



Pendennis Castle Parasols, Falmouth, Cornwall

Archaeological Watching Brief



Historic Environment Projects

Report No 2012R033	Report Name Pendennis Castle Parasols, Falmouth: Archaeological Watching Brief	Report Author C. M. Thorpe
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Event Type Watching Brief			
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Client Organisation English Heritage	Client Contact Matt Bulford
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Monuments (MonUID)					
SM 10552	MCO25055				

Fieldwork dates (From)	(To)	(Created By)	(Create Date)
09/05/12	09/05/12	CMT	10/05/12

Location (postal address; or general location and parish) Pendennis Castle

(Town – for urban sites) Falmouth	(Postcode) TR11 4LP
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(Easting) X co-ord SW 82384	(Northing) Y co-ord 31848		
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Historic Environment, Cornwall Council is a Registered Organisation with the Institute for Archaeologists

Project background

In May 2012 HE Projects was commissioned by Matt Bulford, Property Supervisor, Pendennis Castle to undertake a watching brief during ground works the installation of parasol anchors and a telescope platform at Pendennis Castle, Cornwall. The watching brief was required as a condition of Scheduled Monument Consent for the works.

Location and setting

Pendennis Castle and its twin, St Mawes Castle, were built between 1539 and 1543 as part of Henry VIII's national defence policy. The castles were utilitarian artillery towers reinforced by the waterline blockhouses at Little Dennis and St Mawes, their purpose was to protect the mile-wide inlet of Carrick Roads.

Between 1597 and 1599, following a review of the defences by Sir Walter Raleigh during the hostilities with Spain, the Henrician keep was strengthened by the addition of the Italianate bastioned enceinte designed by the military engineer Paul Ivey.

The defences and armaments at Pendennis were periodically upgraded in time of war. By the time of World War 1 the main long range defences of Pendennis were at Half Moon Battery, first constructed c1793, situated south of the Castle, facing seawards and working in tandem with the long-range battery at St Anthony Head.

In 1956 coastal defence was abandoned and the Castle given to the Ministry of Public Buildings and Works (now English Heritage). Pendennis Castle is part of Scheduled Monument Area, Pendennis Peninsula Fortifications 10552. The Cornwall and Scilly Historic Environment Record - Primary Record Number (PRN) is 18709.

Potential for buried archaeology

Given that the site is within the enceinte of the castle (Figs 1, 2 and 7) there was potential for post-medieval and possibly earlier sites to survive within the project area and for the survival of unrecorded buried archaeological remains and artefacts of all periods.

Site description

The parasols were to be erected on the level tarmac surface immediately to the south of the Royal Artillery Barracks, in the north-east quadrant of the parade ground/car park (Fig 2). The telescope was sited on grass alongside the path c 25m southeast of the east wing of the barracks. All sites lay at a height of c 53m OD.

The underlying geology consists of Devonian interbedded sandstones, and argillaceous rocks of the Portscatho Formation (BGS sheet 352).

Aims and objectives

The site specific aims and objectives were:

- To identify and record the presence/absence of archaeological remains.
- To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, date and significance of any archaeological remains encountered.
- To establish the nature of activity on the site.
- To identify any artefacts relating to the occupation of the castle.
- To provide further information on the archaeological history of the castle.

Working methods

The work was carried out according to a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Charlie Johns (Johns 2012) which had been submitted to and approved by English Heritage.

The trenches were excavated under archaeological supervision all being dug by hand. The trench edges were then cleaned and inspected by the archaeologist.

The trench locations were plotted onto a site plan at a scale of 1:200 based on an Ordnance Survey map of the same scale, being measured in from fixed locatable points on the ground marked on the map. Trench sections, noting the nature of soil depth, layers present, etc and trench plans noting features encountered were drawn and recorded at a scale of 1:10.

Results

Three trenches were excavated and recorded. Two were for parasol bases and one a base for a telescope.

Trench 1. Parasol base (Figs 2, 3, and 4)

Depth	Thickness	Description	Interpretation	Context
0m – 0.05m	0.05m	Grey-black tarmac	Surface of yard	(1)
0.05m – 0.1m	0.05m	Yellow, Grey-brown sandy mortar, with fine gravel	Bedding layer for tarmac	(2)
0.1m – 0.2m	0.10m	Hard, compacted yellow, grey-brown shillet rubble and clay	Levelling layer?	(3)
0.2m – 0.22m	0.02m	Grey-brown clay loam	Old land surface?	(4)
-	Not bottomed	Yellow-brown, to grey-brown rotten shillet bedrock	Decayed natural	(5)
-	Max length observed 0.20m Max width observed 0.07m	Linear cut running west to east	?	[6]
-	-	Dark black-brown silty clay with occasional oyster shell. Rapidly filled with water.	Fill of cut [6]	(7)

This trench measured 0.6m x 0.6m and reached a maximum depth of 0.7m. The profile encountered is described in the table above. A cut for a small linear trench, context [6] was observed running roughly west to east, however as it was at the edge of the trench it was not investigated further. It was filled with dark black-brown silty clay, Context (7) that contained a few oyster fragments. No dating evidence was recorded for this cut. In the course of the excavation it was noted that the area of the fill of this cut became rapidly waterlogged. No artefacts were recovered from this trench.

Trench 2. Parasol base (Figs 2 and 3)

Depth	Thickness	Description	Interpretation	Context
0m – 0.07m	0.07m	Grey-black tarmac	Surface of yard	(1)
0.07m – 0.11m	0.04m	Yellow, Grey-brown sandy mortar, with fine gravel	Bedding layer for tarmac	(2)
0.11m – 0.16m	0.05m	Hard, compacted yellow, grey-brown shillet rubble and clay	Levelling layer?	(3)
0.16m – 0.19m	0.03m	Yellow, grey-brown shillet and clay	Levelling layer?	(8)

0.19m – 0.22m	0.03m	Grey-brown clay loam	Old land surface?	(4)
-	Not bottomed	Yellow-brown, to grey-brown rotten shillet bedrock	Decayed natural	(5)

This trench measured 0.6m x 0.6m and reached a maximum depth of 0.6m. The profile recorded is described in the table above. No archaeological features were observed and no artefacts were recovered.

Trench 3. Telescope base (Figs 2, 3, and 5)

Depth	Thickness	Description	Interpretation	Context
0m – 0.05m	0.05m	Grass, roots and topsoil	Topsoil	(9)
0.05m – 0.09m	0.04m	Grey-brown clay loam	Subsoil	(10)
0.09m – 0.29m	0.2m	Yellow, grey-brown clay with numerous shillet fragments, roofing slate fragments, and white lime mortar fragments.	Levelling or demolition layer	(11)
0.3m height observed Not bottomed	0.3m width observed	Slate blocks up to 0.25m in size bonded with a lime mortar. One edge observed running NW to SE. Couple of small tile fragments incorporated within fabric.	Wall	(12)
0.29m – 0.42m	0.13m	Grey, yellow-brown clay with shillet fragments, and some white mortar.	Levelling or demolition layer	(13)
-	Not bottomed	Yellow-brown, to grey-brown rotten shillet bedrock	Decayed natural	(5)

This trench measured 0.7m x 0.7m and reached a maximum depth of 0.4m. The profile recorded is described in the table above.

On the north eastern side of the trench the remnants of a wall was encountered running in a north-west to south-east direction. This wall was constructed from blocks of shillet up to 0.25m in size, bonded with white lime mortar, context (12). Unfortunately the full width of the wall was not observed as it disappeared into the baulk beyond the limits of the trench; however some 0.30m was recorded. Similarly some 0.3m of the height of the wall was also recorded though it was not bottomed. There was no evidence for a foundation trench. Unfortunately no dating evidence for the wall was found and no artefacts were recovered.

Discussion

Though it proved to be impractical to completely investigate the linear cut Context [6] that appeared within Trench 1 that ran from west to east, as it was situated close to the southern edge of the excavation, it was noted that the fill became rapidly waterlogged as if acting as a conduit for water. This hinted that the trench may have been the cut for a drain. Unfortunately no dating evidence was obtained; however on examination of a plan of Pendennis castle barracks and associated drainage (PRO WO78/2757) dated 1904 (Figure 6) it can be seen that a drain is portrayed in this location with the same orientation, suggesting that Trench 1 may have just encountered the edge of the cut for this drain.

The wall encountered in Trench 3 that was orientated in a northwest to southeast direction with a width greater than 0.30m gave the appearance of being fairly substantial in nature. Though no actual dating evidence was obtained, examination of early plans show that there was a barrack block standing on this location with the same wall orientation noted certainly from 1793 and well portrayed on a plan of 1868 (Figure 7). This was demolished sometime after the current Royal Artillery barracks were built in 1901. It is suggested that the partly uncovered wall was part of this older barrack range.

No other features of archaeological interest were recorded and it appears that this development had very little or no impact on any significant buried remains.

References

British Geological Survey 1974, 1:50000 map Sheet 352 Falmouth

Johns, C, 2012. *Scheduled Monument 10552: Pendennis Peninsula Fortifications: Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Watching Brief during Groundworks for the Installation of Parasol Anchors and Telescope Platform at Pendennis Castle*, He Projects, Truro

Plan of Pendennis Castle. 1868 (PRO 2757).

Plan of Pendennis Castle barracks and associated drainage 1904 (PRO WO78/2757)

Project archive

The HE project number is **HEXQPR146149**

The project's documentary, photographic and drawn archive is housed at the offices of Historic Environment, Cornwall Council, Kennall Building, Old County Hall, Station Road, Truro, TR1 3AY. The contents of this archive are as listed below:

1. Projects file containing site records and notes, project correspondence and administration (**HEXQPR146149**).
2. Field plans and copies of historic maps stored in an A2-size plastic envelope (GRE738/3-4).
3. Digital photographs stored in the directory R:\Historic Environment (Images)\SITES.M-P\PENDENNIS\Pendennis Castle Parasols WB 9th May 2012 HEXQPR146149
4. English Heritage/ADS OASIS online reference: cornwall2- 125617
5. This report text is held in digital form as: G:\TWE\Waste & Env\Strat Waste & Land\Historic Environment\Projects\Sites\Sites P\PENDENNIS CASTLE\Pendennis Castle Parasols Watching Brief 2012 HEXQPR146149\Report

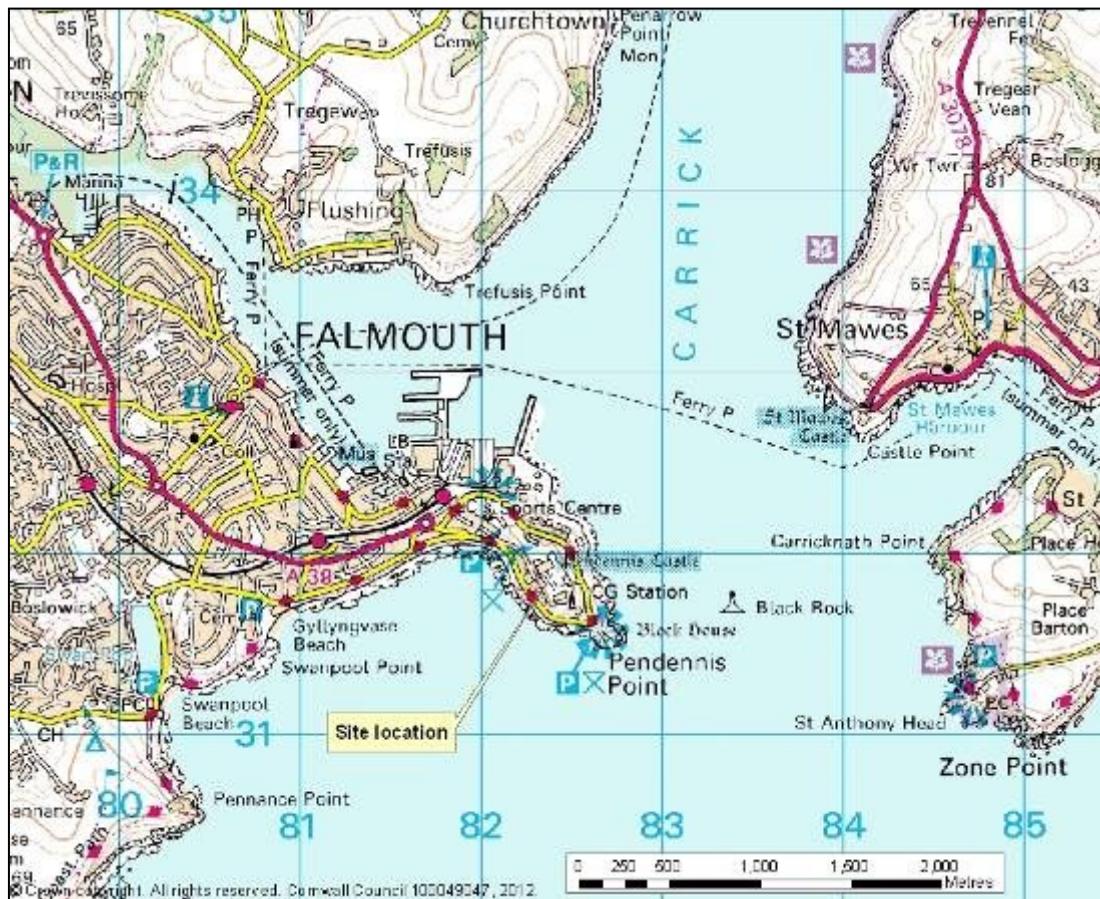


Figure 1. Site location

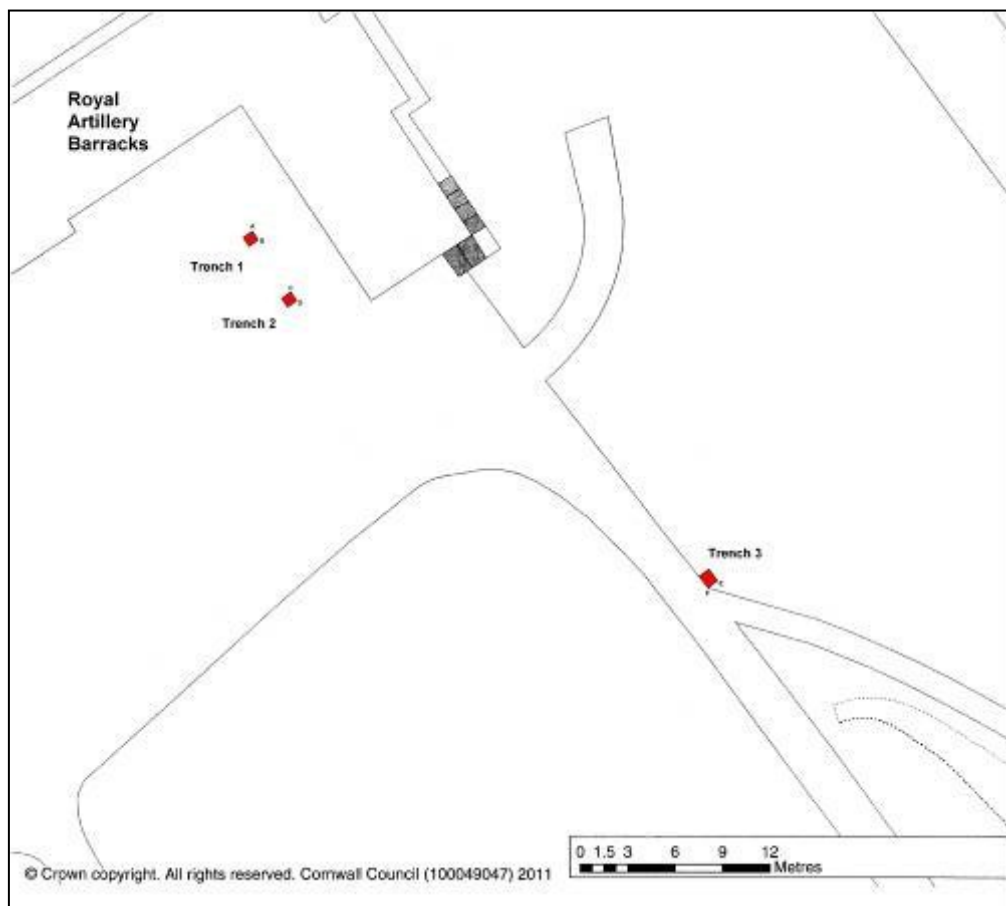


Figure 2. Trench location.

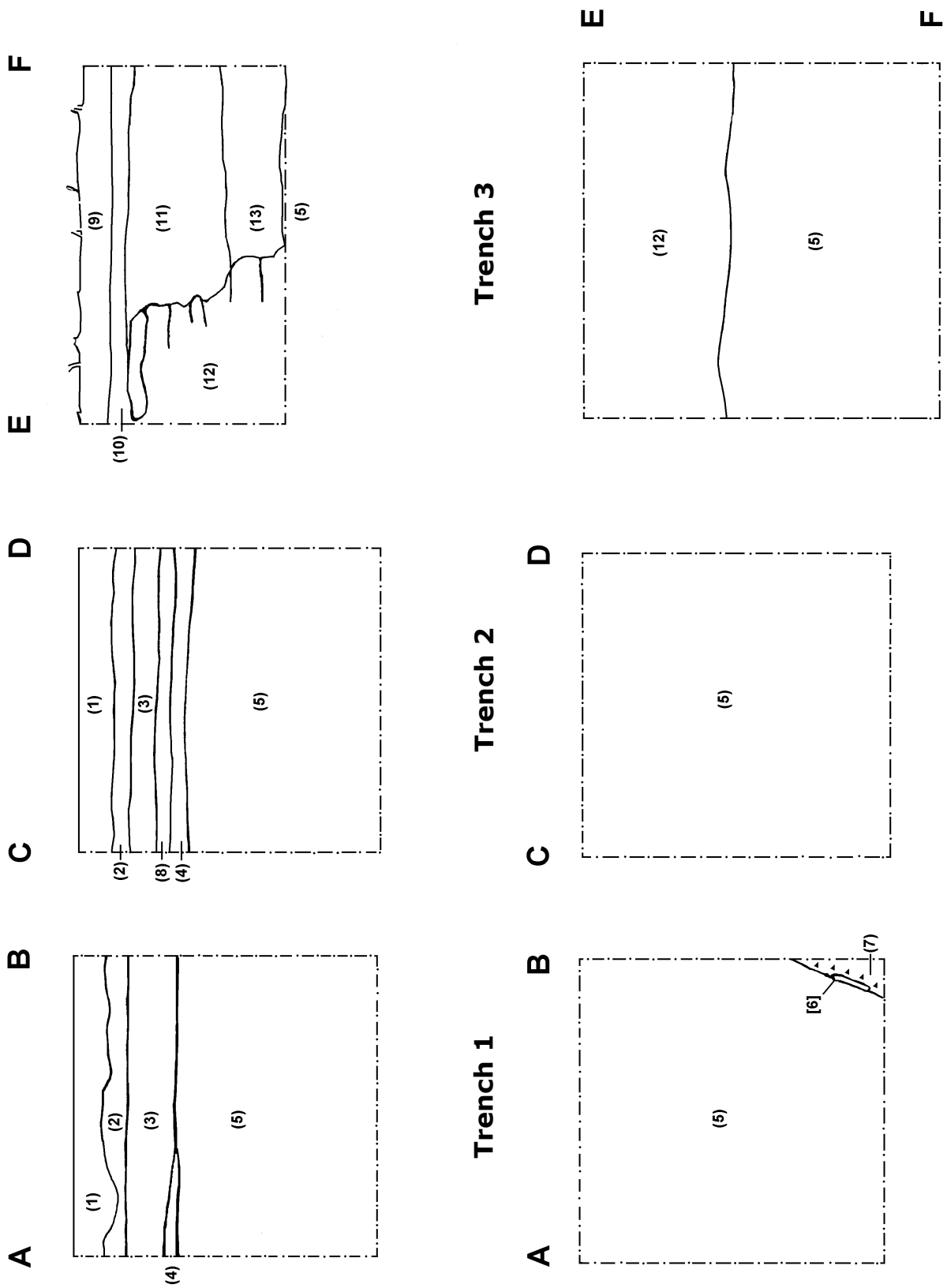


Figure 3. Trench Sections and plans.



Figure 4. Trench 1, looking northeast.



Figure 5. Trench 3 looking northeast. Wall lies to top of dotted line that marks its edge

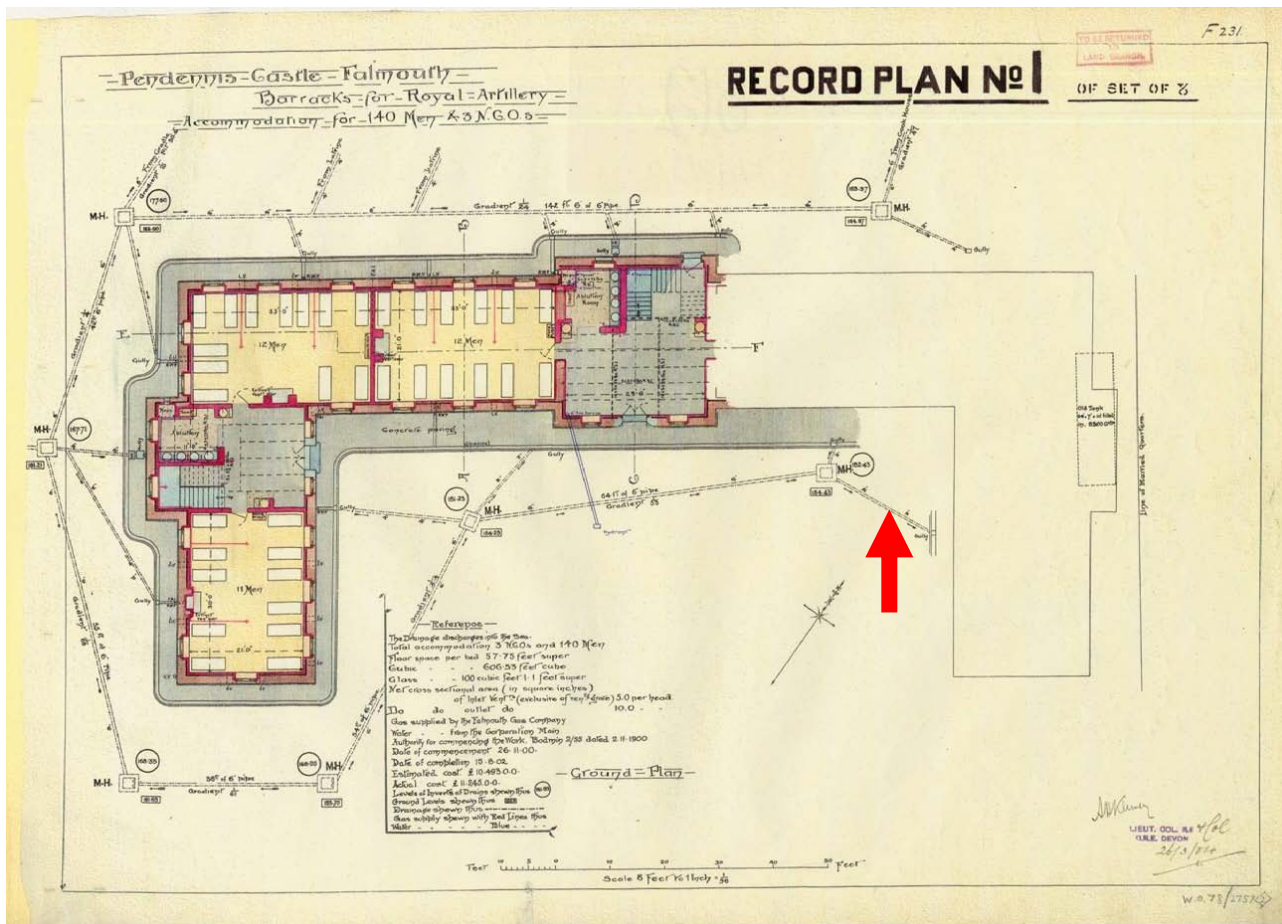


Figure 6. Plan of Pendennis Castle barracks and associated drainage 1904 (PRO WO78/2757). Red arrow shows pipeline encountered in Trench 1.

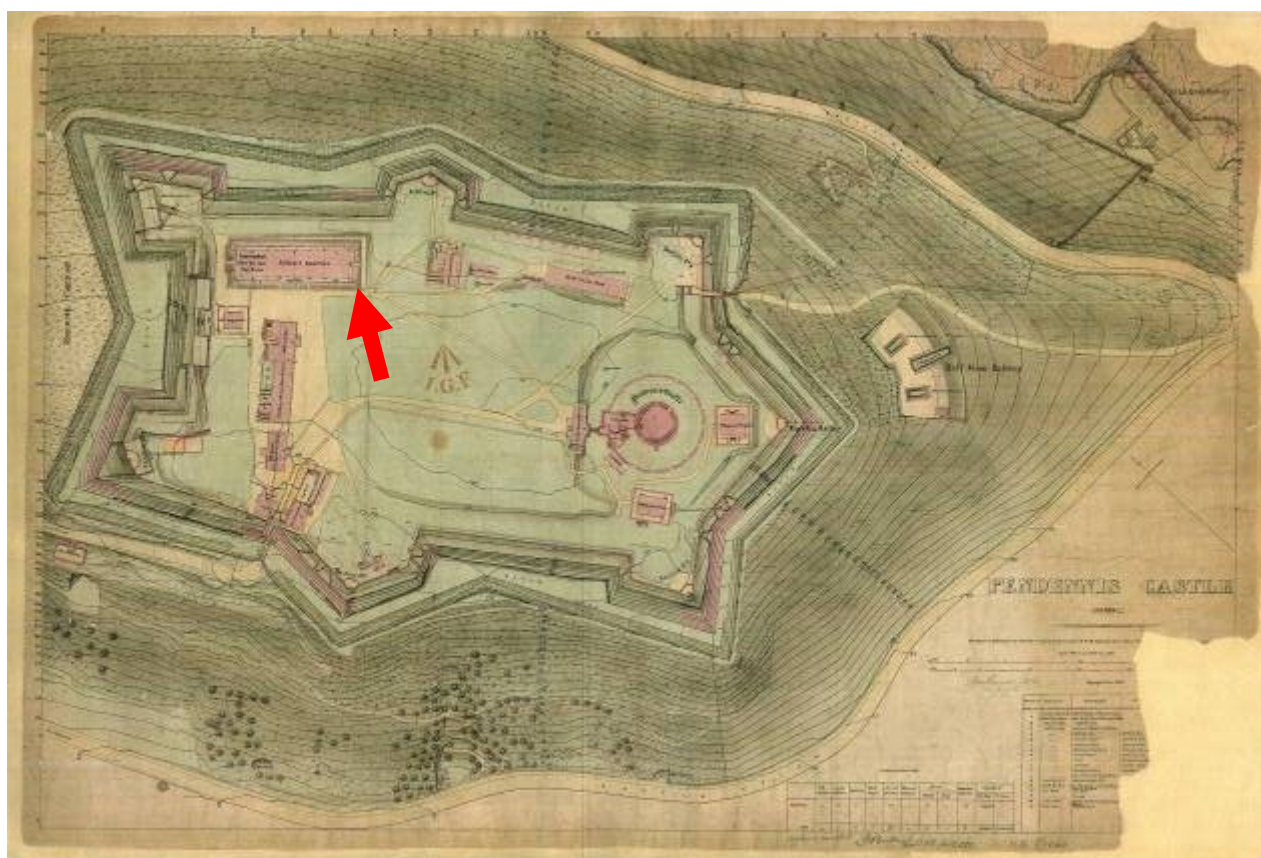


Figure 7. Plan of Pendennis Castle. 1868 (PRO 2757). Red arrow shows wall possibly encountered in Trench 3.