

Land to the west of Reap Lane, Southwell, Portland, Dorset.

An Archaeological Field Evaluation



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for

Betterment Properties (Weymouth) Ltd

by



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

T: 01963 824696

E: mail@contextone.co.uk

W: www.contextone.co.uk

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COAS project team:

Project Director: Richard McConnell

Fieldwork Manager: Stuart Milby

Post-excavation Manager: Dr Cheryl Green

Fieldwork: Luke Jarvis and Kerry Ely

Report: Richard McConnell

Illustration: Tara Fairclough

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Non-technical summary

Context One Archaeological Services (COAS) carried out an archaeological field evaluation on land to the west of Reap Lane, Southwell, Portland, Dorset (the 'Site'), over 2 days in August 2013. The investigation comprised the machine and hand excavation of six trial trenches. The project was commissioned and funded by Betterment Properties (Weymouth) Ltd.

The evaluation was requested by Mr Steven Wallis (Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council) in support of a planning application for residential development on the Site. Archaeological records note the presence of activity spanning the prehistoric to medieval periods in and around Southwell.

The evaluation provided definitive evidence for just one feature and this comprised the foundations of a mortared limestone wall crossing Trench 1. The predominance of finds indicates a Romano-British date. The combined evidence is likely to favour a building albeit a modest structure. A mixed limestone brash and clay subsoil that covered the wall and extended across Trench 6 appears to demarcate a tight zone of activity near the eastern edge of the Site. An undulating subsoil that was particularly evident in Trench 4 and Trench 5 is suggestive of former ridge and furrow cultivation.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Context One Archaeological Services (COAS) carried out an archaeological field evaluation on land to the west of Reap Lane, Southwell, Portland, Dorset (the 'Site'), over 2 days in August 2013. The project was commissioned and funded by Betterment Properties (Weymouth) Ltd.
- 1.2 The archaeological evaluation was requested by Mr Steven Wallis (Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council) in support of a planning application for residential development on the Site. Archaeological records note the presence of activity spanning the prehistoric to medieval periods in and around Southwell. The request followed advice by Central Government as set out in paragraph 141 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012).
- 1.3 The programme of archaeological works comprised five elements: the production of a Method Statement which set out the project strategy; evaluation through trial trenching; post-excavation and report production; and archive deposition. The Method statement was approved by Mr Wallis on 6 August 2013 prior to the commencement of any Site works.

2. Site location, Topography and Geology

- 2.1 The Site (centred on NGR SY 68367 70692) covers c. 0.76 hectares and is located on the western side of Portland and on the northern tip of Southwell. (**Figure 1**). The Site is broadly aligned on a south-west to north-east axis and fronts Reap Lane along its southern edge overlooking a modern housing estate. All other flanks are bordered by farm hedges and face open ground beyond. A track and public footpath runs along the western boundary towards the coastline which is c. 350m further to the west. The Site is largely situated on level ground at an average height of c. 67-68m above Ordnance Datum (aOD). At the time of the evaluation, the Site was laid to coarse pasture.
- 2.2 The solid geology of the Site is recorded as Jurassic Sedimentary Limestone of the Lulworth Foundation. No superficial (drift) geology is recorded.

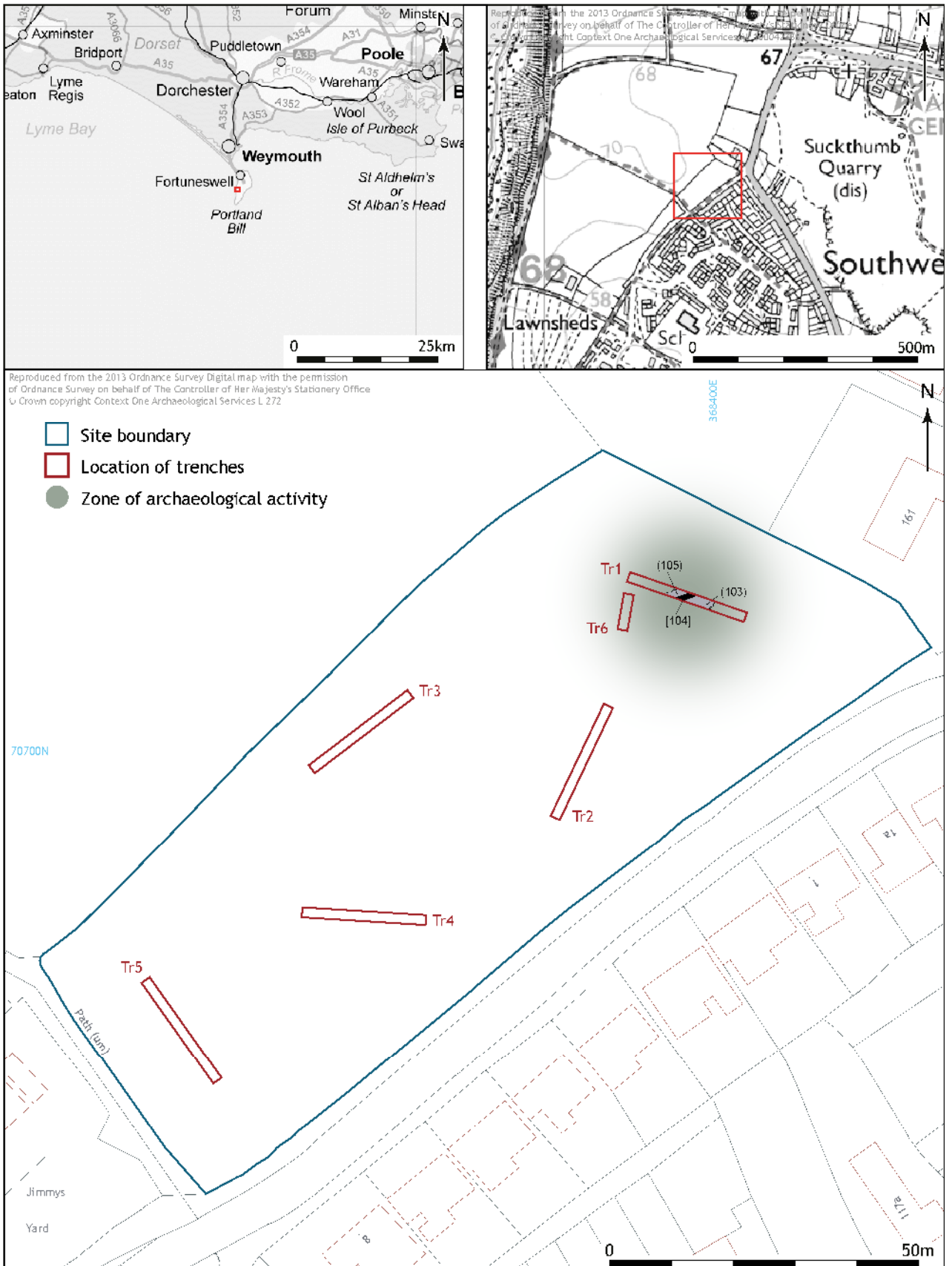


Figure 1. Site setting showing evaluation trenches, features and zone of archaeological activity

3. Methodology

- 3.1 The programme of archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the codes, standards and guidelines set out by the Institute for Archaeologists (IfA 1985, rev. 2012; 1990, rev. 2008; 1994, rev. 2001). Current Health and Safety legislation and guidelines were followed on site.
- 3.2 The evaluation initially comprised five, 20m long x 1.5m wide trenches equating to c. 2% sample of the Site. These were positioned to provide a representative spread across the Site (**Figure 1**). However, archaeological evidence encountered in Trench 1 required further characterisation and a sixth trench, measuring c. 6m long, was excavated. The location of Trenches 1-5 were laid out using a TopCon GRS-1 Global Positioning System pre-loaded with Ordnance Survey grid co-ordinates derived from the Method Statement trench plan. Trench 6 was only excavated to establish the extent of archaeological activity between Trenches 1 and 2 and was subject to minimal recording.
- 3.3 A JCB machine fitted with a 1.5m wide toothless grading bucket was used to remove topsoil/ploughsoil and continued until archaeological features or natural geology was encountered, whichever was first.
- 3.4 In the absence of archaeological features and deposits, one long face of each trench was cleaned by hand to define the sequence of deposits. A representative section was then recorded using COAS *pro forma* evaluation trench sheets. A digital photograph was also taken of each section as well as the long axis of each trench. All photographs included an appropriate scale.
- 3.5 Any archaeological remains encountered were sampled by manual excavation to establish stratigraphic relationships, recover sufficient artefacts to establish 'absolute' dates, determine feature/deposit morphology and character, and to recover any palaeoenvironmental indicators. All features/deposits were recorded using standard COAS *pro-forma* recording sheets. Stratigraphic relationships were recorded using a "Harris-Winchester matrix" diagram. Soil colours were logged using a Munsell soil colour chart. The location, extent and altitude of archaeological features and deposits were mapped relative to the National Grid and Ordnance Datum using a TopCon GRS-1 Global Positioning System. A photographic record was made of individual features as well as working shots to illustrate the nature of the archaeological operation mounted
- 3.6 Upon completion of the evaluation, all trenches were backfilled by machine and compacted.

4. Results

- 4.1 The evaluation was carried out during a spell of dry weather. None of the trenches encountered rising groundwater.
- 4.2 The deposits excavated during fieldwork are listed and described in **Appendix 1**. In the text, context numbers appear in standard brackets, e.g. (1002) and structural elements as braces, e.g. {104}.
- 4.3 Only one trench (Trench 1) produced definitive archaeological evidence and this included a wall and associated deposits. No archaeological remains were encountered in any of the other trenches although an undulating subsoil that was particularly evident in Trench 4 (401) and Trench 5 (501) (**Plate 3**) is suggestive of former ridge and furrow cultivation.
- 4.4 The topsoil/ploughsoil (100), (200), (300), (400) and (500) varied in thickness between 0.10m to 0.20m and overlay a 0.20m to 0.30m deep sub-soil (201), (301), (401) and (501). Across Trenches 3-5, the subsoil rested directly on a weathered limestone geology (302), (402) and (502) at a depth of 0.30m to 0.50m. The subsoil in Trench 1 (101) was notable for the presence of limestone brash mixed with clay that extended throughout Trench 6 before transitioning to natural weathered limestone. At the southern end of Trench 1, the subsoil (101) measured c. 0.80m thick and suggests that this deposit, and accompanying features, sat within a natural depression or shallow quarry that spanned both trenches at least. The natural limestone in Trench 2 (202) was interspersed with clay (203) and the two deposits abutted each other in Trench 3 ((302) and (303)) near the north-eastern

end (Plate 1).

- 4.5 The foundation courses of a wall section {104} aligned broadly west to east was encountered near the centre of the trench below the subsoil (101) (Plates 2 and 3). The section measured 1.6m in length and 0.60m wide and, on the southern face, comprised three courses of squared limestone blocks bonded with a gritty lime mortar and a rubble core. A spread of wall collapse was most evident over the northern side (105). An abutting soil deposit was revealed on the southern side (103) incorporating ?wall debris and areas of burning. Both contexts 103 and 105 yielded a modest finds assemblage including Romano-British pottery with ?late prehistoric fabrics and animal bone.



Plate 1. Trench 3 (from NE; 1m scale)



Plate 2. Trench 1 under excavation (from SE; 1m scale)



Plate 3. Trench 1 - Wall {104} (from S; 1m scale)

5. The finds

- 5.1 A small assemblage of finds was recovered from the evaluation and comprised a total of 89 artefacts. A breakdown of the assemblage by context, type, count and weight is presented in **Appendix 2**. Perhaps not surprisingly, the majority of artefacts (54 or c. 60%) derived from Trench 1, particularly the wall {104} and associated deposits (103), (105), and most relate to Romano-British pottery fabrics and a few possible late prehistoric fabrics. Similar residual material was collected in subsoil deposits (101) and (201). Eighteen sherds from a black burnished ware vessel were found together over a patch of burning just to the south of the wall {104}. A flint core was found in the subsoil of both trench 4 and 5 along with a flint flake in Trench 5 perhaps indicating transient prehistoric activity, at least, although the flints were not sufficiently diagnostic to ascribe to a period. Post-medieval and modern material including pottery, ceramic building material (CBM), slate and glass were encountered in the subsoil of most trenches and typical of refuse disposal as part of manuring processes.

6. Discussion

- 6.1 The evaluation encountered the foundations of a mortared limestone wall crossing Trench 1 with mixed soil deposits on either side with evidence of burning. The predominance of finds associated with this feature indicates a Romano-British date. The combined evidence is likely to favour a building rather than a boundary wall or other ancillary feature although the present indications are that this is a modest structure. A mixed limestone brash and clay subsoil that covered the wall and extended across Trench 6 appears to demarcate a tight zone of activity near the eastern edge of the Site (**Figure 1**). An archaeological programme of strip, map, and record would certainly define the extent of activity here and inform a strategy of mitigation should the development proposal go

ahead. An undulating subsoil that was particularly evident in Trench 4 and Trench 5 is suggestive of former ridge and furrow cultivation of which no above ground traces survive.

7. Archive

7.1 The project archive is currently held by COAS and consists of the following:

Item	Number	Format
Trench profile record sheets	5	Paper
Context recording sheets	1	Paper
Masonry recording sheets	1	Paper
Photographic register	1	Paper
Digital images	60	.JPG

7.2 The paper archive has been scanned as a single file in .PDF format and will form part of the physical Site archive to be deposited with Dorset County Museum.

7.3 Copies of this report will be deposited with the client/agent and included as part of the Dorset Historic Environment Record.

8. COAS acknowledgements

8.1 We would like to thank the following for their contribution to the successful completion of this project:

John Loosemore, Betterment Properties (Weymouth) Ltd
 Steven Wallis, Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council
 G. Crook and Son Ltd (machine operator)

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Appendix 1: Context summary

Key: MOD = Modern, POST RB = post Romano-British, RB = Romano British, LP = Late Prehistoric

CONTEXT NO.	PERIOD	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	EARLIER THAN	CONTEMP. WITH	LATER THAN	LENGTH	WIDTH/DIAMETER	THICKNESS / DEPTH
100	MOD	Layer	Dark Brown, soft silt	N/A	N/A	101	20m +	1.5m+	0.20m
101	POST RB	Layer	Mid Greyish Brown, friable silt	100	N/A	105	20m+	1.5m+	0.80m (max.)
102	GEOLOGICAL	Layer	Greyish Off White cemented/compacted limestone with numerous, rough limestone fragments in clay patching	101	N/A	N/A	20m+	1.5m+	unknown
103	?LP/RB	Layer	Mid Greyish Brown-Black, compacted silt/clay incorporating lenses of burning	101	104	102	2.0m+	1.5m+	0.18m
104	?LP/RB	Structure	Three courses of squared limestone blocks bonded with a gritty lime mortar and a rubble core	105	103	102	1.6m+	0.60m	0.20m
105	RB	Layer	Mid Greyish Brown, firm to compacted silt/clay with frequent limestone fragments	101	N/A	104	0.90m	1.5m+	0.20m
200	MOD	Layer	Dark Brown, soft silt	N/A	N/A	201	20m +	1.5m+	0.20m
201	UNKNOWN	Layer	Mid Greyish Brown, friable silt	200	N/A	202	20m+	1.5m+	0.20m
202	GEOLOGICAL	Layer	Greyish Off White cemented/compacted limestone with limestone fragments	201	203	N/A	varied	1.5m+	unknown
203	GEOLOGICAL	Layer	Yellowish Brown cemented/compacted clay with occasional small (c. 4cm) limestone fragments	201	202	N/A	varied	1.5m+	unknown
300	MOD	Layer	Dark Brown soft silt	N/A	N/A	301	20m	1.5m+	0.10m
301	UNKNOWN	Layer	Mid Greyish Brown friable silt	300	N/A	302	20m	1.5m+	0.20m
302	GEOLOGICAL	Layer	Greyish Off White cemented limestone	301	303	N/A	10m	1.5m+	0.05m+
303	GEOLOGICAL	Layer	Yellowish Brown cemented/compacted clay with occasional small (c. 4cm) limestone fragments	301	302	N/A	10m	1.5m+	unknown
400	MOD	Layer	Dark Brown soft silt	N/A	N/A	401	20m+	1.5m+	0.10m
401	UNKNOWN	Layer	Mid Greyish Brown friable silt	400	N/A	402	20m+	1.5m+	0.20m
402	GEOLOGICAL	Layer	Greyish Off White cemented limestone with occasional amorphous patches of Yellowish Brown clay throughout	401	N/A	N/A	20m+	1.5m+	0.10m+
500	MOD	Layer	Dark Brown soft silt with occasional small (c. 5cm), sub-angular limestone. Root intrusion throughout	N/A	N/A	501	20m+	1.5m+	0.20m
501	UNKNOWN	Layer	Mid Greyish Brown friable silt with occasional limestone small (c. 5cm) stone fragments	500	N/A	502	20m+	1.5m+	0.30m
502	GEOLOGICAL	Layer	Greyish Off White cemented limestone	501	N/A	N/A	20m	1.5m+	0.05m+

Appendix 2: Finds table

CONTEXT	POTTERY		BONE		CBM		FLINT		METAL		GLASS		SHELL		SLATE		COAL	
	no.	wt.	no.	wt.	no.	wt.	no.	wt.	no.	wt.	no.	wt.	no.	wt.	no.	wt.	no.	wt.
101	12	189									1	43						
103	23	213	7	20					1	50							1	3
105	5	57	3	5														
201	6	30									1	35						
301	3	25	1	36											1	5		
401	5	53	4	16	1	39	1	33	1	14	2	40						
501	5	46					2	16			1	14	1	3	1	5		
TOTALS	59	613	15	77	1	39	3	49	2	64	5	133	1	3	2	10	1	3