

FORMER HALLMARK CARS SITE, ST JOHNS HILL, WAREHAM, DORSET

Results of an archaeological watching brief

NGR SY92418728

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On behalf of:

Bourne Valley Developments

Document No: ACW966/2/0

Date: January 2017



AC archaeology

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SUMMARY

Between November and December 2016, archaeological monitoring was undertaken by AC archaeology Ltd. on the former Hallmark Cars site, St John's Hill, Wareham, Dorset, centred on NGR SY 92418728. The works comprised the monitoring of the groundworks associated with the construction of five new dwellings on the site. During the course of the works, features of a post-medieval date were identified; these comprised a probable pathway or garden feature, and the base of a dovecote. In addition to this, the monitoring recorded the presence of a deep former garden soil, which covered most of the northern portion of the site.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This document sets out the results of archaeological monitoring undertaken during the ground works associated with the redevelopment of the former Hallmark Cars site, Wareham, Dorset, centered on NGR SY 92418728 (Fig. 1). The principal works comprised the erection of five dwellings fronting onto St John's Hill, Wareham.

1.2 The monitoring was undertaken by AC archaeology Ltd. on behalf of Bourne Valley Developments Ltd. and was undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the planning consent for the works granted by Purbeck District Council (Ref. 6/2016/0484). Condition no. 6 required:

No development must take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant to, and approved by the Council. This scheme shall cover archaeological fieldwork together with post-excavation work and publication of the results.

Reason: *These details are required to be agreed before ground works start because the area has archaeological potential and it is important that any archaeological features are preserved by record.*

1.3 The site occupies a small area immediately to the north of the St John's Hill car park, and to the east of existing buildings. The site lies in the southern part of the town, approximately 140m north of the River Frome and 100m northwest of St Mary's Church. The underlying

geology comprises sand, gravels and clay of the Bracklesham Group and Barton Group (BGS Online Viewer).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The development area lies within the Wareham Conservation Area as designated in the Purbeck District Local Plan (2012).
- 2.2** The St John's Hill area of Wareham is thought to be the site of a medieval church and associated cemetery, now buried by the car park and modern street (Penn, 1980, 111). A watching brief was undertaken 50m to the west of Hallmark Motors, on South Street by AC archaeology in September 2012, which identified a number of in-situ burials (AC archaeology, forthcoming).
- 2.3** An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the site by AC archaeology as part of a former planning application in September 2014 (Crabb, 2014). This comprised the machine excavation of two trenches, lying towards the northern (trench 1), and central parts of the site (trench 2). Both trenches identified thick buried garden soils, of relatively recent date, with at least two features of post-medieval date being sealed by these soils; these comprise a post pit, and a feature of unclear nature which continued outside the trench limits to the east. In addition to this, a possible surface of medieval date was identified which appears to continue to the west (towards the centre of the site). Trench 2 was dominated by the presence of both modern and late post-medieval structures, which largely obscured any underlying archaeological remains (Crabb, 2014). Where depth could be attained within trench 2, a single post hole of probable medieval date was identified. In summary, the evaluation identified medieval and post-medieval features below a deep sequence of soils. This soil sequence is interrupted in places by the presence of late post-medieval, and modern buildings.

3 METHODOLOGY

- 3.1** The principal aims of the archaeological watching brief were;
- To record any archaeological features and finds which may be revealed or disturbed by the groundworks for the new dwellings, and;
 - To provide an interpretive report on the results of the monitoring.
- 3.2** The monitoring took place in accordance with AC archaeology's standard practice for archaeological watching briefs and with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Carter, 2016) approved in advance by the Dorset County Council Senior Archaeologist (DCCSA). Attendance by the site archaeologist occurred on five separate occasions between November and December 2016.
- 3.3** The archaeological monitoring commenced during the insertion of concrete piles for the foundations of the plots. Subsequent visits witnessed the reduction of levels around the piles, as well as the excavation of trenches for ring beams and services.

- 3.4** Site observations were recorded using AC archaeology Ltd.'s *pro forma* recording system, comprising written, graphic and photographic records in accordance with AC archaeology's *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2* (2012). Individual plans of features were drawn, where appropriate, at scales of either 1:50 or 1:20, with sections drawn at either 1:20 or 1:10, depending on the size of the feature; these can be found within the project archive.
- 3.5** The project archive has been prepared using the unique site code ACW966.
- 3.6** The monitoring was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief (CIfA, 2014).

4 RESULTS

Monitoring of piled foundations

- 4.1** Following the demolition of the former Hallmark Cars building, the first construction activity comprised the insertion of piles. The monitoring was found to be of limited archaeological value so a sample of four piles was observed at various locations across the site. The up-cast material revealed the presence of a thick dark soil, such as that recorded as context 101 during the ground level reduction phase. Examination of the arisings revealed no artefacts.

Reduction of ground levels around piles

- 4.2** Prior to the excavation of ring beams, supported on the piles, the development area was reduced to two different levels. To the south, the site was reduced by c.0.5m, while to the north; the ground level was reduced by only 0.3m (Plate 1). During this phase of groundworks, a brick structure, was revealed within the southeast extent of the site, and is believed to be the remains of a dovecote (Feature F103).

Dovecote F103 (Fig. 2; Plate 2/3)

- 4.3** This structure comprised a 0.4m thick brick wall, in an English bond, laid in a circular fashion with a diameter of c. 4m. Within the interior of the structure, a series of limestone flagstones was laid forming a solid and relatively level floor (104) upon which an additional double skin of slightly curved bricks formed a circular plinth with a diameter of c.1m (F105). Within this was a ceramic tiled surface. The small central brick plinth may have supported a *potence* - a wooden frame supporting a ladder and occasionally occur with suspended floors or perching platforms (McCann, 1998). The in-fill of this feature comprised late post-medieval ceramic building material and refuse, such as glass, which suggests that this structure had gone out of use by the 19th century. This feature had been disturbed in part by the presence of an east-west aligned red brick wall, which most probably relates to the back wall of a row of 19th century structures (present on both the 1846 tithe map, and the 1889 ordnance survey map). A later brick wall, of similar construction and composition to that already outlined, had disturbed the feature to the northeast, while a portion of the eastern extent of the structure had been removed by the construction of the adjacent club building.



Plate 1: Reduction of levels within the northern portion of site, viewed from the south

Plate 2: F107 (foreground) and F103, viewed from the east with two 1m scales





Plate 3: View of the interior of F103, from the northeast with two 1m scales

Garden feature F107 (Fig 2; Plates 2 and 3)

4.4 A probable pathway consisting of red brick edged block paving that had been substantially removed and damaged in places, was shown to abut the dovecot to the east. This is considered to be a garden feature and dates to the post-medieval period.

Context No.	Observed thickness (m)	Description	Interpretation
100	0.3	Concrete.	Previous concrete floor level.
101	0.65	Mid brownish black, sandy loam, soft, common brick, tile, glass, and flint gravel.	Thick garden soil.
102	Over 0.3	Mid grey, sandy silt, of loose consistency, with abundant ceramic brick, tile, as well as stone roof tile and glass.	Spread of demolition material.
103	Unexcavated	Brick wall - circular in plan. Constructed of regular bricks (300mmx110mmx112mm) within a sandy yellow mortar, and bonded in an English bond.	Exterior wall of dovecote.

104	0.1	Limestone flagstone floor, comprising tabular limestone of (400x300x100mm) firmly bedded on sand, and not mortared.	Limestone floor.
105	Unexcavated	Double skin of slightly curved bricks, forming a central plinth. Composed of regular brick measuring 300mmx110mmx112mm.	Upper fill of refuse pit, [104] intentional dumping.
106	Unexcavated	Ceramic tiled surface within brick. Set into sand, not mortared.	Ceramic tile floor.
107	Unexcavated	Red brick mortared with yellow sandy mortar.	Brick garden feature, probable pathway

Table 1: Principal deposits recorded during the works

5 FINDS

- 5.1** All finds recovered from the site derive from the dovecot feature F103. These comprise brick and stone tile samples from the walls and floors that comprised the structure, as well as remains of glass bottles and a single broken stone roof tile recovered from the subsequent infilling following the structures disuse. The finds are not of intrinsic archaeological value and it is recommended that all finds are discarded following agreement with the landowner.
- 5.2** The single stone roof tile was of limestone, weighing 4kg, and measured 340mm x 250mm x 30mm displaying a single round hole (1cm diameter). This was recovered from context 102, the fill of the dovecote, and is likely to be of post-medieval date. As well as this four shards of bottle glass were recovered from this context, these comprised two bases, one of which is embossed with 'N & Co 1153', and two neck fragments both with seam stops below the lip; these examples are thought to date from the late 18th into the 19th centuries.
- 5.3** A single brick weighing 1.3kg was recovered as a sample of those comprising the main wall of F103. This was in a red fabric, with rare quartz grits and common patches of iron oxide within the fabric. A pale yellow, soft, sandy mortar had been adhered to the upper and lower faces. This brick was 210mm x 100mm x 60mm in size.
- 5.4** One of the limestone floor tiles, which comprised surface 104, was retained for inspection. This was tabular in shape and weighed 3.9kg; the tile had signs of a chemical reaction upon the upper face that had lead to a blackening of this face of the slab.
- 5.5** Finally, a slightly curved brick was retained as a sample of those that comprise the interior wall of the dovecote (F105). This weighed 1kg and was of a pale-yellow fabric with rare flint and common quartz grits. A pale yellow, soft, sandy mortar had been adhered to the upper and lower faces the dimensions of this was 210mm x 100mm x 60mm in size.

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1** The monitoring revealed two features of archaeological interest. The presence of the dovecote structure on site was unexpected, as this structure does not appear on any known maps of the town of Wareham, such as the 1846 tithe map, and the later ordnance survey editions. A search of the earlier mapping for Wareham revealed no additional evidence, apart from that in the 18th century when the plot was used as a garden (Lillian Ladle pers comm) and it may be that the structure was in use at that date.

- 6.2 The datable artefacts recovered from the infilling of the dovecote indicate that this feature had gone out of use by the late 18th century or certainly by the early 19th century.
- 6.3 The absence of human remains on the site is significant, and suggest that St John's Hill medieval cemetery, known to lie immediately to the south, did not extend north into the current site boundaries.

7 REFERENCES

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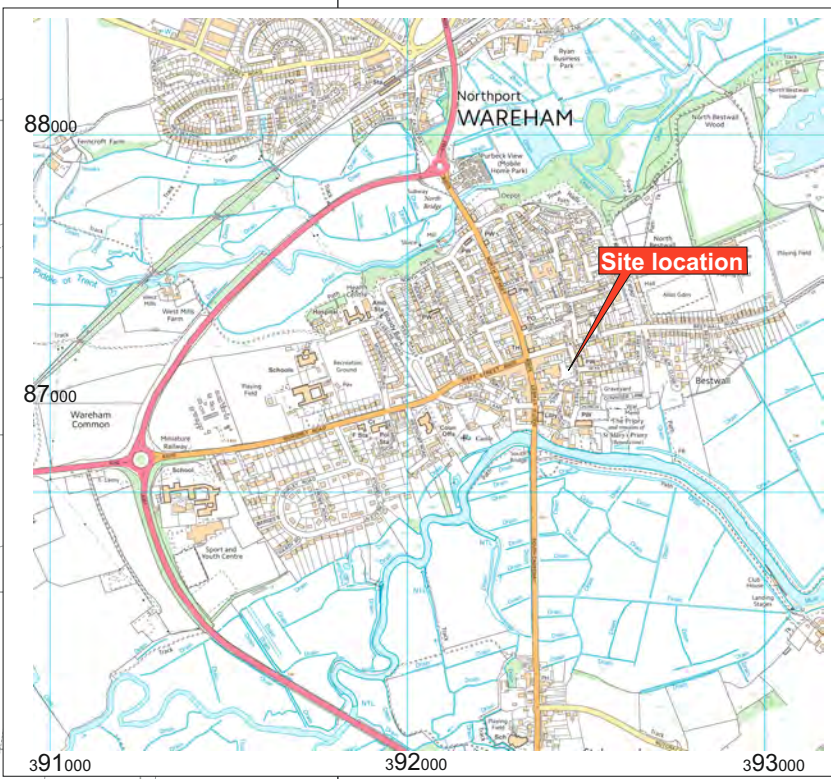
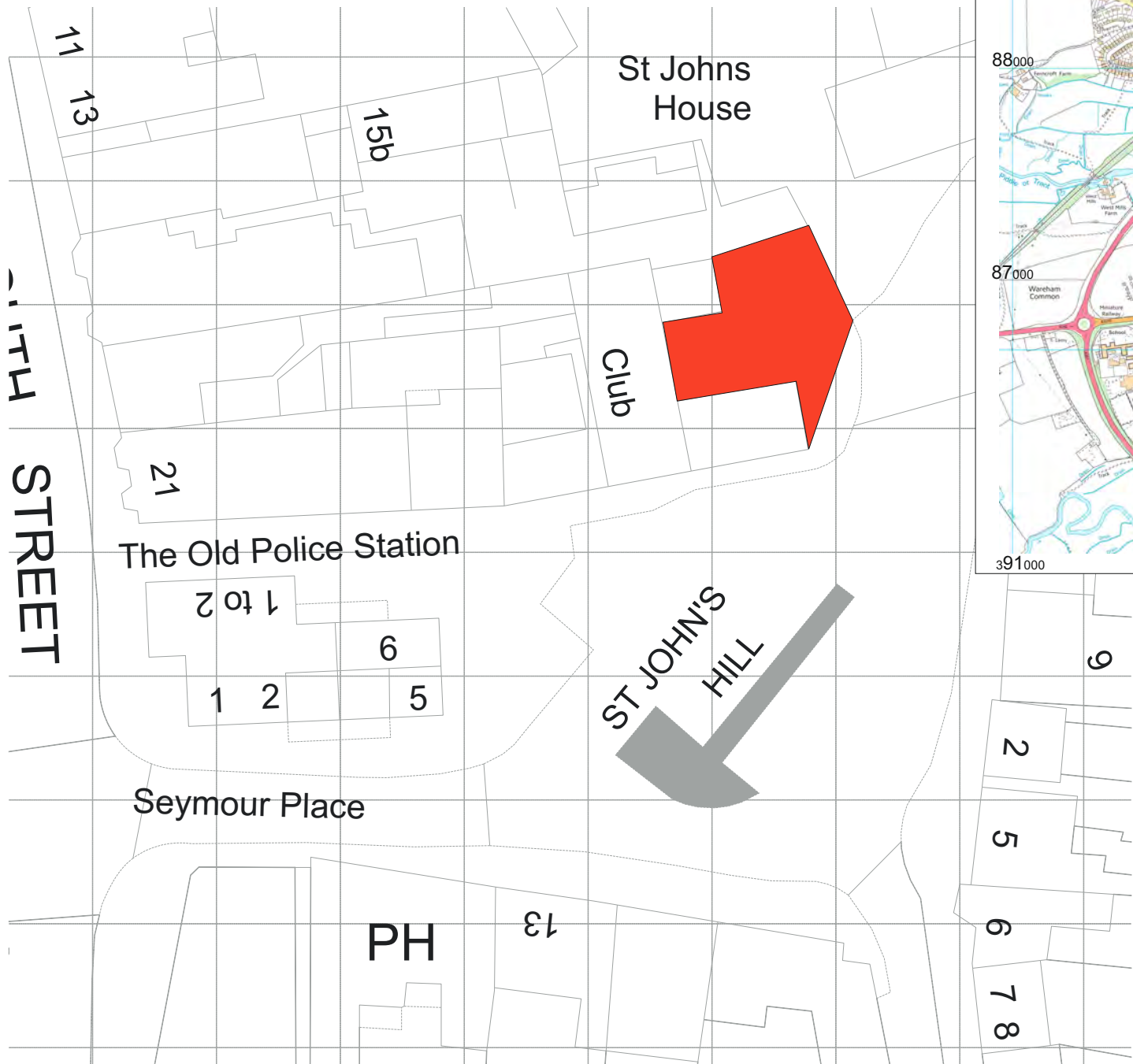
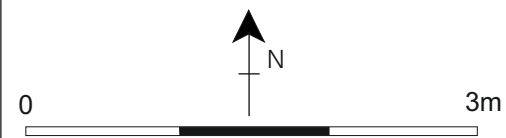
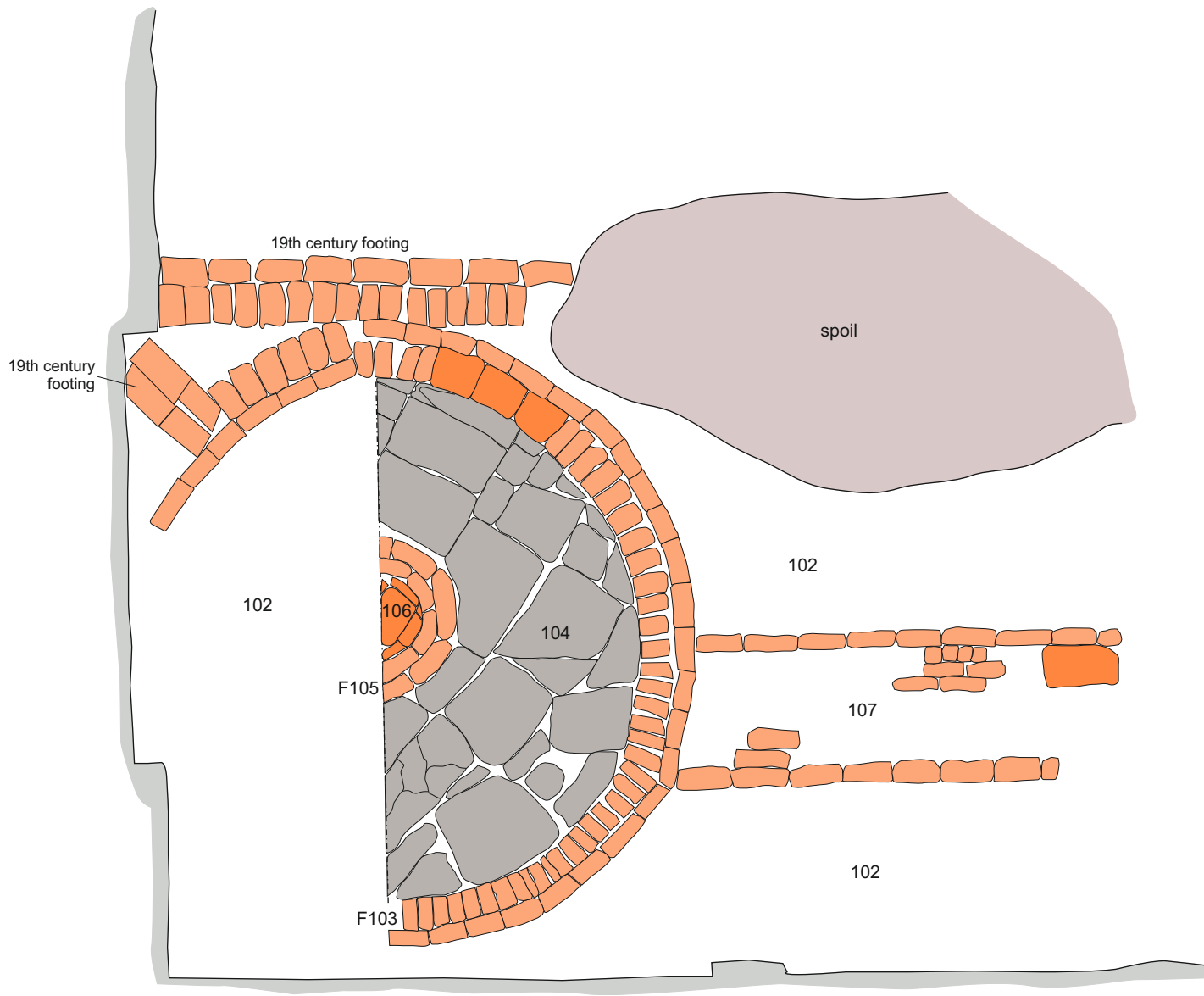


Fig. 1: Site location



Key

- Brick
- Ceramic tile
- Limestone slab

PROJECT
 Hallmark Motors, St John's Hill,
 Wareham

TITLE

Fig. 2: Plan of feature F103



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