

**REPORT ON AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

**AT**

**THE WHEATSHEAF INN, BRIDGE ROAD, YARMOUTH,  
ISLE OF WIGHT. PO41 0PH**

**SMR 5514**

**NGR SZ 4354 8969**

**NOVEMBER 2004**

**National Grid Reference:** NGR SZ 4354 8969

**Site Code/SMR:** SMR 5514

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## 1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 *An archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group at the Wheatsheaf Inn, Bridge Road, Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. PO41 0PH .*
- 1.2 *The natural geological deposits across the site were sterile sands and gravels.*
- 1.3 *All features, deposits and layers of made ground found appear to be late post medieval in date (19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> centuries). The earliest feature in Trench 1 was a wall of red brick aligned north south with an east-west return. This was constructed on a rubble-built foundation to the east of which was a north-south aligned red brick box culvert. These two structures are possibly part of a 19<sup>th</sup> century building which lay northwest of the Wheatsheaf. Several layers of made ground and imported Victorian garden soil also relate to this first phase of construction, above which was a second phase of development consisting of the construction of a small garden wall and brick surface, all of which was capped by modern made ground and the current patio surface.*
- 1.4 *The earliest feature in Trench 2 was the existing 18<sup>th</sup> century wall and a pile of mudstone rubble, possibly a wall foundation of an earlier structure, although there was no artefactual evidence to support this. Over this was a layer of made ground also dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century and a mortar rich layer of demolition or construction trample. Built on this was a north-south aligned red brick wall. A later addition using original 18<sup>th</sup> century bricks, this was sealed below a demolition layer and capped by the current concrete floor of the Wheatsheaf Inn.*
- 1.5 *No archaeological remains from earlier periods were discovered in either trench. .*

## 2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The site of the Wheatsheaf Inn occupies an area of approximately 484 square metres and is situated on Bridge Road, Yarmouth (NGR: SZ 4354 8969) (Fig 1). The development area lies to the east of Yarmouth Harbour and is bounded by the Quay property to the north, a public convenience to the west, the property boundary of 1-6 Ermue Court to the east and Bridge Street to the south (Fig 2). An open courtyard was situated just to the west of the existing building with ancillary buildings located within the south-western corner of the assessment site.
- 2.2 Ian Beach Associates Limited were proposing to demolish the existing conservatory area and redevelop the site to create a new toilet block (Trench 1) on the north west corner of the existing building. In addition to this, load-bearing pier foundations were considered in order to provide support for planned internal alterations. However, these internal alterations were instead carried out using the existing supports in conjunction with a rigid steel joist to span the altered internal layout greatly reducing the amount of ground reduction with the building (Trench 2). As a result the development was undertaken in two separate phases.
- 2.3 Planning permission (TCP/06693/F – P/00692/04) has been granted for this development with the condition (PPG16) that archaeological observation and monitoring was carried out during ground penetrating works associated with the construction works. Due to the archaeological potential for the site, Condition no. 15 was attached to the planning permission by the Isle of Wight County Council on the recommendation of the Isle of Wight County Council Archaeology Service.

## 3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Isle of Wight County Sites and Monuments Record shows the site lies within an area of high archaeological potential as designated the Extensive Urban Survey of the Isle of Wight's Historic Towns, (Hampshire County Council in 1999.)
- 3.2 While there are no records of archaeological finds within the assessment area, the site is situated within the medieval core of the town. The first record of settlement within Yarmouth can be dated to the Danegeld tax of 991AD, then known as *Ermud*, which is again repeated the Domesday Book of 1086AD. At the time of the conquest the town consisted of a small settlement which grew in importance as Thorley Haven, to the east, silted up. By 1135AD the once small settlement was given its first Charter and by the 13<sup>th</sup> century was considered as the most important town and port on the island.

- 3.3 The 14<sup>th</sup> century was dominated by a series of invasion scares, as Edward III focused on France, which saw landowners sending their families to the mainland during the raiding months (Easter – September). Following this, the Black Death (1349AD) killed approximately a third of the population after which the French and Castillion forces almost destroyed the town by fire (1377AD).
- 3.4 The raids continued into the 16<sup>th</sup> century, with a second fire in 1544AD, until the sinking of the Mary Rose. Following this, Henry VIII decided to construct a chain of castles around the Solent. Yarmouth castle, situated within the northern extent of the town, was built by Richard Worsley and completed in 1547AD.
- 3.5 The 17<sup>th</sup> century saw the town prosper and a plan was put into action to cut a channel around the south of the town connecting the Solent to Thorley Marshes. This defensive action was completed in 1662AD and effectively made Yarmouth an island.
- 3.6 The Isle of Wight County Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) shows that there are a number of archaeological sites within the vicinity of the proposed development. SMR 89 is an Iron Age bead rim pottery bowl that was found approximately 100m from the proposed development site. In addition to this a watching brief carried out 80m to the north-east of the site provided evidence for late 3<sup>rd</sup> century Romano-British occupation.
- 3.7 The Wheatsheaf Inn is a Grade II listed building dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Alterations in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries have been made to the internal and external appearance of the property (List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest: Borough of South Wight (Parishes of Brighstone, Calbourne, Freshwater, Shalfleet, Shorwell, Totland and Yarmouth), March 1994, p.203).

#### **4 AIMS OF THE INVESTIGATION**

- 4.1 The aims of the investigation were set out in the Isle of Wight County Archaeological Service brief (ref), and in the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 2004). These were:
  - i. To establish the presence/absence of any archaeological remains within the development site.
  - ii. To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features and to establish the depositional sequence.
  - iii. To record and sample excavate any such archaeologically important material.
  - iv. The final aim will be to make public the results of the archaeological work.

## 5 WATCHING BRIEF STRATEGY

- 5.1 The watching brief was carried out during intrusive groundwork in the two areas identified (Fig 2). The scale and scope of the work in each of these areas was regularly reviewed, where necessary, in consultation with Ruth Waller, Isle of Wight County Archaeology Service.
- 5.2 Access to site was limited so no mechanical excavator could be used; as a result all trenches were excavated by hand, using a pneumatic breaker to remove modern intrusions and concrete.
- 5.5 The watching brief was carried out by an experienced archaeologist. Provision was made for further staff but was not required.

## 6 RESULTS

### Archaeology Present

- 6.1 [Numbers] bracketed in this manner represent either structural or cut features, (numbers) bracketed this way relate to either natural or man made deposits. Context numbers are prefaced by the Trench number i.e. context 1 from Trench 1 is represented as (1/001).

### Trench 1

- 6.2 Evidence of archaeological activity was revealed in Trench 1 (Figure 4). The sequence of deposits is described below. The lowest recorded deposit consisted of mid orangey brown naturally deposited sands and gravels (1/018). This geological deposit is referred to below as the natural. The natural was recorded at a depth of 1.37m OD though this varies throughout the trench due to either archaeological truncation or natural undulation.
- 6.3 Over the naturally deposited sands and gravels was a band of made ground (1/014), consisting of redeposited natural mixed with subsoil. This well-compacted mid orangey brown silty sand deposit contained frequent small to medium angular and sub angular gravels as well as occasional charcoal flecks, slate and CBM fragments. At the very base of this deposit just above the natural gravels was a concentration of clay pipe bowls (1780 -1820) whose date makes them broadly contemporary with the Wheatsheaf Inn. However this interface assemblage is not representative of the context as a whole and the Bulk of finds are much later in date (19<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> century).
- 6.7 Overlying deposit (1/014) were (1/008) & (1/013) two deposits of very humic garden soil, mid brown in colour containing abundant evidence of bioturbation. (1/008) also contained occasional fragments of CBM, slate, oyster shell and animal bone. Ceramic finds from both deposits would date

them to the 19th or early 20th centuries, indicating the deposits are more than likely imported Victorian garden soil.

- 6.4 Cut into these horizons was a rubble-built foundation [1/011], containing large lumps and slabs of local sand, lime and mud stone, as well as large flint nodules and some reused worked stone; including part of a limestone mullion with a masons 'V' marked on the base, possibly relating to an earlier structure. However, clay pipe stems were found within the structure's matrix making the existing structure post-medieval in date. Above this were red brick walls [1/005] and [1/017] constructed using handmade unfroged bricks of 19<sup>th</sup> century date, measuring 220mm x 110mm x 70mm.
- 6.8 Cutting the imported garden soil (1/008) was [1/006] a red brick box culvert which ran parallel to north south aligned wall [1/011]/ [1/005] of which four courses remained intact. As with [1/012] the bricks were unfroged dating to some time in the 1800's. This culvert continues north into section but was not visible in the south section, suggesting either historical disruption or natural termination.
- 6.9 Contained within [1/006] to the east of the structure represented by the rubble built foundation [1/011] and red brick wall [1/005] was (1/007) a mid brown sandy; clay, silt, the fill of a north south silted up box drainage gully which ran alongside the structure to the west.
- 6.5 What remains of an east west return red and orange brick wall [1/017] was truncated by a later post medieval pit. It is possible that this section of wall was an east west return of north south aligned wall [1/005], of which three courses remained constructed above the substantial rubble foundation [1/011]. The two represent a post medieval structure of 1800's date extending to the north and east away from the site. Although not visible in section [1/017] was three bricks wide (Fig 3) and was probably a load-bearing external wall which had been subjected to extensive historical truncation and robbery.
- 6.6 Above (1/011) were the remains of a red and orange brick surface [1/012], which continued west into section overlaying the earlier foundations [1/011]. This consisted of unfroged bricks the same dimensions and date as [1/005]. Although mortar survival was poor, some sandy lime mortar was present on the upper side suggesting a second course, reuse or a mortar render for a tile course.
- 6.10 Above surface [1/012] and wall [1/005] and [1/017] in the north east corner of the trench (Fig 3&4) was a dump of demolition material (1/009) containing frequent mortar and CBM fragments as well as occasional bottle glass and pottery shards. This demolition probably equates to the demolition and levelling of the building represented by brick structures [1/012], [1/017], [1/005] & [1/006] which based on brick sizes type and mortar used in construction seem broadly contemporary. Finds retrieved from this demolition phase seem to be residual so no definitive date can be placed on the event.



- 6.11 Built directly above deposit (1/008) was either the single course of an east west aligned red brick wall or a brick surface [1/019] which is not visible in section but can be seen in plan (Fig 3). This structure abutted a north south aligned red brick and slate wall with stone and mortar foundation bed [1/010]. Although in section these structures would appear higher than [1/006] there is nothing to indicate a later date and the brick type is an exact match. Sealing deposits (1/009); (1/007) and above wall [1/010] was a demolition layer (1/004) containing abundant CBM and mortar fragments. This could relate to a later phase of build and subsequent demolition on site, or could represent the remnants of brick surface [1/019], with both (1/004) and (1/009) corresponding to a single demolition and land levelling event. Capping this demolition layer was (1/003) a burnt horizon of clinker and ash 40mm thick.
- 6.12 Cutting garden soil (1/013) and partially truncating the east-west wall [1/017] was a very large pit [1/016], the fill of which (1/015) was a mid brown sandy silt containing frequent brick and mortar fragments. It is possible this pit was open during the demolition phase discussed above or the material may be residual.
- 6.13 Sealing fill (1/015), burnt deposit (1/003) and brick surface [1/019] and present throughout trench one was (1/002) a 0.22m thick layer of made ground consisting of dark brown silts containing pottery and bottle glass from the 19th and 20th centuries, this was at one time garden topsoil and contained abundant evidence of bioturbation. The final layer was patio surface (1/001) consisting of square concrete paving slabs on a sand bedding. Inside the area of the old conservatory, the patio was replaced with a raised poured concrete slab above hardcore bedding (1/020).

## **Trench 2**

- 6.14 Evidence of archaeological activity was revealed in Trench 2 (Fig 4). The sequence of deposits is described below. The lowest recorded deposit [2/006] a rubble pile, comprising chalk mudstone, sandstone and flint in a mid greyish brown sandy silt matrix present at 1.38m OD. Based on other foundation beds in both trenches it is possible that this may be an earlier foundation. Also recorded at this level was [2/007], a bed of roughly hewn slate and mudstone, above which was a large block of squared worked sandstone, this acted as the foundation for [2/008] an existing internal red brick and plaster wall (brick size 230mm x 110mm x 60mm).
- 6.15 Overlying the stone foundations was (2/005), a deposit of made ground containing frequent oyster shells and occasional fragments of ceramic building material (CBM), slate and chalk. Sealing this was (2/004) a deposit of sandy clay silt made ground 0.48m thick, also containing frequent oyster shell, CBM, slate and chalk fragments, as well as occasional animal bone fragments, clay pipe stems and bowls (1740 - 1800), and small stone ware and Verwood pottery shards - also 18<sup>th</sup> century in date.
- 6.16 Above these deposits of made ground was a highly compacted deposit (2/003), possibly a temporary surface or construction trample. This layer of mid brown

sandy silt contained frequent clay pipe stems, and CBM fragments, moderate lenses of mortar and occasional oyster and other gastropod mollusc shells.

Built over this layer was a north south aligned wall [2/010] constructed using red unfrosted bricks laid end-to-end on their beds, one brick width and bound with a pale yellow sandy mortar. The brick sizes are identical to those in wall [2/008], suggesting that they generally contemporary.

To the north, this wall was truncated by [2/009], a modern poured concrete foundation step for an existing breeze block internal wall [2/012]. To the south, the wall [2/010] continued into the baulk, running parallel to the extant internal wall [2/008]. At the southern limit of excavation, the wall was supported by a flint rubble foundation [2/011], also bound with a very sandy mortar. It is unclear why the wall only required a foundation step here, and not along the entire length of the wall. It may be that just under the baulk the wall has an east west return and this is only a corner support, or some attempt at underpinning.

- 6.17 Sealing the wall was a demolition layer (2/002); a blackish brown loose friable, sandy silty ash containing frequent CBM, mortar, slate, charcoal fragments, and occasional clay pipe stems and oyster shell fragments. Truncating this to the north was the modern poured concrete footing [2/009] for the existing east west aligned breeze block wall [2/012]. Above this and sealing all deposits below was (2/001) the 0.13m deep concrete slab floor of the Wheatsheaf Inn.

## 7 SITE PHASING

### Phase 1 – The natural deposits

- 7.1 Naturally deposited sands and gravels (1/018) were present across the entire site. The natural deposits were only represented in Trench 1.

### Phase 2 – The 18<sup>th</sup> century

- 7.2 The first phase of build occurred during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Structures [2/007] and [2/008] and deposits (2/005) and (2/004) are all associated with the construction of Wheatsheaf Inn (Trench 2). A compact layer of sandy silt (2/003) may represent the construction surface for wall the Wheatsheaf, and wall [2/010] probably represents an internal division to the original building. Layer (1/014) in Trench 1 may be a lateral equivalent of these deposits.

### Phase 3 – 19<sup>th</sup> century development

- 7.3 Built up over the Phase 2 deposits in Trench 1 were two deposits of imported garden soil (1/008) & (1/013) dating to the Victorian period.
- 7.4 A second phase of building construction, represented by the construction of brick walls [1/005] and [1/007], probably occurring between the mid 19<sup>th</sup> and

early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. This building and associated brick box culvert [1/006] were situated to the north east of the Wheatsheaf Inn.

- 7.5 To the east of this structure an east west boundary wall [1/010] and brick surface or corridor [1/019] was built, more than likely contemporary with the building.

#### **Phase 4 - Demolition**

- 7.6 Demolition of the structures in Phase 3 occurred during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the destruction of the building in Trench 1, represented by demolition layers (1/003) and (1/004). It is possible that at this time a large pit [1/016] was also open.

#### **Phase 5 – Modern alterations**

- 7.7 During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Wheatsheaf Inn itself saw several changes made to the internal layout, which were clearly visible in Trench 2 with demolition of internal wall [2/010] and the construction of modern breeze block wall [2/012], culminating in the current poured concrete floor. In Trench 1, the ground levelled and the whole of area sealed beneath made ground (1/002), and capped by the current patio surface (1/001).

### **8 FINDS**

- 8.1 The earliest group of finds in Trench 1 was an assemblage of clay pipe bowls and stems found on the interface between (1/014) and the naturally deposited gravels (1/018) which appear 18<sup>th</sup> century in date. All other finds in Trench 1 were of 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century date, with the exception of the lime stone mullion with a masons 'V' marked on the base, which although undated is probably earlier. The pottery, glass, clay pipe bowls and the mullion will be retained; all brick samples and CBM will be discarded.
- 8.2 In Trench 2 all finds collected appear to date to the 1800s and have been retained.

### **9 CONCLUSIONS**

- 9.1 The results in Trench 1 indicate two possible phases of construction separated by several phases of land levelling and soil importation. Above the natural was (1/014) a phase of ground make up. After this phase, the ground level was raised with made ground, or imported garden soil at some point during the Victorian period.
- 9.2 The earliest feature was the south-eastern corner of a 19<sup>th</sup> or 20<sup>th</sup> century building, consisting of rubble foundations [1/011] which contained a worked reused limestone mullion, possibly from an earlier structure from the site or

near by. The depth and size of the foundations would suggest load bearing structure rather than a garden feature. This structure may be a house to the northwest of the Wheatsheaf Inn.

- 9.3 Above the rubble foundations were the building's red brick walls [1/005] & [1/017], and associated with the structure was a brick box culvert [1/006] & brick surface [1/012]. To the east of this was the north south aligned wall [1/010] and the abutting brick surface [1/019], extending at least 2m west of the wall. This may relate to a yard or corridor east of the structure in the earlier phase and possible garden or boundary wall separating the property from the Wheatsheaf
- 9.4 The building was later demolished, represented by the demolition material (1/009) contained within the remaining walls. However, the dating evidence retrieved was residual. The ground was levelled and the current patio laid.
- 9.5 In Trench 2, the finds and deposits seemed in keeping with the age and known later changes to the grade II listed 18<sup>th</sup> century building. No evidence for earlier occupation was found in either Trenches.

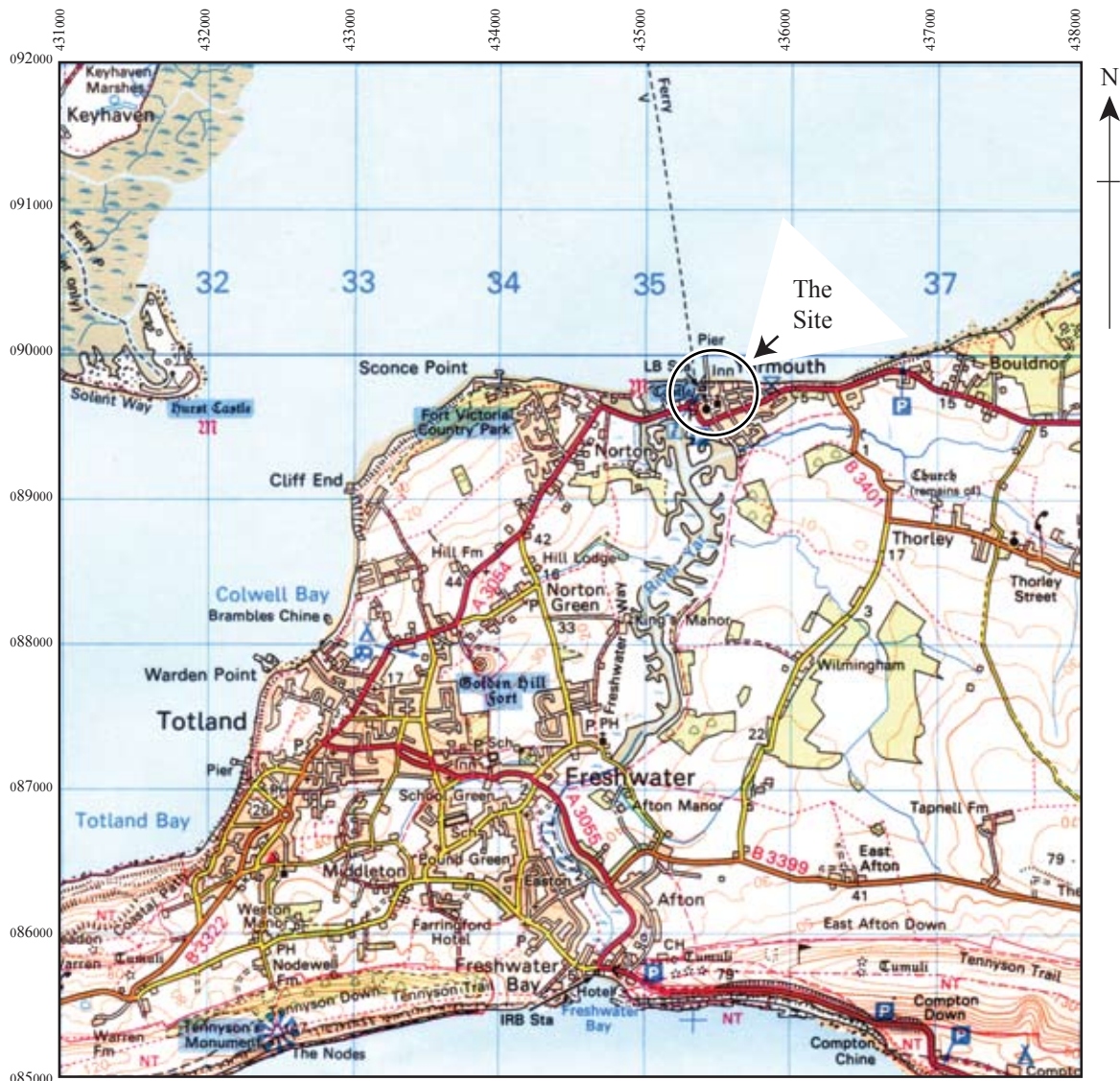
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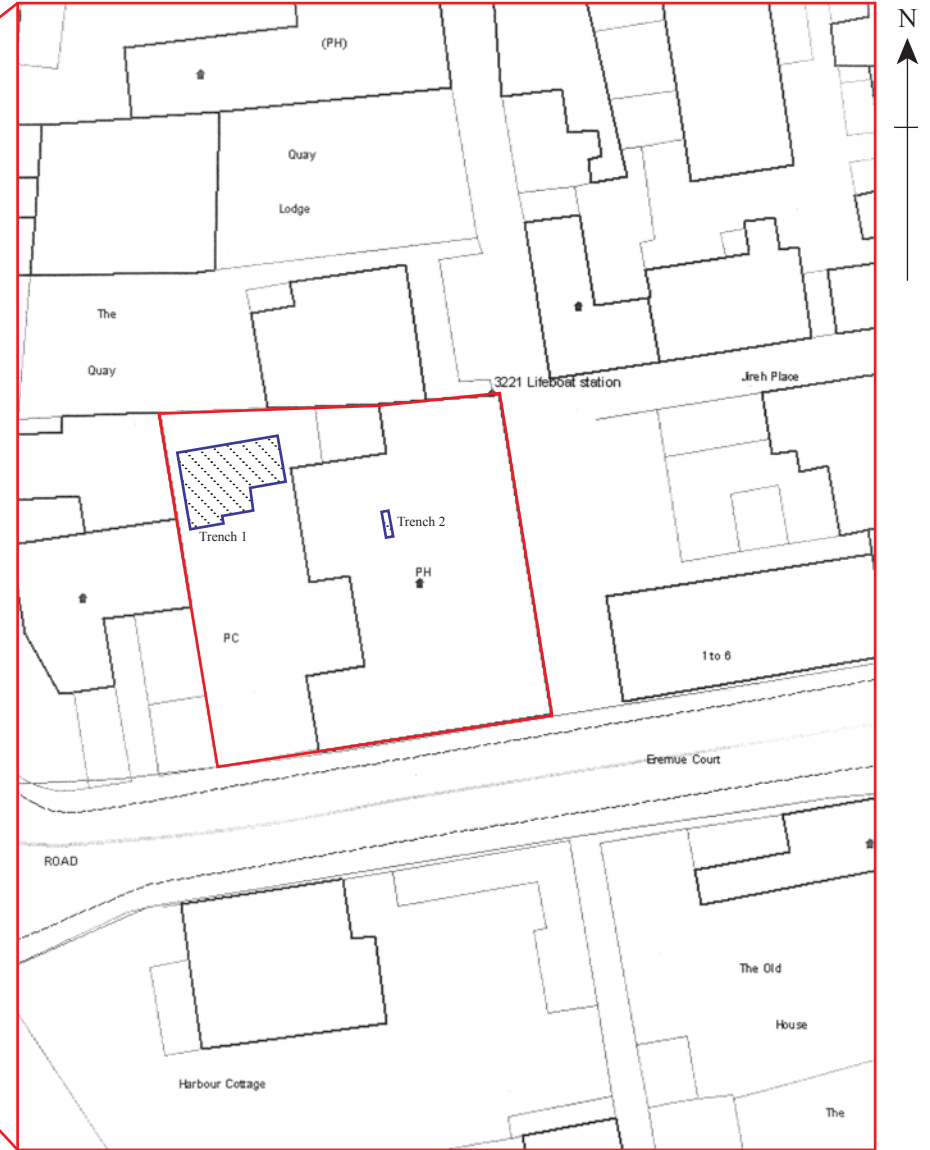
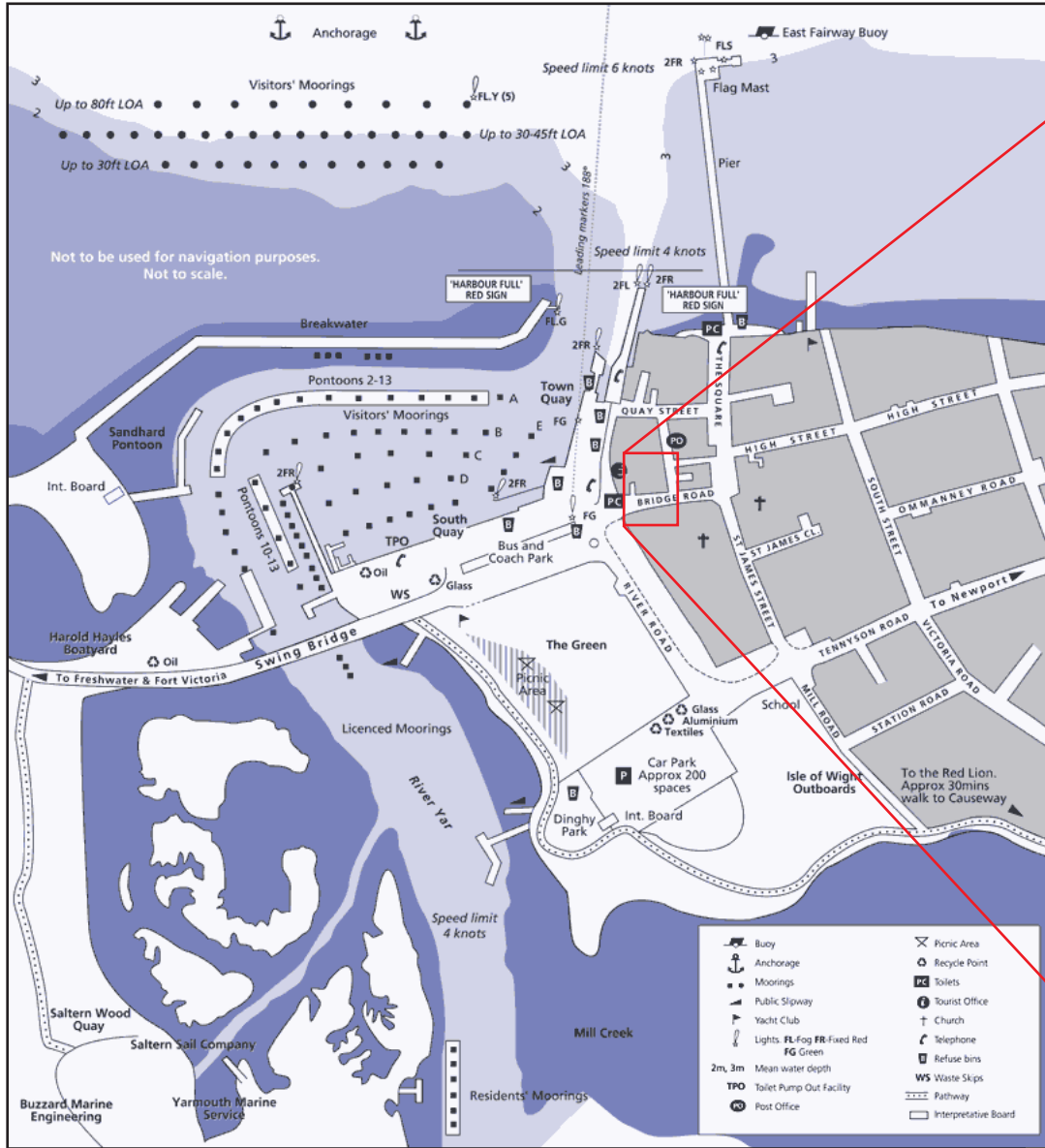


Based on the Ordnance Survey's 1:50 000 Landranger map of 1993 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright. Licence No. AL 1000 16114

500m 0 2 km

1:50 000

Figure 1: Site Location



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[HTTP://WWW.YARMOUTH-HARBOR.CO.UK/MAP.HTML](http://www.yarmouth-harbour.co.uk/map.html)

Figure 2: Detailed Site Location

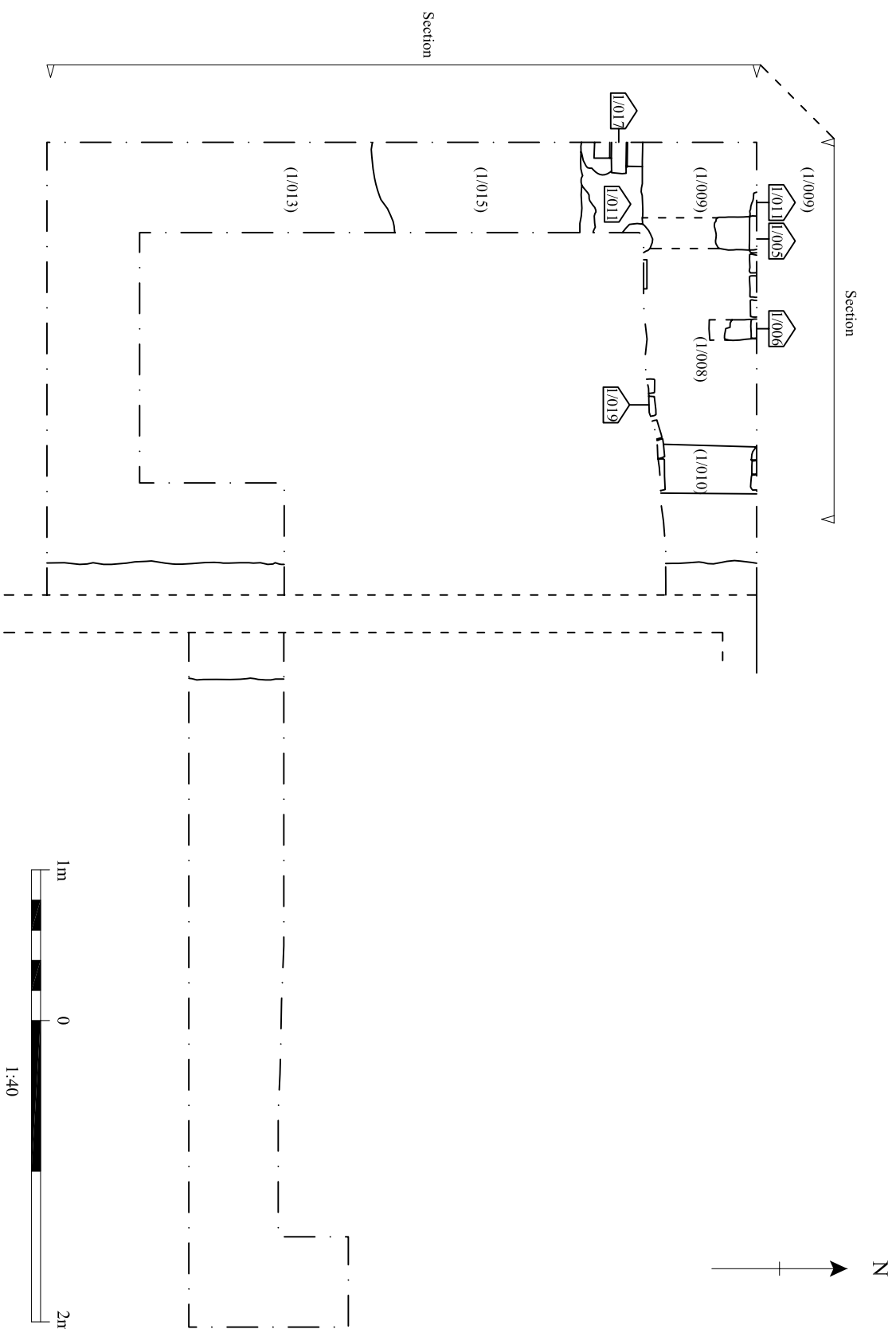


Figure 3: Plan: Trench 1

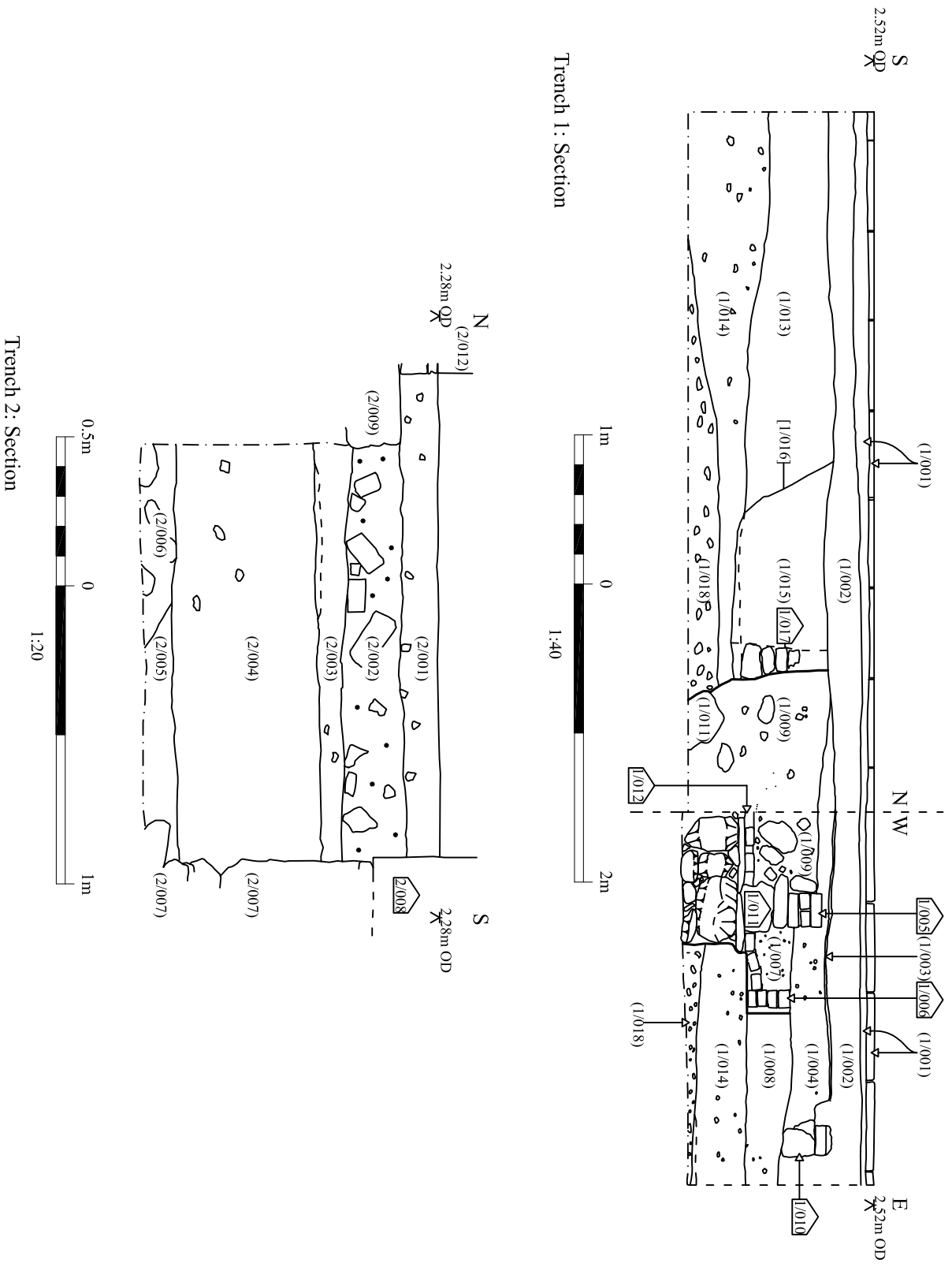


Figure 4: Sections: Trench 1 & 2