

# Rear of 2, North Street, Wareham, Dorset

## Results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation

Centred on NGR 392369 087421

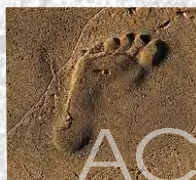
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Commissioned by:  
Chapman Lily Planning Ltd  
For Ameriscot Commercial

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AC archaeology

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# Rear of 2 North Street, Wareham, Dorset

## Results of an archaeological trial trench evaluation

Centred on NGR 392369, 087418

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### SUMMARY

*Two archaeological trial trenches were positioned at the rear of No. 2 North Street, Wareham (NGR 392369, 087418). The trenches measured 3 x 1.6m and were excavated to a depth of 0.9-1.4m below the ground surface. The depth of deposits sealing the archaeology comprise a dark soil horizon, of post-medieval date, which is considered relatively ubiquitous across Wareham. In Trench 1, medieval features were identified directly below the post-medieval soil, while in Trench 2 a medieval soil horizon was identified which sealed further medieval features.*

*Two medieval pits and a curvilinear ditch were revealed within Trench 1, at a depth of 1.3m. The restricted nature of the works prevented full excavation of features within this trench, however one pit and the ditch were partially excavated to confirm the nature of these and to characterise them via the recovery of datable artefactual evidence. Pottery of a late 10th to early 12th century date was recovered from pit F105. In Trench 2, at a depth of 0.9m, a further pit was revealed, which was cut by a gully; both were investigated and shown to possess depths of 0.3 and 0.2m respectively. These features contained artefacts of 13-14th century date. An additional pit or linear was identified on the eastern edge of Trench 2. This extended outwards, making thorough investigation of this feature impossible. Similar may be said for a further linear, or possible robbed out wall foundation, identified at the southern end of Trench 2. Partial excavation of this feature, F209, revealed relatively large amounts of building debris, mortar, stone and ceramic building material along with post-medieval pottery. Cumulatively, the evaluation showed that medieval deposits occur within the footprint of the proposed development, and there appears to be relatively little later disturbance and truncation. These deposits range in date from the late 10th century to the post-medieval period and have the potential to provide information relating to the early development of the town, along with its rise to prominence as Dorset's principal high medieval economic centre, before its subsequent relegation by Poole in the later medieval period.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This document sets out the results of an archaeological evaluation in relation to a proposed development at 2 North Street, Wareham, Dorset (centred on NGR 392369, 087418). The investigation was undertaken by AC archaeology Ltd in September 2021, on behalf of Ameriscot Commercial, as instructed by their planning advisers Chapman Lily Planning Ltd.
- 1.2 The application area is located within the town centre of Wareham, on the eastern side of North Street, behind the buildings previously occupied by NatWest Bank. The site occupies some 0.069ha of land. The site is L-shaped in plan and includes existing buildings and a rear yard adjacent to the Howards Lane car park (see Fig. 1).

1.3 The archaeological evaluation was requested by Dorset Council planning authority, as advised by the Dorset Council Senior Archaeologist (DCSA).

## 2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Extensive research has been undertaken on the historic settlement of Wareham. The Dorset Historic Towns Survey report for Wareham provides a thorough summary of the history of the town, which is summarised below (DCC 2011).

2.2 Although there is no evidence for significant Romano-British settlement of the area, a church had been built by the early 8th century, close to the site of the Lady St Mary Church. A roman origin for the town has often been hypothesised due to the formal arranged street pattern; yet little archaeological evidence can corroborate this. Instead, a small settlement may have grown up adjacent to the early church, but it is the foundation of the burh by King Alfred in the late 9th century that is formally recognised as the creation of the town and the modern urban centre. The town defences and principal street layout both derive from this planned burh. By 1066, Wareham was the largest town in Dorset, and an important port and trading centre. During the anarchy, a period of civil war in the 12th century, a castle was built on the south-west side of the town. This was subsequently demolished with the castle ditch being at least partially infilled by the late medieval period. By the end of the medieval period, most commercial activity had moved to Poole, with its access to deep water quaysides, leading to the decline of Wareham. The town became a regional market centre, a position which it has retained into the early modern period. In 1762 a fire destroyed much of the medieval core of the town, which was substantially rebuilt in brick and stone in a Georgian style.

2.3 Evidence for archaeological activity in the area of the proposed development, includes Iron Age pottery fragments found during the construction of Wareham Post Office in North Street in 1883 (DHER MDO8168). Unsurprisingly, evidence for medieval occupation has been found in the vicinity, at 5 South Street (MDO8193) and the Rempstone Centre (MDO8187). The application area also lies adjacent to the former medieval church of St Peter, now occupied by the town hall (MDO22608).

## 3. AIMS

3.1 The principal aims of the evaluation were, to:

- locate areas of the site where evaluation trenches can be excavated to avoid known services and drainage;
- record the presence, and assess the significance, of any archaeological deposits exposed in the trench;
- enable an assessment of the impact of the proposed development on any archaeological deposits;
- record the overburden deposits on the site, which may provide protection from future development;
- enable a mitigation strategy to be produced as part of any further archaeological work that may be required. This will include developing research objectives that

will relate to regional and national frameworks should there be significant archaeological remains on the site.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The evaluation comprised the excavation of two trenches, each measuring 3m x 1.6m. These were located to the rear of the 2 North Street within the footprint of the area of the proposed development. This comprises 1.3% of the entire development area, but 3% of the area of the proposed buildings. The trenches had to be moved from the proposed positions due to the presence of standing buildings, buried surface water drainage identified from the location of manholes and buried electric cables identified utilising a cable avoidance tool.

4.2 Each trench was cut through the existing tarmacadam car park surface, and subsequently excavated using a JCB 3CX fitted with a 1.6m wide toothless grading bucket. Machine excavation was halted at the level archaeological features could be identified, where pockets of natural subsoil could be identified in between the archaeological features. Both trenches were approximately north to south aligned, and located towards the east end of the proposed development.

#### 5. RESULTS

##### Trench 1 (Plan, Fig. 2a; sections Fig. 2b-c; plates 1-2)

5.1 Following the machine removal of the overburden, three archaeological features were identified. The northernmost comprised an expanse of black clayey sand, which contained 13-14th century pottery in its upper levels (F108). This feature was not further investigated. The other two features were excavated, as far as was practicable within the deep confines of the trench. Interpretation of some features is difficult for this trench as the archaeological features are large and extend outside the limits of the small trenches. The principal deposits encountered within the trench are outlined in Table 1.



**Plate 1: Plan view of trench 1, shown with two 1m scales, viewed from the north**

**Table 1: Overburden deposits recorded in Trench 1**

Context Number	Depth below ground surface (metres)	Description	Interpretation
100	0-0.06	Tarmac	Existing ground surface
101	0.06 – 0.35	Compacted clean limestone and modern ceramic building material	Bedding for tarmac
102	0.35-1.05	Dark grey-black, clayey sand, sparse charcoal, burnt stone, rounded flint gravel and ceramic building material.	Former garden soil horizon
103	1.05-1.35	Mid grey, clayey sand, friable, common sub rounded flint gravel (<100mm in size).	Former medieval soil horizon
110	+1.35	Mid yellow brown, soft, sand with common rounded flint and chert gravel (<150mm)	Alluvium/natural

### **Pit F105 and ditch F107**

**5.2** Further features were identified at the southern end of trench 1, which were partially excavated to confirm their relationship and to acquire datable artefacts. A pit F105, could be shown to have been cut by a later curvilinear ditch (F107). The uppermost fill encountered within the pit comprised mid greyish yellow, loose, clayey sand. The edges of the feature appeared to be relatively straight-sided, with the base occurring beyond the limit of excavation. This pit appeared to be relatively circular, with a width of over 0.8m – the northern edge had been cut by ditch F107. This probable curvilinear feature was filled by a mid-greyish black clayey sand and had a depth of 0.2m. The only excavated edge (south western side) of the feature appeared to be slightly stepped, and cumulatively possessed a length of over 1.6m, extending out of the trench; F107 ranged in width from 0.3 to 1.8m. The linear appeared to terminate immediately beyond the eastern edge of pit F105. Medieval pottery was recovered from both features, with a stamped sherd of probable Saxo-Norman pitcher being recovered from pit F105. The probable linear was cut in plan by an expansive feature, F108.



**Plate 2: Pit F105, cut by possible ditch, F107. Shown with a 1m scale, viewed from the northwest**

**Trench 2** (Plan, Fig. 2d; sections Fig. 2e-f; plates 3-6)

- 5.3** Once the machine removal of the overburden was complete, four archaeological features were identified in plan. One probable linear feature or elongated pit, extended beyond the north and eastern limits of the trench; this was filled with a black clayey sand. The cut for this feature could not be fully discerned in plan during machining, and could not be defined in section due to a lack of contrast between the black sands that seal the feature and the black sands that fill it. Medieval pottery was recovered from this and it was recorded as F213. Deposits 204 and 205 appear to represent the position of another cut feature, which could not be identified in plan during machining. The limitations of the trench size limit further interpretation. Feature F207 could only be seen in section following machining. The principal deposits encountered in the trench are outlined in Table 1.



**Plate 3 (left): Plan view of trench 3. Viewed from the north with a 1m scales**

**Plate 4 (right): East-facing section of trench 2, shown with two 1m scales**



**Table 2: Overburden deposits recorded in Trench 2**

Context Number	Depth below ground surface (metres)	Description	Interpretation
200	0-0.05	Tarmac	Existing ground surface
201	0.06 – 0.40	Compacted clean limestone and modern ceramic building material	Bedding for tarmac
202	0.40-0.6	Dark greyish black, clayey sand, sparse charcoal, burnt stone, rounded flint gravel and ceramic building material.	Former garden soil horizon
203	0.6-0.0.98	Mid grey, clayey sand, friable, common sub rounded flint gravel (<100mm in size).	Former medieval soil horizon
204	0.80 -0.9	Lens of re-deposited natural alluvium	Re-deposited natural 'lens'
205	0.9-1	Mid greyish black, clayey sand, loose	Fill of feature of medieval soil horizon?
216	+0.9m	Mid yellow brown, soft, sand with common rounded flint and chert gravel (<120mm)	Alluvium/natural

### **Pit F211 and ditch F215**

**5.4** These features were located at the northern end of the trench. Both features were only apparent following the machine excavation of deposit 205. Pit F211 was ovoid in plan and measured 1m in length and 0.9m in width. Hand excavation revealed that the feature had a depth of 0.3m, with a profile comprising steeply sloping sides that round to an undulating base. The pit contained a single fill composed of light greyish brown, soft, clayey sand (210), with sparse rounded flint gravel (<100mm); this deposit was cut by ditch F215. This small linear feature possessed steeply sloping sides onto a flat base, and was filled by a black, clayey sand (214) of loose consistency with rare charcoal flecks and rounded flint gravel (<100mm). Ditch F215 extended beyond the limits of the trench with a length of over 1.3m, a width of 0.3m and a depth of 0.2m; F215 terminated towards the middle of the trench.



**Plate 5: Pit 211 cut by ditch F215. Shown with a 1m scale and viewed from the south**

## Ditch, or robbed wall foundation, F209

- 5.5** F209 comprises one side of a linear feature that extends outside of the limits of three sides of Trench 2. Only a width of 0.3m lies within the confines of the trench. Limited hand excavation revealed that the feature possessed a steep sloping edge and contained post-medieval pottery, ceramic building material, stone and mortar. Cumulatively, this indicates that the feature may constitute a footing trench, for a structure which was demolished in the post-medieval period, although the limited nature of the investigation makes the character of the feature far from certain. The alignment of this linear approximately corresponds to a known historic boundary presented in the Dorset historic town project report for Wareham (DCC 2011, Fig. 57).



**Plate 6: North-facing section of probable wall foundation, F209. Shown with a 1m scale**

## 6. FINDS

- 6.1** All finds recovered on site have been retained, cleaned and marked where appropriate. Finds were then quantified according to material type by context. The assemblage was then examined to extract information regarding the range, nature and date of artefacts represented. This information is detailed below. The full quantification by material type and context is presented in Table 3.

### Animal bone

- 6.2** A small assemblage of animal consisting of seven fragments weighing a total of 93g was recorded from three separate contexts. In general terms, the bone was in poor condition. Context 102, a soil horizon of post-medieval date, contained a single fragment of cattle rib, with evidence of chop marks on the bone. Context 210, a medieval pit fill, contained three bone fragments consisting of a possible cattle humerus. A midshaft fragment of a metacarpal and a pelvic fragment (acetabulum), both from sheep/goat were also



recovered from this fill. Two sheep/goat metacarpals and a fragment cattle vertebra were recovered from context 214, the fill of a medieval ditch. This small assemblage of bone, in poor overall condition, offers little research potential in relation the medieval settlement and economy of Wareham.

**Table 3: Quantification of artefacts recovered by context**

Con text	Animal bone		Ceramic Building Material		Medieval pottery		Post-medieval pottery		Slag		Slate		Limestone		Total, by count	Total, by weight
	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	N o.	Wt (g)	N o.	Wt (g)	N o.	Wt (g)	N o.	Wt (g)		
102	1	15	1	29			1	168							3	212
103					2	26									2	26
104					4	32							3	95	7	127
106					3	39									3	39
109					4	36									4	36
203					5	69									5	69
205							1	100							1	100
206			1	23	2	13							1	336	4	372
208			2	272			4	96							6	368
210	3	46			9	71			3	227	1	19			16	363
212					1	41									1	41
214	3	42			4	81									7	123
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>408</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>431</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>1876</b>

### Ceramic Building Material

**6.3** Four fragments of ceramic building material were recovered from the investigations, The two fragments from context 208 comprise one partial brick, created in an open topped mould with a thickness of 66mm, and a roof tile. The brick occurs in a mid-red, hard, sandy fabric with common quartz (<10mm), the tile occurs in a light reddish pick, hard, sandy fabric, with common argillaceous inclusions and iron oxide. A further tile fragment was recovered from context 102, weighing 29g. The fabric comprises a light reddish pink, hard, sandy fabric, with common rounded quartz (<1mm). A glazed roof tile was recovered from context 206; this occurs in a similar fabric to that from context 102; all but this fragment are post-medieval in date, while this fragment has a probable late medieval date.

### Medieval Pottery

**6.4** In total 34 fragments, weighing 408g, of medieval pottery were recovered. The pottery can be divided into six fabrics, with the majority being locally manufactured. The Wareham area medieval pottery fabrics have previously been described by Hinton and Hodges (1977, 60). Those fabric descriptions have been applied here as they remain relevant and accurate. The only change to the Hinton and Hodges' (ibid) fabric sequence is the division of fabric C being referred to here as Wessex coarseware, along with a refined variant, noted here as developed Wessex coarseware. The pottery has been

quantified by fabric type and is detailed in Table 4, spot dating by context is provided in Table 5. Each fragment was examined visually, with optical light microscopy utilised at x20 magnification to confirm the presence or absence of certain inclusions. In addition, a mild acid was utilised to confirm the calcareous nature of certain inclusions.

### *11-13th Century*

- 6.5** The earliest fragment of pottery comprises a sherd of flint tempered (Wareham Fabric A), stamped, pottery of 10th to early 12th century date. This is likely to derive from a Saxo-Norman pitcher, and was recovered from context 104. The stamp on this sherd is a partial segmented circle or petalled flower motif. Similar motifs have previously been noted by the author in Shaftesbury, Dorset, and possess a similar date to this example. Six fragments exhibit flint and limestone temper (Wareham fabric B), these items are likely to be of 11-12th century date and were recovered from contexts 106 in F105, 206 in F207, 210 in F211 and 214 in F215. The sherd from deposit 106 displays rilling on the exterior, and a squared rimmed cookpot was recovered from ditch F215. Fragments in Wessex coarseware were also recovered from these contexts. Wessex coarseware has a greater currency than Wareham fabrics A and B, thus there is potential for fragments in this fabric to extend into the early 13th century. The origins of fabrics A and B are considered to be locally sourced from the Wareham area, and while similar may be said for some of the Wessex coarseware examples (Wareham fabric C), additional sources of this ware type include Laverstock, Salisbury, and potentially east Dorset and western Hampshire (Wareham fabric E).

### *13-14th Century*

- 6.6** Medieval wares of this date are confined to developed Wessex coarsewares. These display the same inclusions as its coarser predecessor, but displays an apparent refinement in raw materials and often a thinner walled pot. This ware type was recovered from deposits 103, 203, 210 and 214. One sherd of green glazed Beauvais was recovered from deposit 109 and represents the only foreign import within the recovered pottery. This item occurs alongside a sherd of glazed jug or pitcher, likely created at the Pound Lane, Wareham, medieval pottery kiln, with a date of 13-14th century.

### **Post-medieval pottery**

- 6.7** Six sherds of post-medieval pottery were recovered. These comprise four sherds of Verwood-type (east Dorset) pottery, and two items of locally produced South Dorset sandy ware from the Stoborough area. These items were recovered from deposits 102, 205 and 208. Context 208 contains the most post-medieval pottery with a date range of 17-18th century. Vessel forms recovered from this feature include a jar rim, a porringer rim and a fragment of manganese-glazed (Alderholt ware) cup.
- 6.8** One Verwood jug or chamber pot base, recovered from context 202, displays an inscribed 'R O' on the base. The inscription extends beyond the broken fragment. This appears to have been created after firing and could represent a potential owner rather than a maker. Nonetheless, the occurrence of marking utilitarian ware is relatively rare in post-medieval Dorset.

**Table 4: Quantification of pottery by fabric per context**

Context	Medieval Pottery												Post-medieval pottery						Total No.	Total Wt (g)
	Wareham A		Wareham B		Wareham Pound Lane Kiln Fineware		Wessex Coarseware		Developed Wessex Coarseware		Beauvais - French Import		Stoborough Area Post-medieval		Manganese Glazed Verwood		Verwood-type			
	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)	No.	Wt (g)		
102													1	168					1	168
103							1	21	1	5									2	26
104	1	13					3	19											4	32
106			1	6			2	33											3	39
109					1	21	2	14			1	1							4	36
203							2	48	3	21									5	69
205																	1	100	1	100
206			1	5			1	8											2	13
208													1	26	1	16	2	54	4	96
210			2	25			5	28	2	18									9	71
212							1	41											1	41
214			2	59			1	11	1	11									4	81
<b>Total by fabric</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>772</b>

**Table 5: Pottery Spot Dating by context**

Context	Spot Dating (century AD)
102	17-18th
103	12-14th
104	10 – early 12th
106	11-13th
109	13-14th
203	13-14th
205	19-20th
206	11-13th
208	18-19th
210	13-14th
212	12-13th
214	13-14th

## Stone

- 6.9** One fragment of Cornish roofing slate was recovered from context 210. The item is an unusual artefact to be recovered from a distinctly medieval context and could be either an intrusive find, or more likely, could reflect the presence of a relatively high status, or prominent, medieval building formerly lying in the vicinity of the site. Four fragments of slightly burnt fossiliferous limestone were recovered from contexts 104 and 206. These items could reflect building or roofing stone that has been burnt, or perhaps the burning of limestone to create slaked lime as part of an industrial, building or agricultural process. These were recovered from sealed medieval contexts.

## 7. COMMENT

- 7.1** The trenches revealed evidence that archaeological deposits lie within and around the footprint of the proposed development. Some of these deposits have potential to date from the 10-11th centuries (e.g. deposit 104) making them important in understanding the early development of the town. A quantity of later medieval pottery from archaeological features show the area continued to be intensively occupied. Medieval to post-medieval transitional pottery and features are conspicuous by absence, suggesting that there is a break in visible archaeological activity at this time on the site. The presence of only one post-medieval feature (F209) suggests that post-medieval intrusion and disturbance of earlier deposits is relatively limited on the site.
- 7.2** The Dorset historic town project report for Wareham outlines the importance of the road network, which is framed around the principal North, East, South and West Streets which are considered to be a part of the creation of the town as a 9th century burh (DCC 2011, 60). The North Street site lies in a location, close to the junction of these principal thoroughfares, that could aid the understanding of the creation and subsequent development of the street system, thus the origins of the town and the organisation of the associated burgage plots. There have been several archaeological investigations, which cumulatively have significantly increased the archaeological understanding of the

development of Wareham; in 2011, 69 sites are outlined in the historic town project report (DCC 2011, Appendix 3). North Street in particular, has seen a substantial number of these, yet relatively few have occurred so close to central crossroads (DCC 2011, Fig. 57). The site of St Peter's Church at the junction of East and North Streets was in existence by 1348, but the date of foundation remains unknown. The proximity of this North Street site to the former significant medieval religious centre (now occupied by the town hall) may help to shed light on the date of creation. The proximity of the North Street site to the former central marketplace can also not be overstated. A market was recorded as being held within the town from the 1200s and is likely to have been focused on the main central crossroads; a position that was maintained into the post-medieval period.

- 7.3** In summary, the potential for archaeologically important deposits lying within the development footprint has been confirmed by the archaeological evaluation trenches. While the significance of these individual deposits is considered low, the site could contribute to broader research aims. The small nature of the investigation parcels limited the potential for fully exploring the character of these deposits, thus any more detailed assessment of their significance is somewhat restricted. The creation of new building footings and drainage, as part of the development of the site, could result in the physical loss of archaeological deposits.

## **8. REFERENCES**

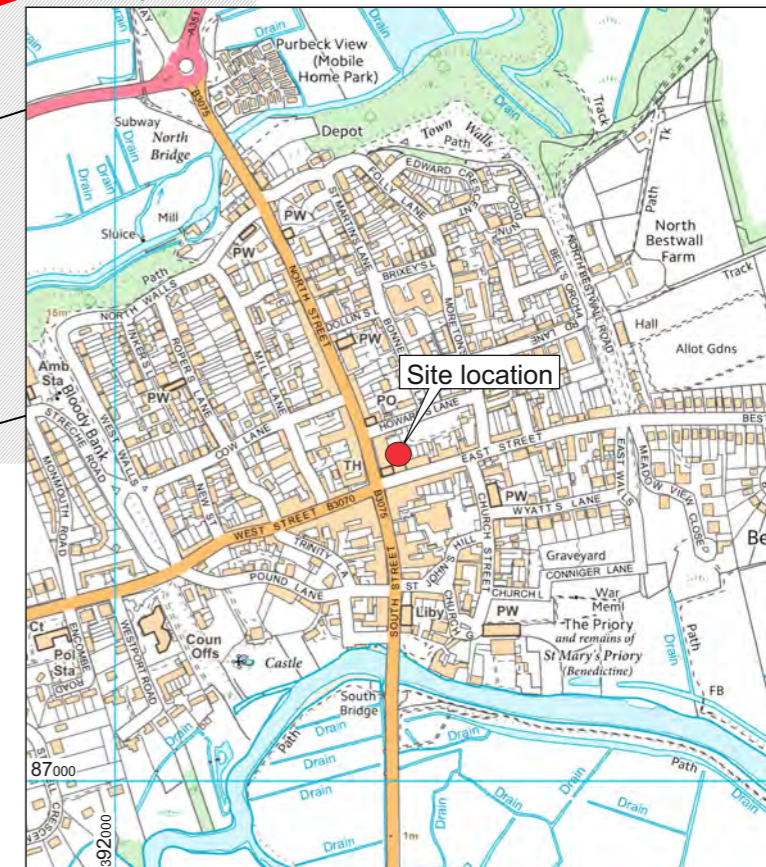
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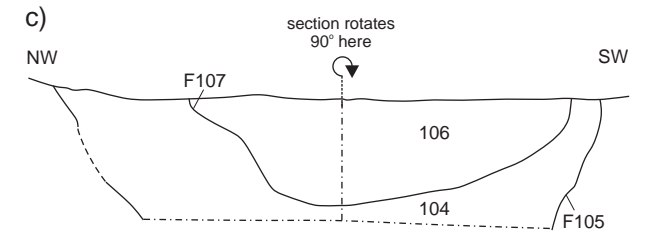
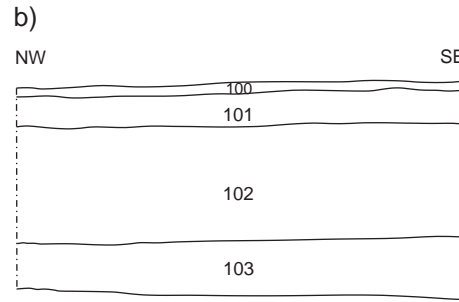
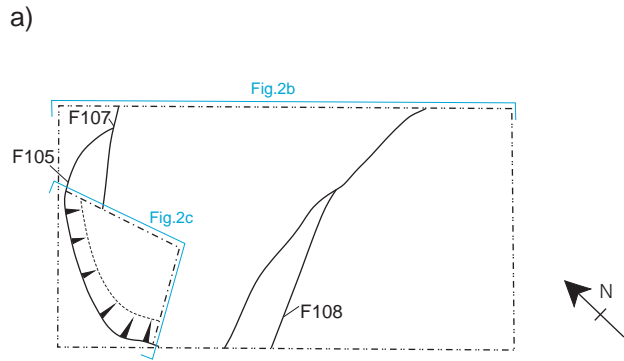
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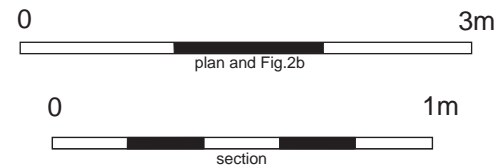
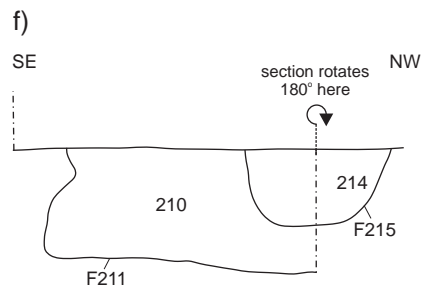
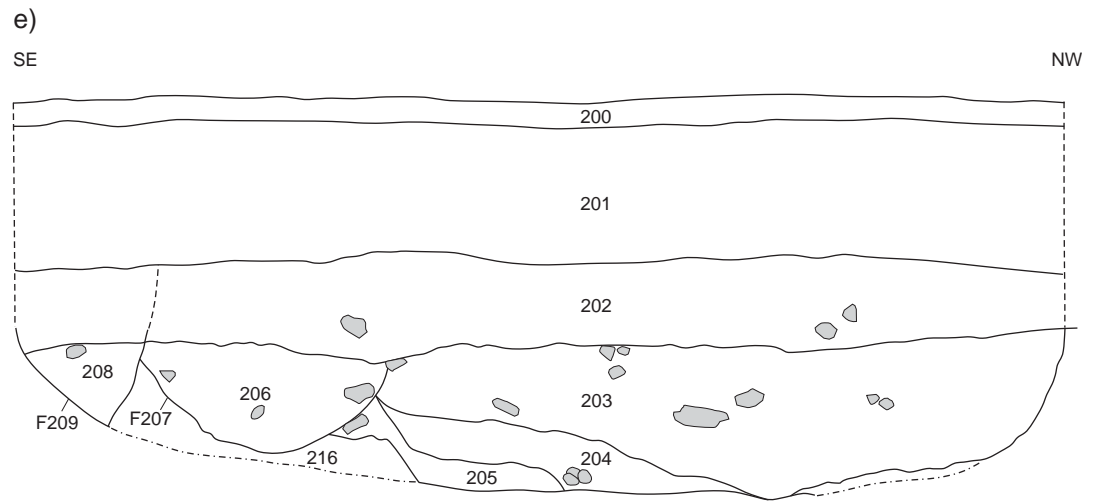
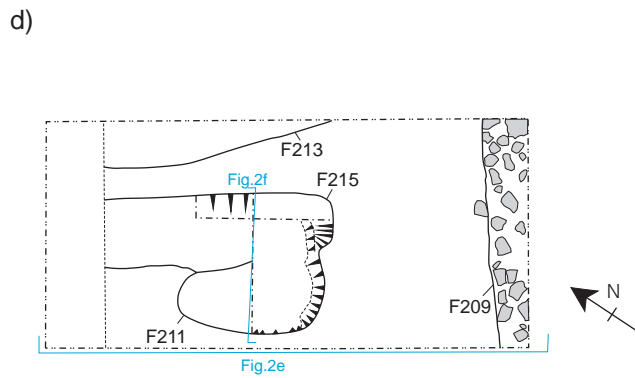
PROJECT  
2, North Street, Wareham

TITLE  
Fig. 1: Site and trench locations


Trench 1



Trench 2



PROJECT



AC archaeology

2, North Street, Wareham

TITLE

Fig. 2: Plan and section drawings

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