

# Harper House, Hound Street, Sherborne, Dorset

## An Archaeological Watching Brief



© Context One Archaeological Services 2012

# Harper House, Hound Street, Sherborne, Dorset

## An Archaeological Watching Brief

for

**Nichols Brown Webber Architects and Landscape Planners**

on behalf of

**Sherborne School**

by



Brickfield Offices, Maperton, Wincanton, Somerset. BA9 8EG.

T: 01963 824696

F: 07092 259858

E: [mail@contextone.co.uk](mailto:mail@contextone.co.uk)

W: [www.contextone.co.uk](http://www.contextone.co.uk)

**COAS Project Reference:** C1/WBF/11/HSD

**National Grid Reference:** ST 63971 16653

**West Dorset District Council Planning Reference:** 1/D/10/001885

**OASIS ID:** contexto1-147773

**Dorset County Museum:** C1/WBF/11/HSD

**COAS Team:**

**Project Director:** Richard McConnell

**Fieldwork Manager:** Stuart Milby

**Fieldwork:** Peter Fairclough and Lee Newton

**Post-Excavation Coordinator:** Kelly Evans

**Report:** Richard Tabor

**Research:** Richard Tabor

**Graphics:** Tara Fairclough

September 2012

Context One Archaeological Services Ltd shall retain the copyright of any commissioned reports, tender documents or other projected documents, under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 with all rights reserved, excepting that it hereby provides an exclusive licence to the client for the use of such documents by the client in all matters directly relating to the project as described in the Project Design/Specification/Written Scheme of Investigation.

## Contents

Non-technical Summary.....	i
1. Introduction .....	1
2. Site Location, Topography and Geology.....	1
3. Archaeological and Historical Background .....	1
4. Methodology.....	3
5. Results.....	4
6. Finds .....	9
7. Conclusions .....	9
8. Archive .....	9
9. COAS Acknowledgements .....	10
10. Bibliography .....	10

### Appendices

Appendix 1. Context Summary.....	11
----------------------------------	----

### Illustrations

Figure 1. Site setting and selected Medieval remains within the environs of the site .....	2
Figure 2. Detailed site setting and details of archaeological interventions .....	5

### Plates

Plate 1. Detail from Percy's Map of Sherborne (1834).....	3
Plate 2. Detail from Ordnance survey 25", 1887 .....	3
Plate 3. Area 1, general view (from SSE).....	6
Plate 4. Area 1, general view (from NW).....	6
Plate 5. Area 1, profile 1 (from WSW; 1m scale) .....	6
Plate 6. Area 2, profile 2 (from NE; 1m scale) .....	6
Plate 7. Area 2, soakaway (from SSW).....	7
Plate 8. Area 2, soakaway, profile 3 (from SE; 1m scales).....	7
Plate 9. Area 2, limestone paving (110) (1m scale) .....	7
Plate 10. Area 2, garden wall (105) (from SE; 1m scale).....	7
Plate 11. Area 3, profile 4 (from NNW; no scale) .....	8
Plate 12. Area 3, service trench (from SE; 1m scale).....	8
Plate 13. Area 3, trench 3 profile (from SW; 2m scale) .....	8

## **Non-technical Summary**

*Context One Archaeological Services Ltd carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief during development groundworks at Harper House, a Grade II listed building in Hound Street, Sherborne, Dorset (centred on NGR ST 63971 16653). The project was commissioned by Nichols Brown Webber Architects and Landscape Planners on behalf of Sherborne School at the request of West Dorset District Council. The work was conducted over seven days in July and August 2011.*

*Recent archaeological in and around Hound Street has revealed evidence of its medieval occupation. It is likely that this extended to the rear of Harper House, however landscaping associated with the gardens appear to have erased all traces of earlier occupation, consistent with the findings from a previous evaluation by COAS.*

*A very few 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century finds were of no special significance and might reasonably be discarded.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd (COAS) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief during development groundworks at Harper House, Hound Street, Sherborne, Dorset (centred on NGR ST 63971 16653; hereafter referred to as the Site). The project was commissioned by Nichols Brown Webber Architects and Landscape Planners on behalf of Sherborne School, which funded the project.
- 1.2 The archaeological work was requested by West Dorset District Council as a condition of granting planning permission for extensions to a school boarding house with external alterations and the formation of a new play area (Planning application no: 1/D/10/001885). The work was conducted over seven days between the 7<sup>th</sup> July and the 11<sup>th</sup> August 2011.
- 1.3 It was considered that archaeological features/deposits could be present on the Site, and that these could be damaged or destroyed by development. However, as the nature or presence of such features/deposits has not been proven on the basis of currently available information, it was determined that a reasonable archaeological response would be to carry out a watching brief during all ground disturbance associated with the development.
- 1.4 The request for the archaeological work follows advice given by Central Government as set out in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 5: Planning for the Historic Environment (2010) and in accordance with Policy SA24 of the West Dorset District Local Plan (January 2003).

## 2. Site Location, Topography and Geology

- 2.1 Sherborne is located c. 5km east of Yeovil, in Somerset and c. 24km west of Shaftesbury, in Dorset. The town sits on the northern bank of the River Yeo, on the edge of the Blackmore Vale. The Site itself (centred on NGR ST 63960 16660) is located on land to the rear of Harper House, which fronts Hound Street (**Figure 1**). It occupies roughly level ground c. 62m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).
- 2.2 The underlying geology is of Inferior Oolite Group Jurassic sedimentary Ooidal limestone (BGS 2012). The soils in the area are characterised by shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone (MAGIC 2006).

## 3. Archaeological and Historical Background

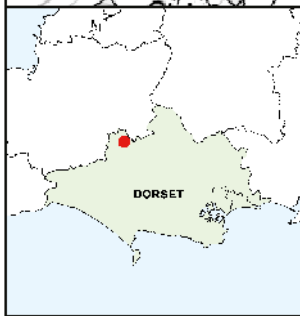
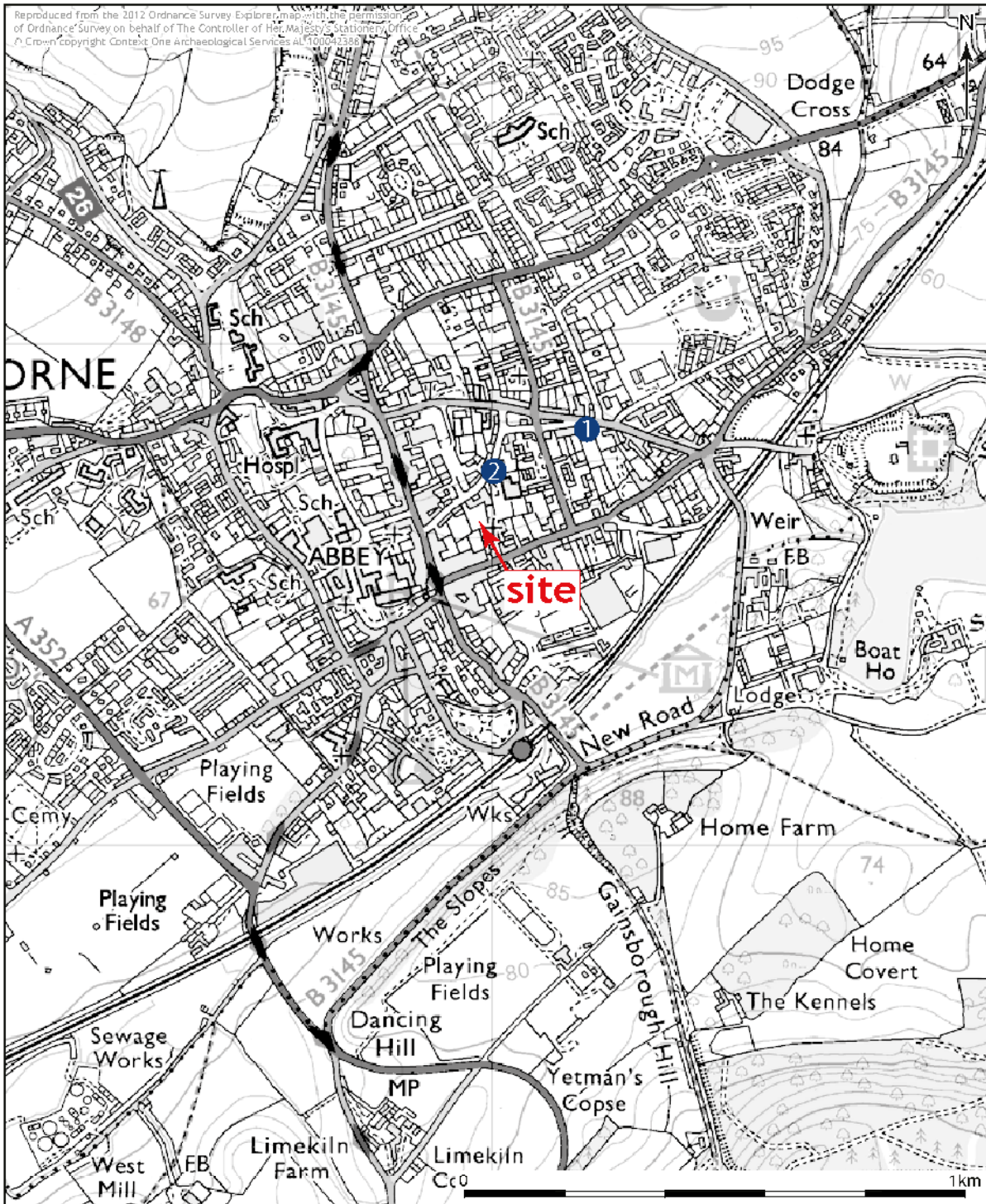
- 3.1 The archaeological and historical background for the proposed development site and environs has been drawn from secondary sources, in particular from the report of an evaluation carried out by COAS (Slator 2007). That report made extensive use of a summary history of Sherborne (Penn 1980), now superseded by that of the Dorset Historic Towns Project (Davey and Bellamy 2011), which has been the principal research resource together with the Dorset Historic Environment Record (HER) (**Figure 1**).

### **Prehistoric and Roman (- AD450)**

- 3.2 The HER does not record any archaeological evidence for Prehistoric or Roman activity within the environs of the Site. However, Sherborne is located in an area densely occupied during the Late Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman Periods, with several Romano-British occupation sites having been found along the Yeo Valley (Penn 1980, 91).

### **Anglo-Saxon and medieval (AD451-AD1065)**

- 3.3 A cathedral was founded at Sherborne in AD705. Later, the town became the capital of Wessex and Alfred's elder brothers, Ethelbert and Ethelbald, were buried in what became Sherborne Abbey.



- 1. HER No. 1101149 metalised surface
  - 2. HER No. 1101150 demolition deposits
- Medieval

<b>PROJECT TITLE</b> Harper House, Hound Street, Sherborne, Dorset		
<b>FIGURE TITLE</b> Site setting and selected Medieval remains within the environs of the site		
<b>SCALE</b> as shown	<b>PROJECT CODE</b> C1/WBF/11/HSD	<b>FIGURE NO.</b> <b>1</b>

### Medieval (AD1066 - AD1547)

- 3.4 Sherborne was referred to as *Scireburne* (meaning clear stream) at the time of the Domesday survey in 1086. Archaeological evidence of Medieval activity within the environs of the site relates to two field evaluations conducted in the 1990s. Investigation of an area of the street frontage of Hound Street adjacent to Harper House (Richards and Hawkes 1992) revealed a limestone/sandstone courtyard or pavement and a single pit, both dating to the 12th or 13th century (HER no. 1 101 149; **Figure 1, 1**). It was noted that the amounts of pottery recovered were considerable given the size of the area examined (c. 7 sq. m). A further archaeological evaluation, c. 50m to the north-east of the development site, encountered a number of features dating to the Medieval period. This included evidence for structures on both the frontage of Hound Street and at the rear of the site, as well as a number of pits and a possible quarry (HER no. 1 101 150; **Figure 1, 2**). The ceramic assemblage indicated a date range between the late 12th century and 14th century, suggesting that the two sites were broadly contemporary. Maps of 1834 and 1887 both show that outlines of Medieval burgage plots encroached on the Site throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### Modern (AD1800 -)

- 3.5 Harper House is an early 19<sup>th</sup> century stucco house with later additions from the same century. With its boundary walls and the even numbered houses 16 to 20 Hound Street, it forms a Grade II listed group (English Heritage Building ID: 104014). A town map drawn by Edward Thomas Percy in 1834 (**Plate 1**) depicts three discrete garden areas divided by boundary walls, with formalised pathways providing access through the gardens. Quartering of the south-west section of the west garden can additionally be observed. The first edition Ordnance Survey map of 1887 depicts a similar garden layout, although the quartering of the south-west section of the west garden is no longer extant (**Plate 2**) and no traces were found during an evaluation (Slator 2007, 11). The pathways visible on the 1887 map in the area of the proposed new play area were still extant in 2001, but have subsequently been grassed over (Anne Johnson pers. comm.). A linear pathway running parallel to a boundary wall can be seen bisecting the area of the proposed new tutor's house, formerly a boarding house.



Plate 1. Detail from Percy's Map of Sherborne (1834)



Plate 2. Detail from Ordnance survey 25", 1887

## 4. Methodology

- 4.1 The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the codes, standards and guidelines set out by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 1985, rev. 2010; 1990, rev. 2008; 1994, rev. 2008) at all times during the course of the investigation. Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.

- 4.2 A tracked 360 degree or JCB type machine was used to remove all overburden. All machining was monitored by a COAS archaeologist for the purpose of identifying and recording any archaeological remains, features and deposits present. Machine excavation continued to the first encountered of potentially archaeologically significant deposits or *in situ* subsoil or natural geology.
- 4.3 Potentially archaeologically significant deposits were cleaned by hand and assessed within the bounds of safety. All deposits were recorded using standard COAS pro-forma context recording sheets. Stratigraphic relationships were recorded using a “Harris-Winchester matrix” diagram. A digital photographic record comprised images of individual features, excavation areas and working shots to illustrate the nature of the archaeological operation mounted.
- 4.4 Where possible the location, extent and altitude of the archaeological work were mapped using a TopCon GRS-1 Global Positioning System receiving real-time calibrations to produce accuracies of 1-2cm.

## 5. Results

- 5.1 The deposits encountered during fieldwork are listed and described in **Appendix 1**. In the text, context numbers for layers and deposits appear in standard brackets, e.g. (102). Where a feature is discussed, it is referenced with its cut, and associated fill. During the post-excavation the Site has been divided into Areas 1 to 3 and photographic view directions have been marked on **Figure 2** for clarity of reference.

### Area 1

- 5.2 The area was situated on the east side of the Site, immediately south of Harper House. Prior to development it was under tarmac (**Plate 3**) set on a levelling deposit (100). The removal of the modern layers in preparation for the cutting of foundation trenches (**Plate 4**) suggested a grading in preparation for their laying as they were directly over natural (101) (**Figure 2**, profile 1; **Plate 5**).

### Area 2

- 5.3 The area occupied land south of the centre and west of Harper House. Prior to the installation of service trenches and a soakaway it was under lawn, through the middle of which a test pit was excavated. This revealed a deep topsoil (102) sealing a possible make-up or garden drainage layer (103) over what was interpreted as an earlier garden soil (104) (**Figure 2**, profile 2; **Plate 6**).
- 5.4 The soakaway was excavated midway between the test pit and the angle of the join between the central and east parts of Harper House (**Plate 7**). In part of the soakaway the topsoil lay directly over natural (101) (**Figure 2**, profile 3; **Plate 8**) but it also encroached on an area of presumed modern stone paving (110), also set on natural (**Plate 9**). In the service trench leading to the house courses of rough garden wall (105) (**Plate 10**) may have been broadly contemporary with the paving.

### Area 3

- 5.5 The area in the south west part of the Site was lawned, enclosed on its south and west sides by old, high, stone and brick garden wall (**Plate 11**) with a potting shed at the north end. Services trenches revealed consistently deep, loam topsoil (**Plate 12**) exceeding 1m in depth, over natural sandy clay, a sequence identified in a test pit (**Figure 2**, profile 4; **Plate 13**).
- 5.6 No other features or archaeological deposits were found. The recovered artefacts are discussed in section 6.



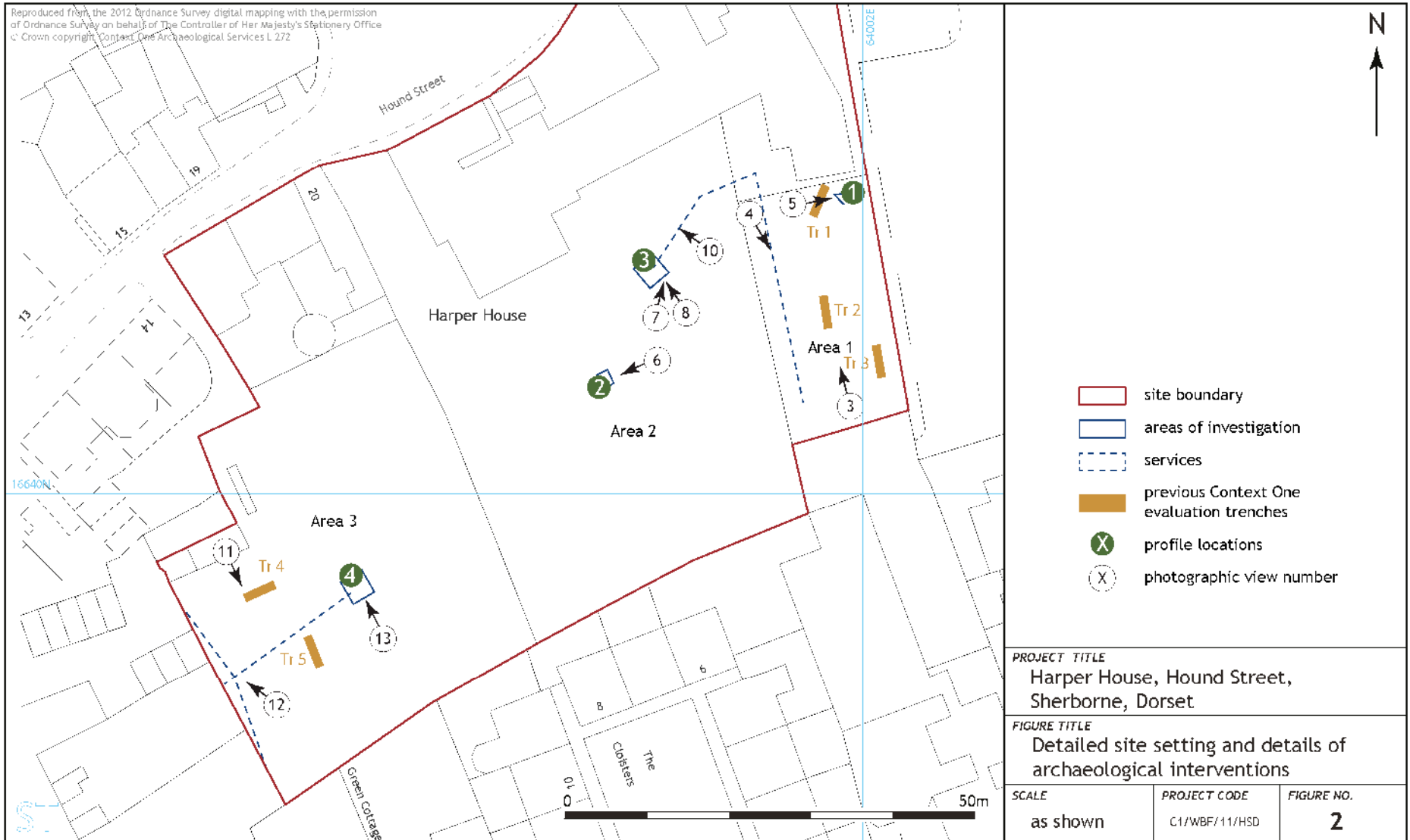




Plate 3. Area 1, general view (from SSE)



Plate 4. Area 1, general view (from NW)



Plate 5. Area 1, profile 1 (from WSW; 1m scale)



Plate 6. Area 2, profile 2 (from NE; 1m scale)



Plate 7. Area 2, soakaway (from SSW)



Plate 8. Area 2, soakaway, profile 3 (from SE; 1m scales)



Plate 9. Area 2, limestone paving (110) (1m scale)



Plate 10. Area 2, garden wall (105) (from SE; 1m scale)



Plate 11. Area 3, profile 4 (from NNW; no scale)



Plate 13. Area 3, trench 3 profile (from SW; 2m scale)



Plate 12. Area 3, service trench (from SE; 1m scale)

## 6. Finds

### Pottery

- 6.1 Three joining sherds (59g) from a sharply flared or flanged-rim dish were recovered from layer (103). It was in medium grey sandy fabric with orange outer margin and exterior surface. A yellowish green glaze covered the grey interior surface. A 5mm wide incised wavy line decorated the upper surface of the flange. The vessel is likely to have been 18<sup>th</sup> century in date.

### Glass

- 6.2 A concave base from a large (399g; 130mm diameter base) oxidised green glass bottle was recovered from topsoil (106) and probably dates to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 7. Conclusions

- 7.1 In the last two decades archaeological work in close proximity to Hound Street has identified significant features and deposits from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Comparable remains appear to be absent from the rear of Harper House, consistent with the results of an evaluation conducted by COAS in 2007. In the east and central areas deep grading of the surface is evident from the tarmac and topsoil directly overlying the natural. To the west there appears to have been deliberate accumulation of deep garden soils, reflected in the elaborate layout in Percy's map of 1834.

## 8. Archive

- 8.1 The Site archive is currently held at the offices of Context One Archaeological Services Ltd and consists of 88 digital images in .jpg format, including four profile sheets and various registers. There were no scaled drawings due to the lack of significant archaeological features. The archive will be prepared to comply with guidelines set out in Environmental Standards for the Permanent Storage of Excavated Material from Archaeological Sites (UKIC 1984, *Conservation Guidelines 3*)/ *Guidelines for the Preparation of Excavation Archives for Long-term Storage* (UKIC 1990)/ *Standards in the Museums Care of Archaeological Collections* (Museum and Galleries Commission 1992)/ *Management of Archaeological Projects 2* (English Heritage 1991). Arrangements will be made to deposit the archive with Dorset County Museum within 12 months following the submission of this report.
- 8.2 Copies of the Watching Brief report will be deposited with:

**Sherborne School**  
Abbey Road  
Sherborne  
DorsetDT9 3AP

**Dorset County Museum**  
High West Street  
Dorchester  
Dorset  
DT1 1XA

## 9. COAS Acknowledgements

- 9.1 Context One Archaeological Services Ltd would like to thank groundworks team of CW Ltd for their assistance during the course of the project. We are also grateful to Mr Steve Wallis (Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council) for curatorial advice.

## 10. Bibliography

- British Geological Survey, 2012 *1:50,000 Solid Geology map*. <http://bgs.ac.uk> (Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2012)
- British Listed Buildings Harper House, Sherborne. <http://www.britishlistedbuildings.co.uk/en-104014-harper-house-sherborne> (Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2012)
- Davey, J. and Bellamy, P. (ed), 2011 *Dorset Historic Towns Project: Sherborne - Historic Urban Characterisation*. Dorset County Council
- Department for Communities and Local Government, 2010 *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office
- Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), June 1985 (rev. April 2010) *Code of Conduct*. Reading: IfA
- Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), September 1990 (rev. October 2008) *Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology*. Reading: IfA
- Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), October 1994 (rev. October 2008) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief*. Reading: IfA
- Institute for Archaeologists (IfA), October 1994 (rev. October 2008) *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Excavation*. Reading: IfA
- Ordnance Survey 1887 25" map. [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk) (Accessed 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2012)
- Penn, K. 1980 *Historic Towns in Dorset*. Dorset Natural History and Archaeology Society Monograph Series No.1
- Percy, E. 1834 *Map of Sherborne, 26" map*. From Slator 2007
- Richards, J. and Hawkes, J. 1992 *Harper House, Hound Street, Sherborne. Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History and Archaeological Society* 113, 181
- Slator, J. 2007 *Land to the rear of Harper House, Sherborne School, Hound Street, Sherborne, Dorset: An archaeological evaluation*. Unpublished report, COAS

## Appendix 1. Context Summary

Context no.	Period	Type	Description	Earlier than	Contemp. with	Later than	Length	Width/ Diameter	Thickness / Depth
100	Modern	Layer	<b>Tarmac and levelling</b> (Profile 1)			101			0.50m
101	Geological	Layer	<b>Colluvium.</b> Brownish yellow silty sand including occasional angular sandy limestone (<0.20m) (Profiles 1 and 2)	100					0.25m exc
102	Modern	Layer	<b>Topsoil.</b> Dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) compacted loam including frequent subangular and subrounded sandy limestones (<0.05m) (Profile 2)			103			0.32m
103	Modern	Layer	<b>Make-up.</b> Pale yellow compacted silty, sandy clay including frequent large sandy limestone fragments (<0.30m) (Profile 2)	102		104			0.22m
104	Undated	Layer	<b>Buried soil.</b> Dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) compacted loam including occasional subangular sandy limestones (Profile 2)	103		101			0.47m
105	Modern	Structure	<b>Garden wall.</b> Light grey (5YR 7/1) small to large subangular sandy limestones laid randomly (Profile 3)	106	110	107	0.85m exc		0.35m
106	Modern	Layer	<b>Topsoil.</b> Dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) soft loam including frequent gritty to small sandy limestones (Profile 3)			105, 107			0.30m
107	Geological	Layer	<b>Natural.</b> Yellow (10YR 7/8) sandy clay including fine sand (Profile 3)	106		108			0.40m
108	Geological	Layer	<b>Natural bedrock.</b> Very pale yellow (10YR 8/2) sand bed of fractured sandy limestone (Profile 3)	107		109			0.15m
109	Geological	Layer	<b>Natural.</b> Yellow (10YR 7/8) sandy clay including fine sand (Profile 3)	106		108			1.15m
110	Modern	Structure	<b>Paved surface.</b> Light grey (5YR 7/1) small to large subangular sandy limestones laid randomly (Profile 3)	106	105	107	1.0m exc	3.0m	0.20m

111	Modern	Layer	<b>Topsoil.</b> Dark greyish brown (10YR 3/2) soft loam including interleaving lenses of redeposited natural (Profile 4)			112			1.5m
112	Geological	Layer	<b>Natural.</b> Yellow (10YR 7/8) sandy clay including large sandy limestone fragments (Profile 4)	111					0.50m exc