

24 HIGH EAST STREET, DORCHESTER, DORSET

(NGR SY 69229 90729)

Results of a programme of archaeological monitoring,
excavation and recording

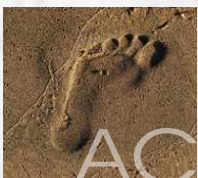
Dorset Council planning reference WD/D/19/02927,
condition 3

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On behalf of:
Ferriby Land

Document No: ACD2382/2/0

Date: June 2021



archaeology

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(NGR SY 69299 90729)

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|------------------|-----------------|
| Client | Ferriby Land |
| Report Number | ACD2382/2/0 |
| Date | 21 June 2021 |
| Status | Version 1 |
| Report Author(s) | Andrew Passmore |
| Contributions | - |
| Checked by | Paul Rainbird |
| Approved by | Andrew Passmore |

Acknowledgements

The investigation and reporting were commissioned by Ferriby Land, and managed on their behalf by Martin Burgess and for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andrew Passmore, and the illustrations for this report were prepared by Stella De Villiers and Andrew Passmore.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of AC archaeology and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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Summary

Archaeological monitoring, excavation and recording was undertaken by AC archaeology in November 2020, on behalf of Ferriby Land, during the redevelopment of the Grade II Listed 24 High East Street, Dorchester, Dorset.

Excavations for new services within and outside the rear warehouse were monitored. Within the building a flagstone floor surface, contemporary with the warehouse of c.1820-1840, was exposed. Foundations, an internal floor surface, and landscaping deposits associated with the addition in the early 20th century of a side passage to the warehouse were also exposed. No earlier, dateable deposits were exposed, and no finds recovered.

1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of a programme of archaeological monitoring, excavation and recording undertaken by AC archaeology on 17 November 2020 during groundworks associated with the redevelopment of 24 High East Street, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1EZ (NGR SY 69229 90729). The investigations were commissioned by Ferriby Land, and were required under condition 3 of the grant of planning permission (Dorset Council reference WD/D/19/02927) for 'conversion to 9.no dwellings'. Guidance on the scope of works was provided by the Dorset Council Senior Archaeologist in his consultation response to the application. No formal project brief has been provided.
- 1.2 No. 24 High East Street is a Grade II Listed Building (National Heritage List for England (NHLE) no. 1110584; Dorset Historic Environment Record entry MDO19273), and dates to the second quarter of the 19th century. The property comprises a front range with shop and accommodation over, and a rear former warehouse range, along with several small outbuildings. Both the principal ranges are set over three storeys with additional accommodation in the roof spaces. The property is located on the south side of High East Street, in the core of the town centre, and within the Dorchester Conservation Area. The building lies at a height of approximately 67m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology comprises Cretaceous chalk of the Portsdown Chalk Formation (British Geological Survey online viewer 2021).
- 1.3 The scheme comprised the conversion of the rear warehouse range into a number of residential units. In the front range the ground-floor shop has been retained, with the upper floors converted into further residential units. The archaeological monitoring, excavation and recording took place in the centre of the property, in association with excavations for services for the new units in the rear warehouse range.

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 2)

- 2.1 Dorchester, and the surrounding landscape, contains extensive evidence of later prehistoric activity. Within the town is Maumbury Rings that has its origins as a Neolithic henge, and excavations elsewhere have also uncovered part of a very large timber circle.
- 2.2 The property is situated within the Roman town of Durovaria, within the area enclosed by its 2nd-century defences. Although the lines of the defences are broadly understood, evidence for the internal layout is more fragmentary. However, High East

Street is thought to broadly follow the line of an internal town road, with the alignment at its west end slightly to the south of the current highway (i.e. including under the front range of the property). As would be expected from Roman town planning, excavations within Dorset have demonstrated the presence of buildings constructed against the internal roads, as well as set around courtyards behind the streets.

- 2.3** The current plan of the central core of Dorchester follows the medieval layout of the town, which does not appear to have been totally influenced by the earlier Roman town layout, although the Roman walls remained the boundary or limits of the parts of the town, and are still evident in the current streetscape. Within the line of the Roman walls Trinity and Princes Streets were laid out as back lanes during the 17th and 18th centuries. A series of severe fires during these centuries led to much development on the street frontages, although St Peter's Church, Holy Trinity Church and All Saints' Church survived. It was during this period that the Corn Exchange, Shire Hall and County Museum were constructed (West Dorset District Council 2003, 8-9). The property is an historic tenement potentially of medieval date. An historic building appraisal of No. 24 High East Street (Costen and Passmore 2019) has identified party walls to the adjacent properties that predate the current early-mid 19th-century buildings; their date however is unknown. They might represent the boundaries of medieval burgage plots or buildings (pre-dating the current shop and warehouse) shown on 18th-century maps of the town.
- 2.4** The current buildings date to the period 1820-1840 and comprise a shop with accommodation above and a rear warehouse. There are some later 19th-century alterations, and further changes were made in the early 20th century (Costen and Passmore 2019). A phased ground-floor plan of the building is reproduced as Fig. 2.

3. AIM

- 3.1** The aim of the archaeological monitoring, excavation and recording was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed, along with the recording and collection of associated finds, during groundworks associated with the scheme. This was with particular reference to the historic development of the property (specifically its history predating the current early-mid 19th-century buildings), and to any earlier archaeological remains relating to the Roman town and prehistoric activity preceding this town.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1** The programme of monitoring, excavation and recording was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (updated 2020), and an approved Written Scheme of Investigation (Passmore 2020). Groundworks associated with the conversion of the buildings was limited, and comprised excavations for new drainage services. These were less extensive than originally expected, and only one trench and associated connection pit into the existing drainage system were monitored and recorded. Within the rear yard the existing drainage system was retained and reused.
- 4.2** The contractor's excavations and associated archaeological excavation and monitoring were carried out in accordance with section 4 of the Written Scheme of Investigation. All excavations were undertaken by hand.

5. RESULTS (Fig. 2; Plates 1-5)

Introduction

- 5.1 The monitored excavations comprised a new service trench located within the rear warehouse, within one of the former showrooms, extending into the adjacent passage along its western side, and a connection pit located within the rear yard adjacent to the west wall of the passage.

Service trench (Plates 1-3)

- 5.2 This trench was aligned diagonally across the former showroom and passage on a northwest-southeast alignment. It measured 5.7m long by 0.28m wide, widening at the northwest end, to 0.80m, to allow for a connection under the wall.

- 5.3 The floor surface in the former showroom was a 0.10m thick layer of concrete. This overlaid an earlier surface, consisting of 0.05-0.08m thick limestone slabs. This surface appeared to be identical to the flagstone floor in the showroom to the north. The slabs were laid onto a 0.01m thick bedding layer of very fine gravel. Below this layer the top of an earlier deposit of soft dark grey silt with inclusions of occasional charcoal, slate, and brick fragment, and small chert pebbles was exposed.

- 5.4 In the passage the concrete surface was 0.05m thick, and overlaid a different earlier surface comprising concrete with brick inclusions, and which measured 0.07m thick. Below this surface a deposit of soft dark grey silt containing very frequent inclusions of brick and tile, and frequent inclusions of slate, glass, lime mortar and stone fragments was exposed; it continued below the depth of the trench (at 0.5m from the surface). This deposit overlaid the foundations of the brick west wall of the passage. They projected out very slightly from the line of the wall, and consisted of concrete with large inclusions of chert, coal and brick.

- 5.5 No earlier deposits or features were exposed, and no finds were recovered from this trench.

Connection pit (Plates 4 and 5)

- 5.6 This pit was located against the angled northwest wall of the passage and measured 0.80m long by 0.50m wide. It was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.62m below the surface.

- 5.7 The existing yard surface is concrete, and is 0.12m thick. It had been laid onto a loose brick and stone make-up deposit creating a single thick layer. Removal of the surface exposed a deposit of soft dark grey silt containing frequent inclusions of brick, slate, glass, lime mortar and stone fragments. The deposit extended below the depth of the excavations. It overlaid a ceramic drain that was aligned northwest-southwest, and dropped down from a downpipe in the northwest corner of the yard. The deposit also overlaid the foundations of the passage wall. These measured up to 0.20m wide, 0.60m deep, and were as described in Section 5.4 above.

- 5.8 No archaeological features or deposits were exposed, and no finds were recovered from this pit.

Other observations

- 5.9 During the 2019 appraisal of the building there was no access to the basement of the property. The extent of this was subsequently recorded on survey plans, and is shown

on Fig. 2. This is a useful observation in view of the projected line of a Roman road under this part of the building.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The excavations associated with the conversion of the rear range were very limited, and yielded limited results. However, given their shallow depth, and the presence of relatively recent deposits, much of the property (except where there is a basement alongside High East Street) will have archaeological potential at lower levels below the depth of the recent groundworks.
- 6.2 Within the rear warehouse a flagstone floor was exposed, which as with the visible surface in the former showroom to the north, is probably contemporary with the construction of the present building in the period between 1820 and 1840.
- 6.3 The passage along the western side of the warehouse dates to the period between 1901 and 1928. The groundworks exposed the foundations of its western wall along with contemporary landscaping deposits both inside and outside the structure. In the yard it was clear that the current arrangement of services is contemporary with the construction of the passage. The presence of associated landscaping deposits both within and outside the passage indicates that the whole of the original (pre-passage) yard has been disturbed – to a depth of at least 0.50m from the current surface – by the construction of this extension and associated landscaping.
- 6.4 No archaeological features, or clearly datable deposits, predating the period 1820 to 1840 were exposed, and no finds were recovered during the course of the works.

7. SOURCES CONSULTED

Printed and unprinted sources

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National Heritage List for England
<https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/>



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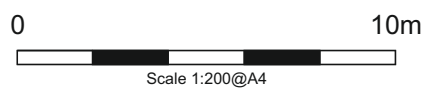
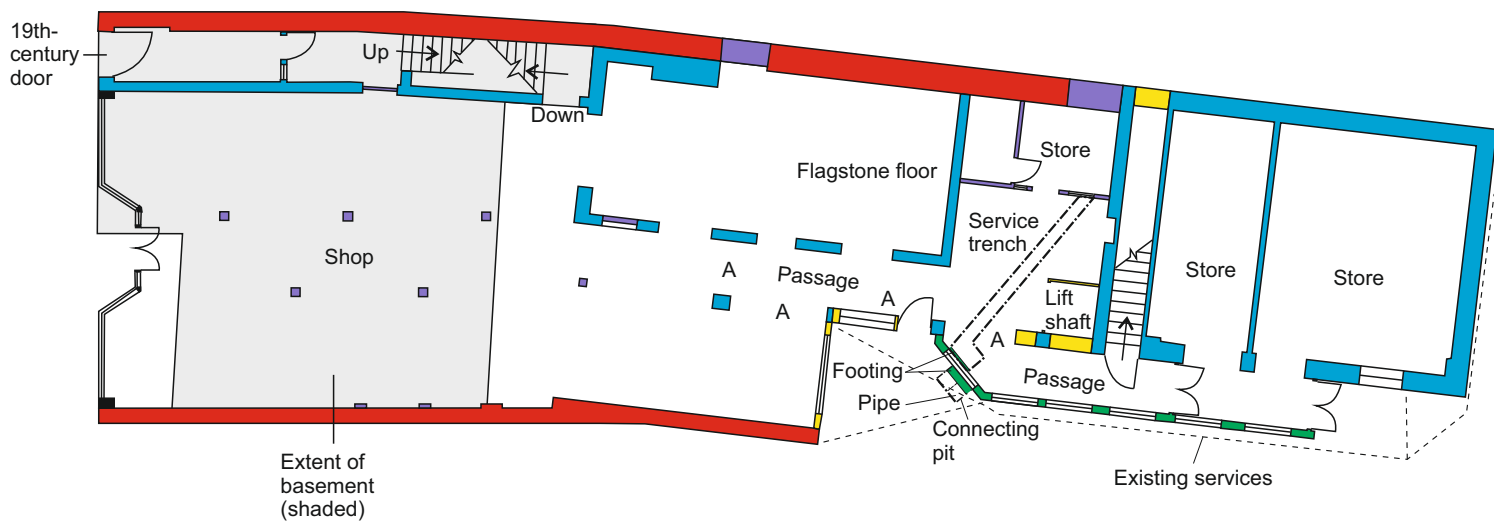
PROJECT

24 High East Street, Dorchester, Dorset

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location





- | | | |
|--------|---------------------------|--|
| A Arch | Probably pre 19th century | Early 20th century (Between 1901-1928) |
| | Mid 19th century | Mid 20th century |
| | Late 19th century | Late 20th century |

PROJECT
24 High East Street, Dorchester, Dorset

TITLE
Fig. 2: Phased ground-floor plan showing location of observations





Plate 1: The service trench, looking northwest (0.40m scale)



Plate 2: Section through the service trench, looking southwest showing the flagstone surface under the modern concrete (0.40m scale)



Plate 3: The northwest end of the service trench within the passage, looking north (0.40m scale)

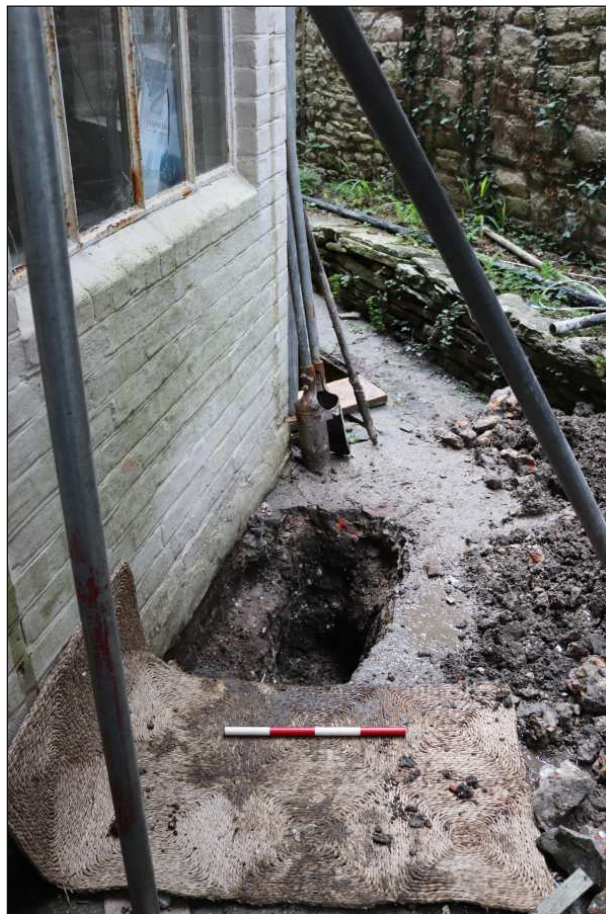


Plate 4: The connection pit, looking southwest (0.40m scale)



Plate 5: The connection pit, looking southwest (0.40m scale)

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