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Southampton Archaeology Unit

Report 761

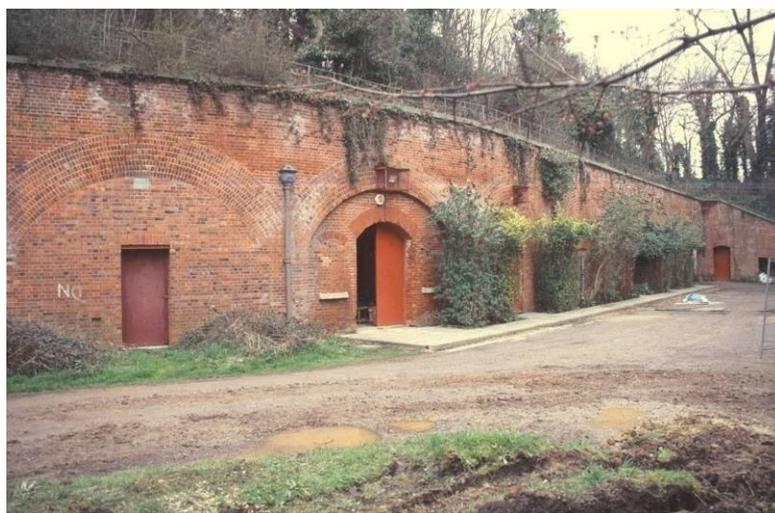
Archaeological watching brief at Bastion 4, Hilsea Lines, Scott Road, Hilsea, Portsmouth

2006/682

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2006

Client: CASEMATES



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Report on the archaeological watching brief at Bastion 4, Hilsea Lines, Scott Road, Hilsea, Portsmouth.

By PR Cottrell BA

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1. Summary.

A watching brief on the installation of a toilet, a sewage treatment plant and drain trenches at Bastion 4 of the Hilsea Lines revealed evidence of 19th century brick walls, a sunken brick feature and a possible ditch of uncertain date.

2. Introduction

The Archaeology Unit of Southampton City Council carried out an archaeological watching brief on the installation of a toilet for disabled people and a sewage treatment plant at Bastion 4, Hilsea Lines, Scott Road, Hilsea, Portsmouth (fig 1) on behalf of CASEMATES. The works were carried out under scheduled monument consent (ref No HSD 9/2/7673). The observations were made by C Lacey and E McDonald between 20/3/2006 and 30/3/2006. The project was managed by PR Cottrell.

The site (fig 1) is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (County Monument No 330) and lies in Area 15 of the Local Areas of Archaeological Importance as defined by Portsmouth City Council. Area 15 covers the area of the Hilsea Lines, a rampart and moat built in the mid-18th century, on the line of earlier but ill-defined defensive works, probably centred on the bridge over Ports Creek, which had been built in stone by 1510. The area is defined principally as one of importance for post-medieval archaeology.



Figure 1. The location of the site.

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3. Aims of the investigation.

The aims of the investigation, according to the scheduled monument consent, were to inspect the site during the works and to record and remove for study any matters of archaeological or historic importance observed in the course of the inspection.

4. Watching brief methodology.

The archaeological work on site consisted of observation of the insertion of pipes through the structure of the monument and of the machine excavation of the pipe trenches and the pit for a sewage treatment plant.

All archaeological records were made using the Southampton City Council archaeological recording system. The archive is stored on Portsmouth City Council premises.

5. Site location and topography.

The Hilsea Lines are situated at the north end of Portsea Island and extend along the south bank of Ports Creek. Bastion 4 is located north of Scott Road, by the north-west corner of Shawcross Industrial Park.

The area of the site, south of the ramparts, is generally level. Spot heights shown on the Ordnance Survey map in the vicinity of the site are 2.4m AOD in Scott Road and 2.1m AOD in Shawcross Industrial Park, both about 80m south of the site.

The underlying geology consists of Alluvium.

6. Historical and archaeological background.

The first defences of the north of Portsea Island were built just north of Ports Creek in 1544, during the reign of Henry VIII, to protect the naval port from an inland attack. In 1757 defensive lines consisting of high earth ramparts were established to the south of the creek. These remained largely unaltered until 1858, when the renewed threat of invasion by France led to the strengthening of all the fortifications around Portsmouth, including improvements to the Hilsea Lines. The original linear fortifications were replaced with bastions containing heavily armed casemates to provide angled and flanking fire. The works were also designed to cover the routes into Portsmouth of London Road and the railway.

By 1860 however, the development of rifled breech-loading artillery with greatly increased range and accuracy made the dockyards vulnerable to bombardment from Portsdown Hill. As a result the Royal Commission on the defences of Britain decided in 1860 to construct a line of detached forts on Portsdown Hill. The role of the Hilsea Lines would now be to support the Portsdown forts with long-range gunfire and to provide a base for action against any enemy troops that might succeed in by-passing the Portsdown defences.

The Hilsea Lines were completed in 1871, the last continuous defensive lines with bastions to be built in Britain. They extended for 2.5km along the northern side of Portsea Island and substantial sections survive. The Lines were designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument in 1964 and the site was given Conservation Area status in 1994.

7. Results of the watching brief.

Trench 1 consisted of three elements. It started as a rectangular trench c500mm x c700mm at the location of the new toilet inside the casemate, linked through the rear wall to the second section, which ran south-east to connect with trench 2. The third section, serving a sink drain, exited the casement about 8.5m to the north-east and turned through 90° to run south-west, parallel with the rampart, as far as trench 2. Trench 2 ran south-east for c20m across the car park to the location of trench 4, the pit for the sewage treatment plant. This was 3m long, 2.5m wide and 2.5m deep. Trench 3 ran south-west for c47m from T4 to a soakaway area to the south of the site. It divided at an obstruction (context 15) c5m from its south end and a branch ran SSE for c10.5m. The pipe trenches, 1, 2 and 3, were between 300mm and 400mm wide. The trenches are shown on figure 2.

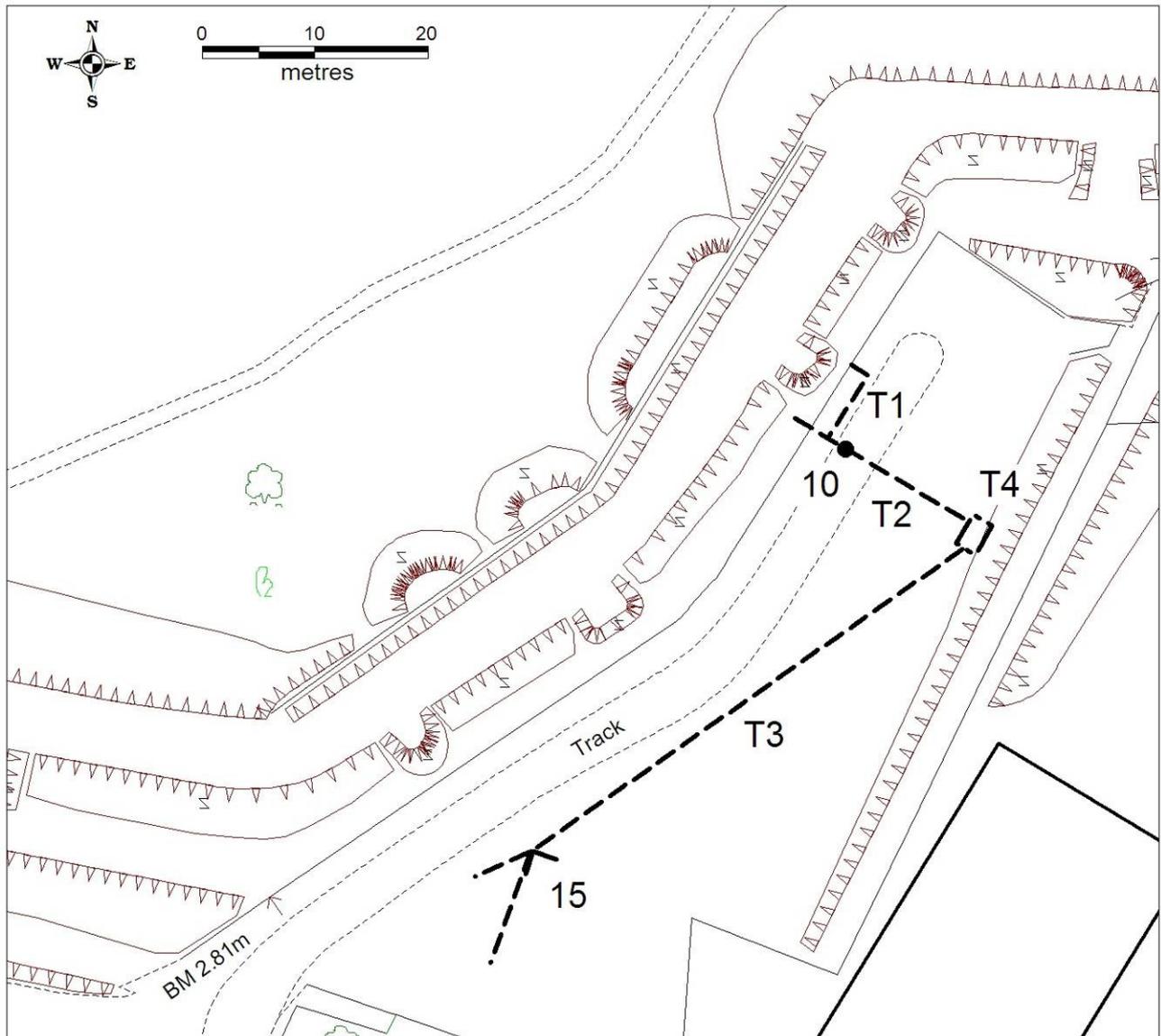


Figure 2. Site plan, showing trenches and features 10 & 15.

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The earliest deposit exposed was context 8, very slightly stony, light yellowish brown clay over 2 metres thick. This was interpreted as the natural alluvium. It was exposed in all the external trenches.

Part of trench 1 was dug inside the casement, adjacent to the wall (context 1), aligned NE – SW, that blocked the casement arch. Beneath the modern concrete floor, context 2, was layer 3, brick and concrete rubble mixed with moderately stony, yellowish brown sandy loam. Context 4 was a linear brick feature aligned SE – NW, possibly a remnant of the base of an internal wall. Context 5 consisted of two courses of brickwork, one of headers laid on edge above a course of

stretchers. These were below the base of wall 1 and on the same alignment, but separated from it by a thick layer of mortar, which suggested that wall 1 was a separate phase of building, possibly a later blocking of the casement arch.

In trenches 1 and 2, the clay was overlaid by context 7, a layer of moderately stony, very dark greyish brown soil c225mm thick, mixed with brick rubble and containing fragments of concrete, 19th century pottery and slag or clinker. Above this was the car park surface, context 6, very dark grey crushed stone, c100mm thick. Context 9 was a concrete block at the base of wall 1. It appeared to be a later insertion.

Feature 10 was observed in both sides of trench 2, about 3.7m from the west end of the trench. It was c530mm wide and c450mm deep with a roughly V-shaped profile. It may have been a small pit or a linear feature, aligned roughly parallel with the rampart, possibly a ditch. The fill, context 11, was very slightly stony, yellowish brown clay loam with fragments of charcoal and brick. No dating evidence was recovered and it is possible that the feature was related to the construction of the original 18th century earthworks of the Hilsea Lines. The brick fragments in the fill may have been associated with those works, but it is possible that it was filled in at the time of the 19th century reconstruction.

In trench 4, the clay was overlaid by context 13, very slightly stony, dark yellowish brown clay loam, c250mm thick, and context 12, a layer of moderately stony, very dark greyish brown clay loam, containing fragments of brick and concrete blocks, which formed the topsoil east of the car park. The same deposits were observed in Trench 3.

Feature 15 was exposed in trench 3. It was a rectangular sunken feature constructed of brick, lined internally with cement. Only the north-east corner was exposed, so its full extent was not visible, however it measured over 2m, both E – W and N – S. It appeared to be a tank, presumably for water. It was filled with modern rubble and debris, recently deposited, according to the client (D. Dod, *pers comm*).

A single find was recovered, from the spoil from trench 3. It was the base of a free-blown wine glass, probably 19th century in date.

8. Conclusions.

Wall 1 may have been a later blocking of the casement arch, as it continues to the full height of the arch, with a single small, central door opening. It is possible that the bricks of context 5 represent the base of an original or earlier phase of walling across the casement arch. The casement arches of some other bastions, such as Bastion 3, feature low walls with large window openings flanking a central door. The casements with windows to the rear provided the accommodation for the garrison. The brick feature, 4, may be a remnant of a former internal wall within the casement, now removed. This, together with the rubble deposit below the modern concrete floor, suggests that the interior arrangement of the casemate has been modified, probably during the 20th century.

Feature 10 may have been a small ditch, aligned parallel with the rampart. It may have been associated with the 18th century earthwork ramparts of the Hilsea Lines.

The sunken feature, 15, was probably a water tank although whether for a water supply or for drainage is unclear. It may have been a holding tank for surface water.

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Appendix 1. Context list.

Number/letter codes (eg 10YR 3/1) = Munsell soil colour codes.

sa = stone abundance – 0 = virtually stone free; 5 = gravel

Context	Type	Description
1	structure	brick wall
2	layer	concrete
3	layer	10YR 5/6 sandy loam and rubble
4	structure	brick feature
5	structure	brick feature
6	layer	10YR 3/1 crushed stone
7	layer	10YR 3/2 loam, sa3
8	layer	10YR 6/4 clay, sa1, natural
9	structure	concrete feature in wall 1
10	feature	possible ditch
11	fill	10YR 5/4 clay loam, sa1, fill of 10
12	layer	10YR 3/2 clay loam, sa3
13	fill	10YR 4/6 clay loam, sa1
14	fill	unstratified finds
15	feature	brick tank