

**NEW RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME, JUMPERS ROAD,  
CHRISTCHURCH, DORSET**  
**Archaeological Observations and Recording**



**Report No. 53187/3/1**

**June 2005**

# **New Residential Care Home, Jumpers Road, Christchurch, Dorset**

## **Archaeological Observations, May–June 2005**

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# **New Residential Care Home, Jumpers Road, Christchurch, Dorset**

## **Archaeological Observations, May–June 2005**

### **SUMMARY**

*Archaeological observations and recording were carried out by Terrain Archaeology in May–June 2005 during topsoil stripping in advance of the construction of a new residential care home on Jumpers Road, Christchurch (SZ14706384).*

*No prehistoric or Roman features were observed and only a very small quantity of Bronze Age flint was recovered. Most of the features found on site appear to be 20<sup>th</sup> century in date and comprise the gravel bases to a number of small buildings, perhaps of World War II vintage, together with two gravel paths or tracks.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Terrain Archaeology was commissioned by Property Management Division, Dorset County Council, to undertake archaeological observations and recording during topsoil stripping associated with the construction of a new residential care home on Jumpers Road, Christchurch.

The development comprises the construction of an 80-bed residential home and day centre with social care offices above.

‘Archaeological Observations and Recording’ (or ‘watching brief’) is a formal programme of observation and investigation conducted during any operation carried out for non-archaeological reasons, within a specified area or site where there is a possibility that archaeological deposits may be disturbed or destroyed.

The site lies on the former Jumpers Common. It is situated to the north of Jumpers Road, in the northern part of Christchurch at NGR SZ14706384 (Figure 1). The topography is flat and the site lies at about 7.3 m above Ordnance Datum, between the Stour and Avon river valleys. The underlying geology is mapped as fourth terrace river gravels. The site is bounded to the southwest by Christchurch cemetery, by housing to the northwest, northeast, and south and by Christchurch hospital, the Juniper Centre and Social Services Centre to the east (Figure 2).

The fieldwork was carried out between 23<sup>rd</sup> May–24<sup>th</sup> June 2005 by Peter Bellamy.

Terrain Archaeology would like to acknowledge Steve Wallis (Senior Archaeologist, Dorset County Council), Mr Chris Brownlow (Property Management Division, Dorset County Council), Messrs Mike Ward and Simon Fallon (ROKbuild), the groundwork contractors (CPS Ltd), and Christchurch Local History Society for their help and cooperation during this project.

### **ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

The site lies on the fourth terrace gravels of the Stour, from which a number of Palaeolithic finds have been discovered. Lower Palaeolithic material has been found at Jumpers Lane and Cedar Avenue, about 700 m and 800 m west of the site respectively, and at Latch Farm, 500 m to the

east, as well as a number of other localities in the vicinity (Wymer 1999). An Upper Palaeolithic site has been found at Bendigo Road, about 300 m northwest of the site (Barton 1992).

There is considerable evidence for archaeological activity dating from the Early Neolithic to the Bronze Age, much of it in the form of scatters of flint and pottery, in the area surrounding the site (Calkin 1951, Gardiner 1987). This material is particularly concentrated in the area around Latch Farm on the edge of the River Avon, about 500 m east of the site, where there had been intensive collecting during gravel extraction in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Calkin 1951). The area around Latch Farm has produced Early Neolithic leaf arrowheads and flint axes, Late Neolithic flintwork (including transverse arrowheads) and Grooved Ware pottery. A large quantity of Beaker pottery and Early Bronze Age pottery has also been recovered from Latch Farm.

A number of Bronze Age round barrows survive in the vicinity, but these are concentrated on the high ground of St Catherine's Hill to the north of the site (Figure 1). At least two destroyed barrows once existed closer to the site. About 150 m west of the site, a tumulus is shown on Jumpers Common on the 1872 Ordnance Survey 6-inch map (Figure 3). Another barrow about 500 m east of the site was excavated in advance of gravel extraction at Latch Farm (Piggott 1938). This barrow was later the focus of a Middle Bronze Age urnfield.

A small quantity of Iron Age pottery has been found in the vicinity of the site and presumably activity of this period was focussed on St Catherine's Hill. No Roman or medieval material has been recorded close to the site.

The 1872 Ordnance Survey map shows the site as two fields adjacent to the cemetery with the southern boundary of the site marked as a track running east from the cemetery and joining Fairmile Road close to Latch Farm (Figure 3). Fragments of the former commons lie to the north and west of the site.

In 1881, a new workhouse was constructed for the Christchurch Poor Law Union on Fairmile Road, to replace an earlier workhouse on Quay Road (now the Red House Museum). This new workhouse, which opened on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1881 had an entrance block on Jumpers Road (Newman 2000). An infirmary block was added to the north in 1882. A children's home and school was added to the west of the main buildings in 1886 and additional buildings were added to the east in 1895. A large infirmary complex was built to the north of the site in 1913. Some of the former workhouse buildings survive as part of the present Christchurch Hospital and others have been converted into housing. Social Services offices and a Day Care centre were added to the west of the hospital on Jumpers Road in the post-war period.

The site itself has remained as a field or open ground until the present development. There were a number of small buildings along the western edge of the site shown on the 1956 Ordnance Survey maps. These may have been constructed during World War II.

## **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The objective of the archaeological observations was to establish and make available information about the archaeological resource existing on the site.

The archaeological works aimed to observe and record all the in situ archaeological deposits and features revealed during the groundworks to an appropriate professional standard.

## **METHODS**

The work was carried out in line with the Institute of Field Archaeologists *Standard and guidance for archaeological watching briefs*, although no written brief was issued for the work.

The turf had been stripped from the site, prior to the start of the observations. The stripped topsoil surface was carefully fieldwalked and the position of any finds noted. No modern finds were collected.

The area was stripped by a tracked mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless grading bucket down to the surface of the natural deposits. The amount of topsoil and overburden removed was between 0.1–0.5 m in depth.

All deposits exposed during the stripping were recorded using elements of Terrain Archaeology's recording system of complementary written, drawn and photographic records. The position of the stripped area and of any deposits exposed was located by taped measurements on to an Ordnance Survey base map.

The records have been compiled in a stable, cross-referenced and fully indexed archive in accordance with current UKIC guidelines and the requirements of the receiving museum. The archive will be deposited with the Dorset County Museum.

## **RESULTS**

### **Introduction**

The area of the site can be divided into three separate areas: a rectangular plot of land to the north, a triangular area immediately to the south behind the houses along the north side of Jumpers Road, and the access road off Jumpers Road (Figure 2). The whole of the northern part was stripped. The turf had been removed prior to the archaeological observations and the depth of the stripping became gradually shallower to the south. Most of the triangular area was not observed, except for the southern tip, as it was used as a topsoil storage area. The access road mainly used existing hard surfaces and the remainder of the route was not observed. A number of trial pits were dug along this road and these indicated that the stratigraphic sequence was identical to the areas to the north.

### **Natural Deposits**

In the northern end of the site, clean loose yellowish-brown flint gravels (103) were exposed (Figure 3). Over the rest of the site, these were sealed by a layer of friable brown sand (102) containing moderate to frequent amounts of small flint gravel. No finds were noted in these layers.

### **Agricultural Soils**

The natural sand and gravel layers 102 and 103 were sealed beneath a 0.3 m thick layer of friable greyish-brown sandy loam (101) with moderate small flint gravel. All of the features described below were either cut into this layer or were built on top of it. In addition, the remains of a bonfire were observed on top of this soil layer in the southeast corner of the rectangular field and some patches of grey building sand were also found nearby.

A small quantity of finds was noted from this layer. Most were observed in the western edge of the site and included later 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery and glass and some small slate and brick fragments. None of these finds were collected. A small quantity of prehistoric flint was recovered from the eastern side of the site within a relatively small area (Figure 4). No prehistoric flint was noted over the rest of the surface of this layer.

## Observed features

On the western side of the site, a number of features were observed. These comprised gravel bases for lightweight buildings, burnt areas, and gravel paths.

### *Structures*

Four rectangular areas of hard-packed dark yellowish-brown flint gravel were observed running parallel to the southwest side of the site (Figure 4). To the north was structure 105 which comprised a roughly rectangular area of gravel about 13 m by 5 m and 0.35 m thick. This was cut through layer 101 and lay on top of the natural gravel below. The edge of the feature on the southeast side was defined by a line of bricks, one course thick.

Immediately northeast of 105 was a similar gravel feature (106) of about the same size, but no bricks were found in association with this particular structure. The northeast corner was rather disturbed.

To the southeast of 105 and 106 was another similar hard-packed gravel feature (109) that measured five metres square. To the southeast of 109 was another gravel feature (110), which was fairly well defined in its northern end but the southern limits were much less clear, partly because this part of the site had not been stripped to as deeply as the rest of the area. This feature was about 7 m wide and between 10–23 m long. There was a patch of burning in the northeast corner and a number of modern finds were noted in the gravel, including later 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery, nails and other iron fragments and some brick fragments. None of these finds were collected.

The upper surface of all the gravel features described above were disturbed by a series of parallel marks 0.15 m wide and 0.1 m deep, set 0.15 m apart and filled with topsoil (Plate 2). These strips ran parallel to the field boundary along the southwest side of the site. These marks could also be traced as feint marks in the top of layer 101, continuing beyond the gravel features to the north. This is likely to be the remains cultivation traces or similar.

The stratigraphic position and the nature of the finds associated with feature 110, indicate that these gravel features are of relatively recent date. They may represent the remains of the bases for some lightweight buildings in this area, perhaps dating to World War II.

### *Burnt areas*

Immediately to the northwest of structures 105 and 106, on the top of context 102, was a small oval patch of coal dust, coal fragments and clinker (107), measuring 1.2 m by 0.75 m across.

Between structures 105 and 109 was an irregular patch of burning (108) about 5.3 m by 3.3 m across and 0.07 m thick. This contained large quantities of coal, clinker and ash and also a small amount of later 20<sup>th</sup> century pottery and glass.

These two areas of burning, together with the burnt patch on feature 110, may represent the demolition of the structures in this area.

### *Paths*

Two gravel paths were identified. Running along the southwest side of the site was a layer of hard-packed flint gravel in pale yellowish-brown sand (104). This path was about 1.3 m wide and survived 0.05 m thick. It was constructed on top of layer 101, immediately below the modern turf (100) and was largely scraped away during the topsoil stripping operations.

Running northeastwards from the gate in the southeast corner of the cemetery was a hard-packed yellowish-brown gravel surface (111) about three metres wide. It was also constructed on top of soil layer 101. It was difficult to trace as it lay in an area not properly stripped, but it appeared to run along the line of the former field boundary on the southeast side of the rectangular field and

then turn to run southwards (Figure 4). It was not traced very far towards the south, as this was in an area that had not been stripped and was disturbed by the frequent tracking of machinery across it. Neither path is visible on any of the Ordnance Survey maps consulted.

### *Engineer's Testpits*

The backfilled remains of four engineer's test pits were found (Plate 3). Their location is shown on Figure 4.

## **Finds**

The majority of finds noted in the observations were modern. These were not collected.

A small group of seven worked flints was found at SZ14749384 (Figure 4). This collection comprised six waste flakes of Bronze Age character and one piece of unworked burnt flint. These finds were not retained.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

No prehistoric or Roman features were exposed, and only a very small quantity of prehistoric worked flint was noted on the site, suggesting it was not an area of significant prehistoric activity. Although there is evidence for prehistoric activity in the immediate vicinity, this appears to be associated with the Stour and Avon river valleys. It is likely that the site was in an area of poor quality marginal land until it was brought into agricultural use during the post-medieval period.

The features exposed appear to relate to mid-later 20<sup>th</sup> century occupation of the site. It may be the remains of World War II use of this area.

## **PROJECT ARCHIVE**

The archive (Terrain Archaeology Project No. 53187) will be deposited with Dorset County Museum, which has agreed in principle to accept the archive, subject to fulfilment of the Museum's requirements of the preparation of archaeological archives. A copy of the microfilmed archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Record.

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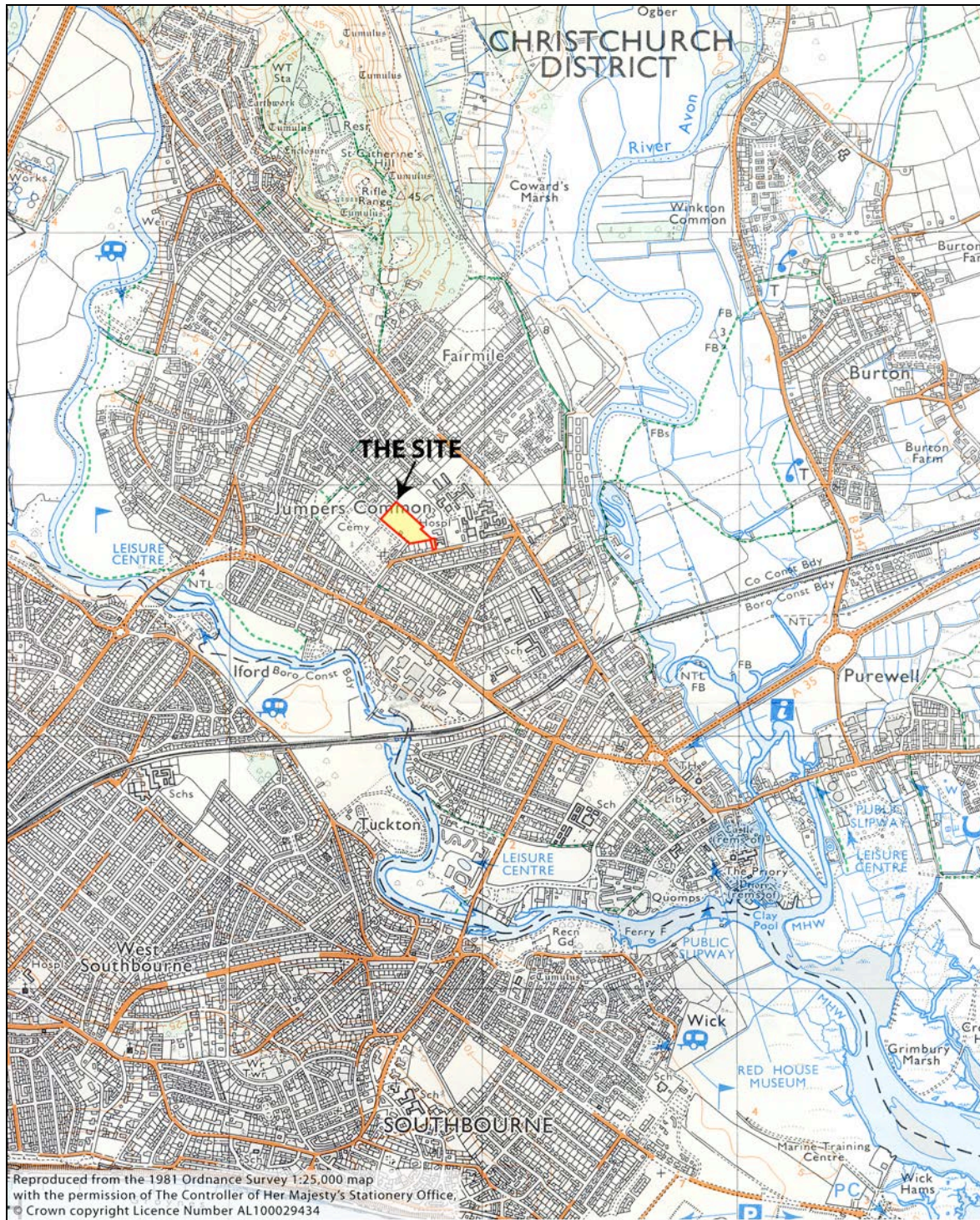


Figure 1: Location Map



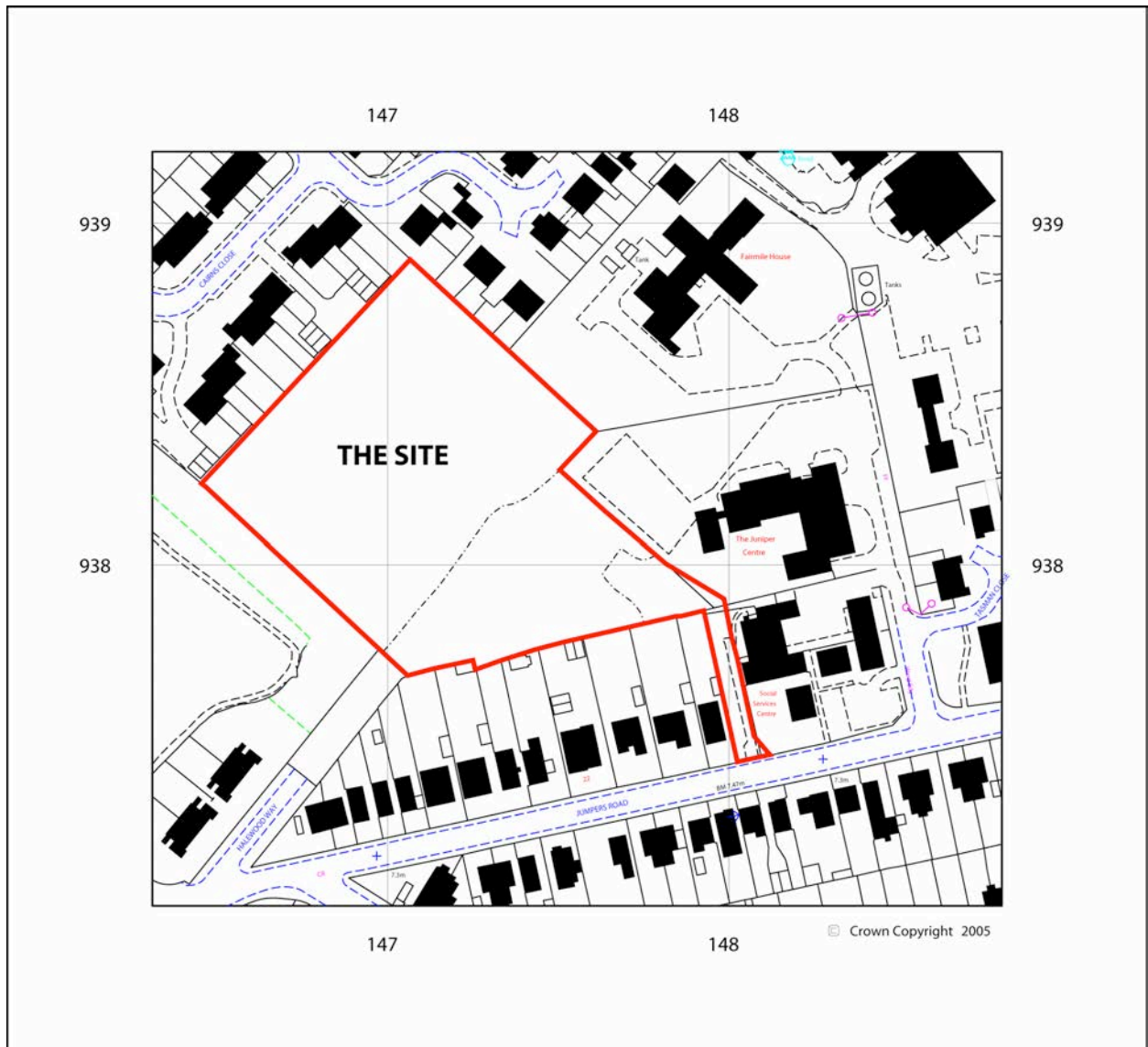


Figure 2: Plan of site (Reproduced from Ordnance Survey Superplan Data. © Crown copyright 2005. All Rights reserved.)

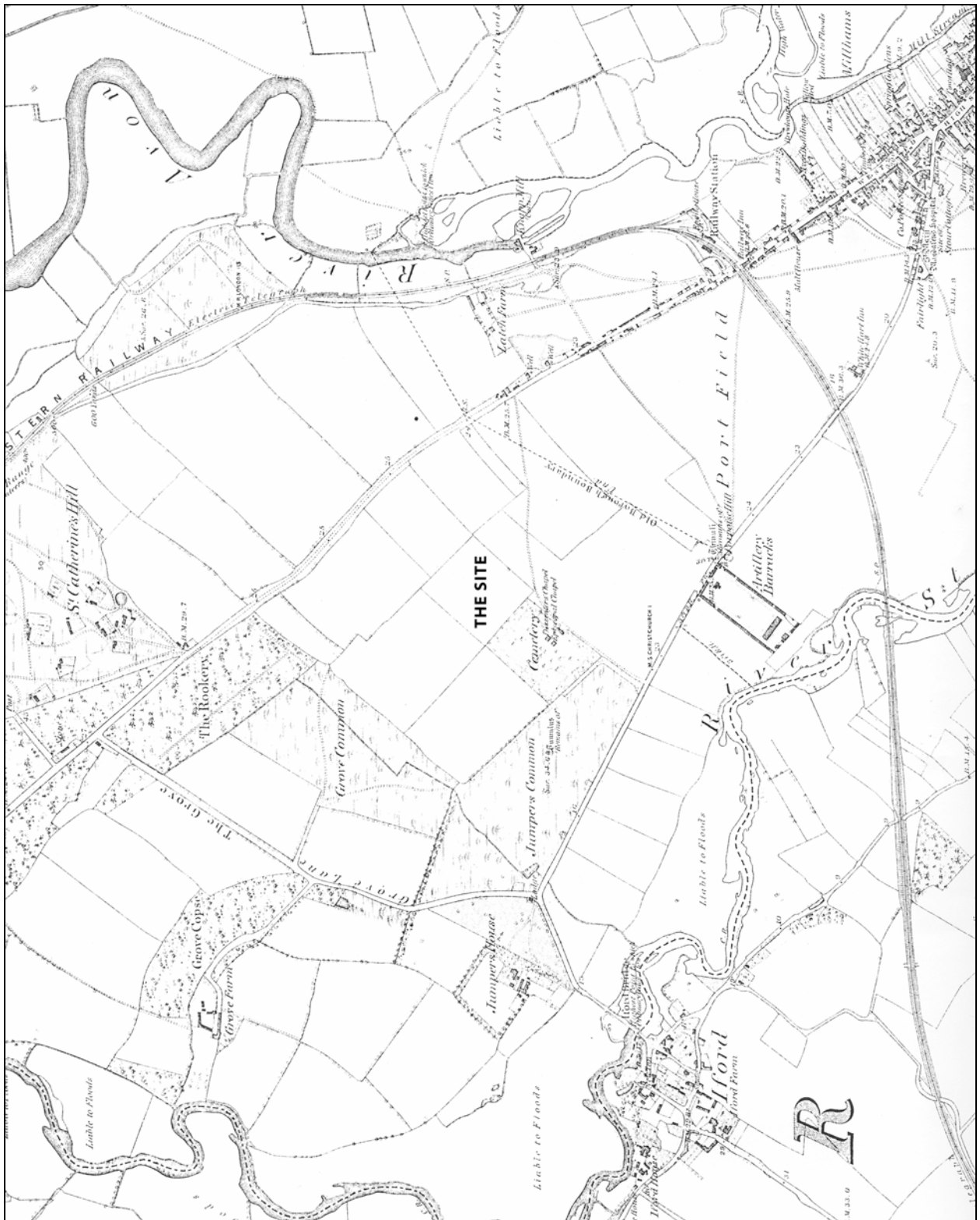


Figure 3: Extract from 1872 Ordnance Survey 6-inch County Series Map, First Edition. (© Crown Copyright Reserved)

**NEW RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME  
JUMPERS ROAD, CHRISTCHURCH  
Plan of observations**

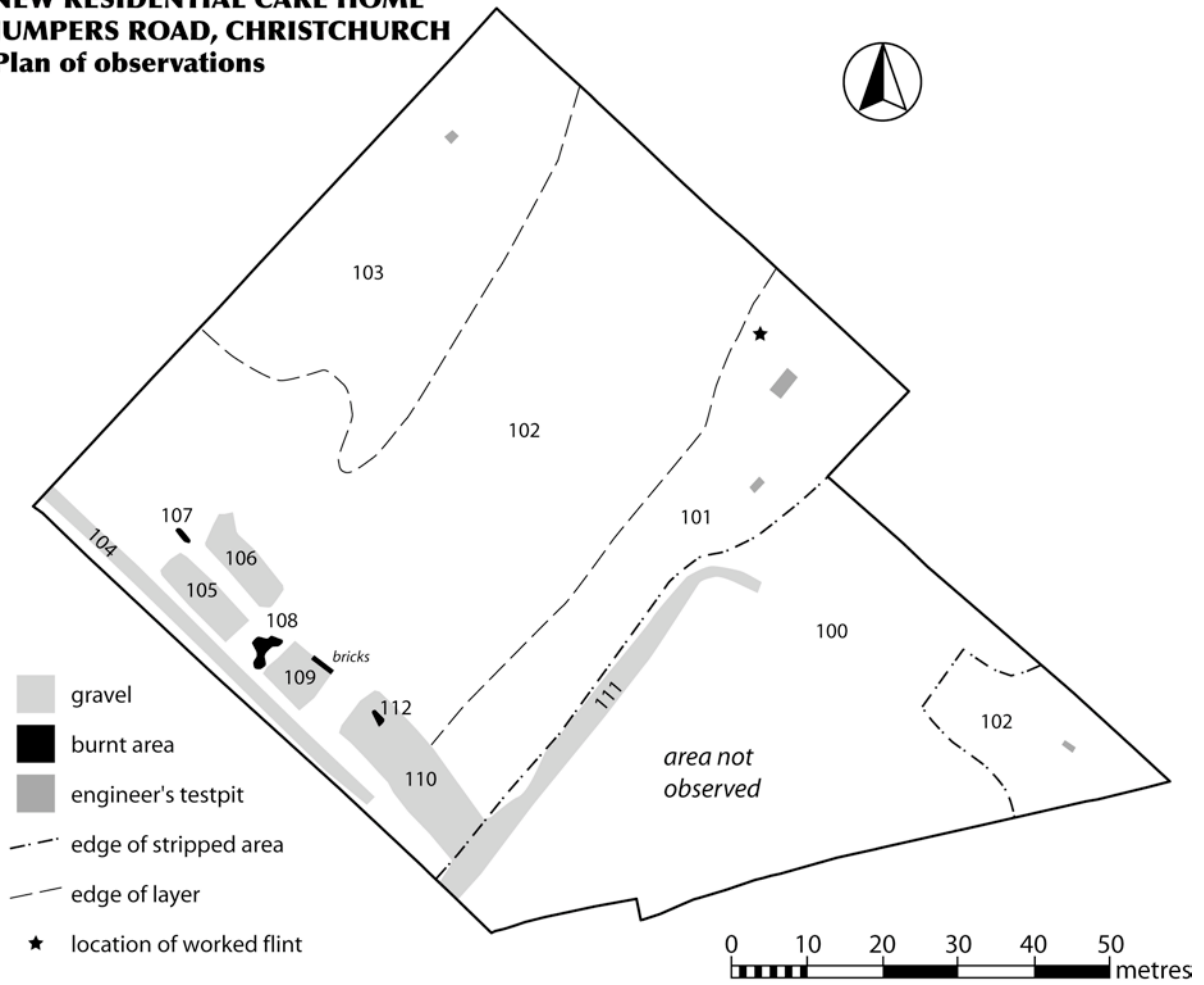


Figure 4: Plan of observations



*Plate 1: General view during stripping, looking southwest.*



*Plate 2: Structure 105, looking southeast.*



*Plate 3: Southern end of site, looking northwest, with the remains of an engineer's testpit in middle foreground.*