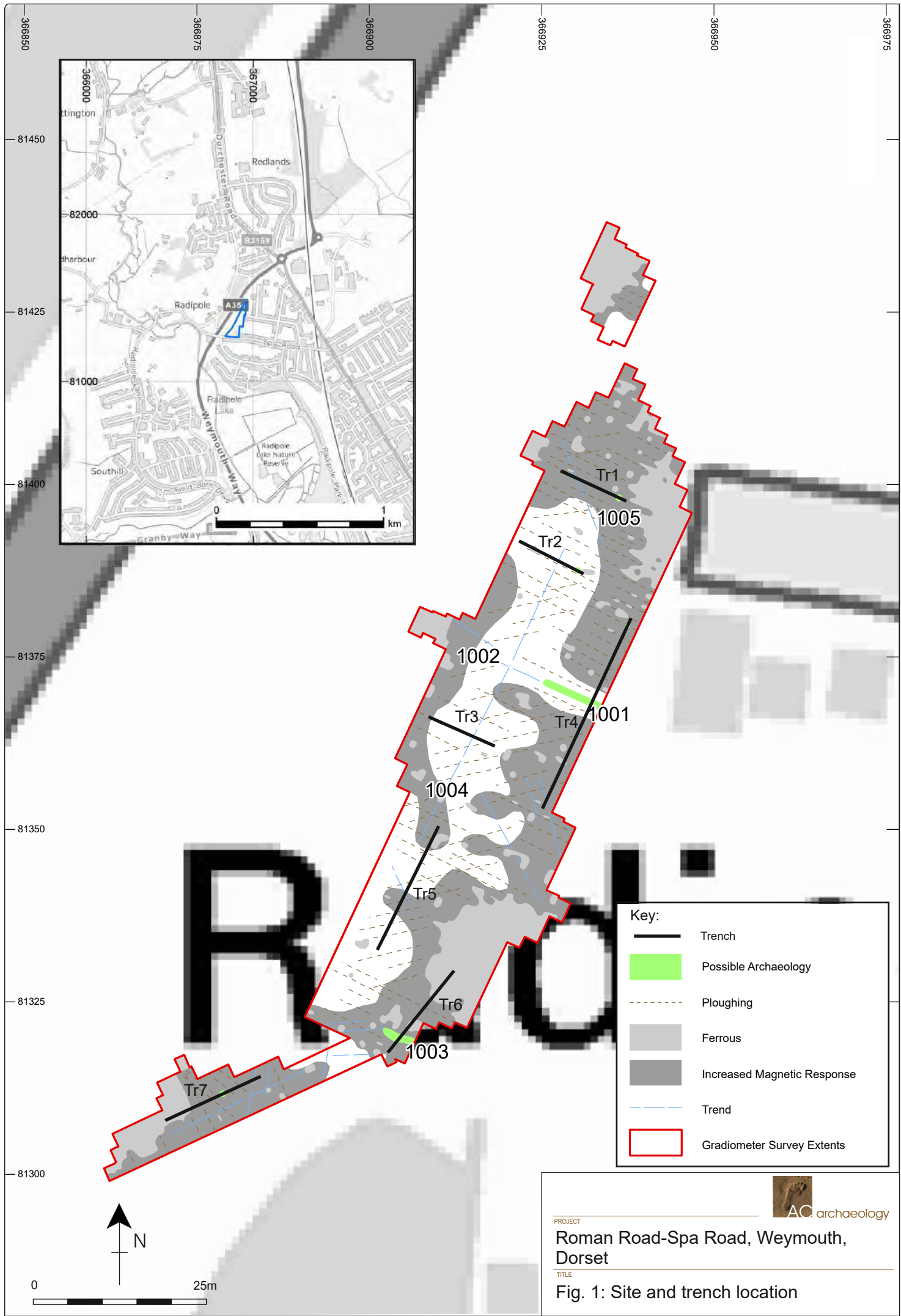
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Key:

-  Trench
-  Possible Archaeology
-  Ploughing
-  Ferrous
-  Increased Magnetic Response
-  Trend
-  Gradiometer Survey Extents

 AC archaeology

PROJECT
Roman Road-Spa Road, Weymouth, Dorset

TITLE
Fig. 1: Site and trench location

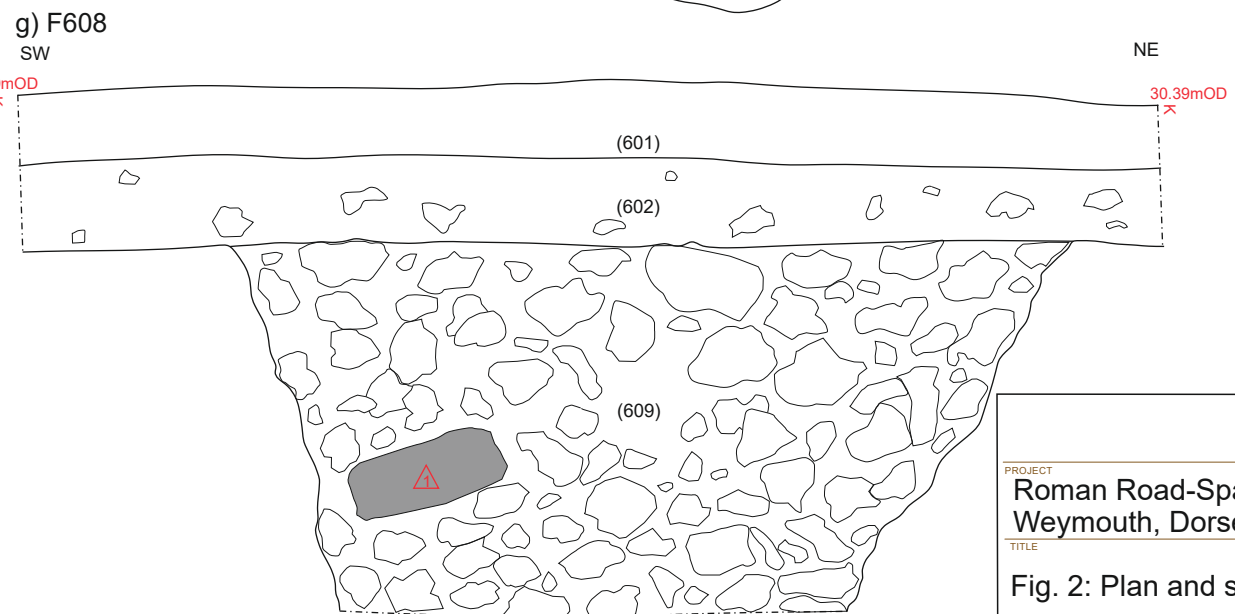
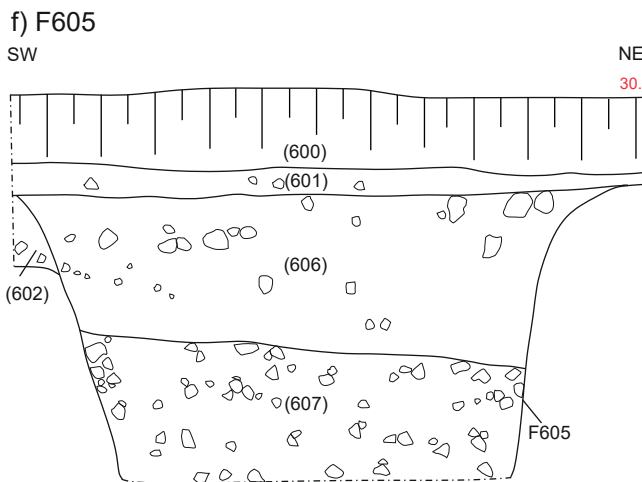
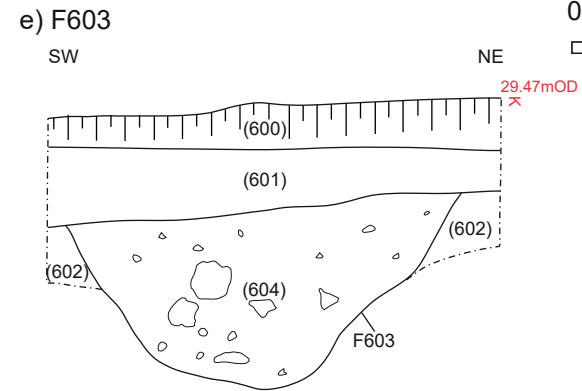
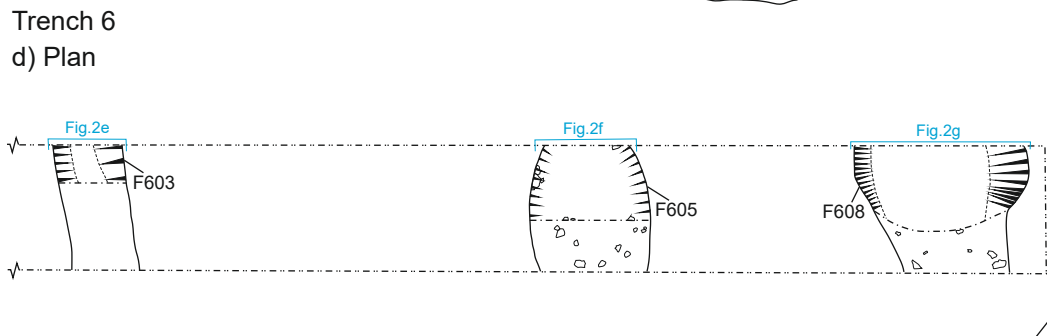
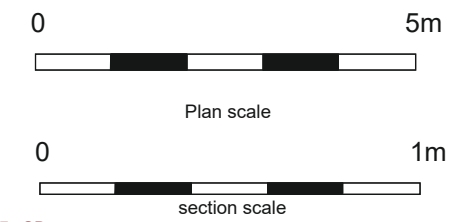
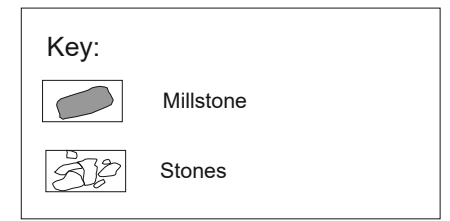
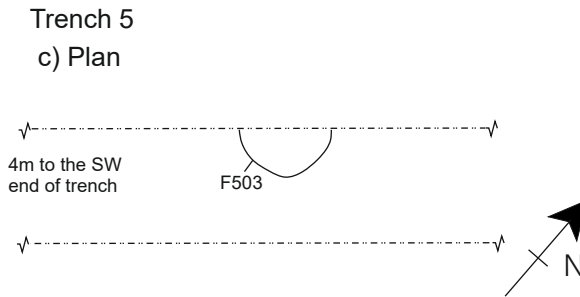
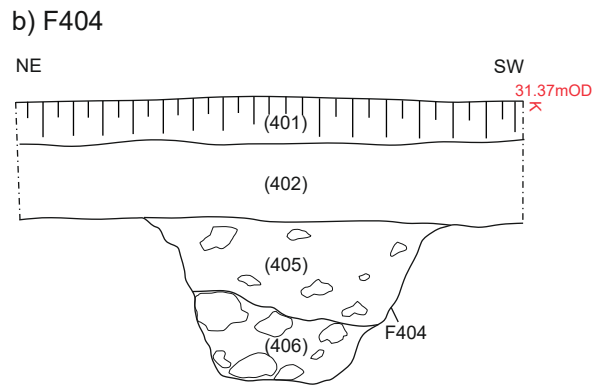
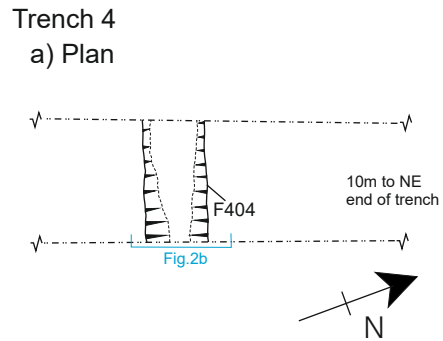




Plate 1: South-east facing section of ditch F404 (scale 0.2x1m)



Plate 2: North-west facing section of pit F503 (scale 1m)



Plate 3: North-west facing section of ditch F603 (scale 1m)



Plate 4: North-east facing pit F605 (foreground) and F608 under examination (scale 1m)



Plate 5: Partially excavated north-west facing section of pit F605 (scale 1m)



Plate 6: North-west facing section of pit F608 under excavation (scale 1x2m)



Plate 7: Oblique view of millstone SF1 (scale 0.5m)



Plate 8: Plan view of millstone SF1 (scale 0.5m)

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