

**West Norman Road,
Dover Castle,
Dover,
Kent**

Archaeological watching brief report

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Watching brief, West Norman Road, Dover Castle, 2021

1. Summary

1.1 In 2021 English Heritage commissioned Canterbury Archaeological Trust to conduct a watching brief at Dover Castle during trenching work for a replacement electricity cable. This ran from the rear wall of the thirteenth century Constable's Gate, northwards along West Norman Road to the Spur Casemates, a distance of just over 100 metres. NGR 632385 141947 to 632407 142034.

1.2 Most of the new trench was cut through the backfilling of a previous cable trench but in a few places adjacent stratified deposits and minor structures were exposed in the sides of the new trench. These were all of later post-medieval date. At the northern end of the trench, outside the Spur Casemates, a small patch of orange clay with flints appeared to be undisturbed natural geology rather than redeposited material.

1.3 Examination of the exposed below-ground section of the rear wall of the Constable's Gate-tower showed that this had been extensively repointed during the nineteenth century, although original medieval fabric was visible further into the body of the wall.

1.4 No artefacts were recovered during the course of the watching brief and no further analysis of the recorded information is presently required.

2. Introduction

2.1 As part of on-going refurbishment works at Dover Castle, Canterbury Archaeological Trust was commissioned by English Heritage to maintain a watching brief during trenching work associated with the laying of a replacement electricity cable. The trench was located on the western side of the Castle complex, between the inner and outer curtain walls, running from the rear of the thirteenth century Constable's Gate, northwards along West Norman Road to the Spur Casemates, a distance of just over 100 metres. NGR 632385 141947 to 632407 142034 (Figs 1–3).

2.2 The fieldwork was conducted over a period of 7 days between 18 January and 16 February 2021, mostly during inclement winter weather that included strong winds, rain and snow (Frontispiece). Although some archaeological deposits and structural evidence were revealed, nothing of special significance was identified during the course of the work. No artefacts were recovered.

2.3 The new cable trench was designed to follow the line of its immediate predecessor so that disturbance of any earlier features or deposits of archaeological significance would be largely avoided. On the ground, this was mostly the case, but several minor features and areas of stratified deposit were exposed where the new trench was over-cut or strayed slightly from the earlier route (Fig. 2). Details of the recorded information are set out below.

2.4 The fieldwork generated a small archive, comprising 27 recorded contexts, a general site plan, four block sections and about 60 digital photographs. No artefacts were recovered. All the field records have been checked and indexed. They will shortly be transferred to the English Heritage regional store in Dover Castle.

3. Historical background (based on Porter 2020)

3.1 The history of this part of the castle complex has been previously outlined by Jonathan Coad (2001) and Roy Porter (Porter 2020) but it may be usefully summarised here.

3.2 The existing power cable route runs from the thirteenth-century Constable's Gate northwards to the Napoleonic Spur casemates (Fig. 2). This is an intramural area, lying between the inner and outer medieval bailey curtain walls. Most of the new trench was cut along West Norman Road, which forms part of a routeway that runs around the inner bailey. The current road has an asphalt surface and is used by site vehicles from time to time. For most of its length, the road is edged by drainage gullies formed of granite setts. These occur along most roads within the castle and have been carefully repaired and reinstated across the site (Coad 2001, 70).

3.3 Map evidence shows that the route taken by West Norman Road has been maintained as a clear space since the early eighteenth century and formalised as a road since at least the later nineteenth century. The present road plan within the castle (Fig. 1) was largely developed by the military in the latter part of the nineteenth century, their principal restraints being the location of gate passages and major earthworks (Coad 2001). The name West Norman Road is not ancient and would appear to be of later nineteenth century origin.

3.4 There is no historical record of any buildings on the route of the present road and the medieval use of this area remains somewhat unclear. The physical evidence suggests that any medieval structures were built against or close to the curtain wall, away from the line of the road.

3.5 It is not known exactly when the existing electricity cable was laid along West Norman Road, although a twentieth century date seems clear enough. There is no record of any archaeological observations being made during its installation. The existing service itself is considered to be of modest historical interest/research value.

4. Aims and objectives of the archaeological watching brief

4.1 The new trenching works were subject to close archaeological supervision and recording. The purpose of the archaeological monitoring was:

- To facilitate identification of the historic service trench and to avoid impacts on previously undisturbed ground.
- To preserve by record the presence and nature of archaeological deposits encountered during the works, including stray as well as stratified finds, and the historic services exposed during the works.
- To signal to interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, the discovery of archaeological material for which the resources allocated to the watching brief were not sufficient to support treatment to a proper and satisfactory standard.

5. The excavated Test Pits (TP 1–TP 6) (Fig. 2)

5.1 A series of six small test pits (TPs 1–6) were initially cut along the line of the existing power cable (Fig. 2). These were monitored by the writer and served as control points, allowing something of the below-ground deposits to be examined and recorded (see below). The pits showed that the original

cable lay buried at a depth of between 0.35 and 0.75m, generally surrounded by clean sand and covered by a continuous line of ceramic marker tiles (Fig. 5).

5.2 Trial Pit 1, Central yard area, south of casemates

Recorded sequence:

- 1) Compact black asphalt surface, 0.04m, *over*
- 2) Loose asphalt, 0.15m, *over*
- 3) Compact light grey chalky loam with very frequent small and medium chalk lumps and occasional asphalt lumps, *over*
- 4) Orange-red cover tiles in yellow sand, over the electric cable. Top of tiles at 0.46m below present ground level (NB: 10cm dia. cast iron pipe lay adjacent; top at 0.40m below present ground level).

5.3 Trial Pit 2, West edge of yard area, south of casemates

Recorded sequence:

- 1) Compact black asphalt surface, 0.04m, *over*
- 2) Loose asphalt, 0.12m, *over*
- 3) Compact light grey chalky loam with very frequent small and medium chalk lumps and occasional asphalt lumps and occasional yellow stock brick fragments, *over*
- 4) Orange-red cover tiles in yellow sand, over electric cable. Top of tiles between 0.38 and 0.47m below present ground level (which slopes down to the west).

5.4 Trial Pit 3, Adjacent rear wall of Constable's Gate-tower

Recorded sequence:

- 1) Modern turf, 0.03m, *over*
- 2) Uniform deposit of moderate to soft dark grey loam containing small flint pebbles, occasional peg tile fragments, occasional small chalk lumps, occasional small flint, occasional yellow stock brick fragments and occasional pieces of glazed ceramic drainpipe, *over*
- 3) Two electric cables surrounded by yellow-green sand. Buried at depths of between 0.65 and 0.75m below present ground level.

5.5 Trial Pit 4, Grass verge east of Constable's Gate-tower

Recorded sequence:

- 1) Modern turf, 0.03m, *over*
- 2) Uniform deposit of moderate to soft dark grey loam containing small flint pebbles, occasional small chalk lumps, occasional small flint lumps, occasional yellow stock brick fragments and occasional pieces of glazed drainpipe, *over*
- 3) Single electric cable surrounded by yellow sand and covered by a marked concrete slab; buried at a depth of 0.30m below present ground level.

5.6 Trial Pit 5, Road east of Constable's Gate

Recorded sequence:

- 1) Compact upper black asphalt surface, 0.09m, *over*
- 2) Compact lower black asphalt, 0.15m, *over*
- 3) Compact light grey chalky loam with frequent small and medium chalk lumps and occasional flints, moderate numbers of asphalt lumps, 0.30–0.56m *over*

4) Marked orange-red cover tiles in yellow sand, over electric cable at 0.55 to 0.80 below present ground level (deepest to south). NB: Three other east–west aligned pipes and cables were also revealed in this area.

5.7 Trial Pit 6, opposite south end of stable block

Recorded sequence:

- 1) Compact upper black asphalt surface, 0.13m, *over*
- 2) Compact lower black asphalt, 0.11m, *over*
- 3) Compact light grey chalky loam with very frequent small chalk lumps, 0.02m (min.)

6. Observations along the new cable trench (Figs 2–15)

6.1 The main trenching for the new cable was undertaken in two phases, with the excavation of the section between TPs 3 and 6 being cut in January 2021 and the remaining section in February 2021. The excavation work progressed from south (Constable’s Gate) to north (Spur Casemates), with the trenching in January being undertaken using a three-tonne machine with a 360 degree slew (Fig. 8). The work in February was undertaken employing a smaller, one-tonne machine with a 360 degree slew (Fig. 4).

6.2 Trench between TP 3 and TP 4, east of Constable’s Gate, 5m (Figs 2, 6–8)

6.2.1 The 5m long trench cut between Test Pit 3 and 4, across the grassed area immediately to the east of the rear wall of the Constable’s Gate-tower was the first section to be excavated. Of the entire new cable route this perhaps represented the area with the greatest archaeological potential, being closest to the medieval gateway.

6.2.2 The excavated trench was aligned roughly east–west and was up to 1.00m in width and 0.75m deep. Examination showed that the entire piece of ground through which it was cut had been thoroughly disturbed by numerous earlier service pipe and cable trenches, totalling at least twelve in number (Fig. 8). Consequently, the new trench dug here failed to reveal anything of archaeological interest.

6.2.3 It would seem that the presence of the Constable’s Gate had required all services being brought into the castle to funnel through this area before spreading out to different parts of the castle’s building complex. Of the pipes and cables exposed, some were clearly disused but others were certainly still live. Some difficulty ensued in determining which electricity cable was the one relevant to the present project.

6.2.4 The dark soils exposed in the excavated trench largely represented the mixed backfilling of a succession of earlier service trenches (Fig. 8). No artefacts of any significance were discovered: material noted included very occasional small pieces of Victorian pottery and glass together with a quantity of broken glazed ceramic drainpipe (none retained).

6.2.5 In the central sector, in the base of the trench, at a depth of about 0.75m, the top of a layer of the light grey-brown clay loam with frequent small and some medium sized chalk lumps might have represented the top of an undisturbed soil deposit below the mixed fillings of the overlying trenches, but this was not exposed clearly.

6.2.6 Constable's Gate-tower (Figs 6 & 7)

The original hand dug TP 3 was subsequently enlarged by machine to form a pit about 1.50m square. This revealed further lengths of old service pipes and cables within the same mixed loam soils as seen previously. More of the east face of the Constable's gate-tower was revealed: about 0.60m of the buried gate-house walling was exposed (Figs 6 & 7).

6.2.7 Cleaning of the masonry exposed showed 4 to 5 courses of water-rounded greensand boulders from Folkestone. There was clear evidence for quite extensive repointing of these in a mid-grey mortar containing frequent coal specks and occasional chalk/lime grits, with some flint galletting, as seen higher up in the wall (Fig. 7). From this, it would appear that the presently below-ground walling had undergone a programme of repointing during the nineteenth century, when it may have stood above contemporary ground level. Quite possibly, this repointing work was undertaken when the medieval gate-house was extended to form the Deputy Constable's residence during the 1880s (Coad 2001, 37).

6.3 Trench between TP 4 and TP 5, east of Constable's Gate-tower, 4m (Fig. 2)

6.3.1 This short section of trench was about 4m in length and ran roughly east-west (Fig. 2). It was cut from West Norman Road to the grassed verge area to the rear of Constable's Gate-tower and was about 0.50m in width. Most of the trench was taken to a depth of 0.55m.

6.3.2 Early road metalling

For a distance of about 2m west of TP5 the new trench cut across previously undisturbed ground and revealed a sequence of stratified deposits. Here, two layers of modern asphalt road surfacing overlay a sequence of earlier road make-up layers, with one certain surface, to a depth of 0.55m. The lowest layer exposed was a deposit of compacted chalk rubble, perhaps similar to Context 6 in Section 1 (although not the same layer). The early road surface revealed above was not obviously the same as road Context 5 recorded further to the north (see below).

6.3.3 Roadside gully

At the western end, this section of trench, cut through the cobbled roadside gully to allow connection with TP 4. Inspection showed that the individual stones of the gully were laid on a bed of yellow sand, implying a twentieth century date. Traces of an earlier road surface occurred below, indicating that the gully in its present form was of a relatively recent date.

6.4 Trench between TP 5 and TP 6, West Norman Road (south section), 30m (Figs 2, 3, 9-11)

6.4.1 This section of trench was about 30m in length and ran roughly north-south along the western margin of West Norman Road. It was about 0.90m in width and was taken to a maximum depth of between 0.70 and 0.80m on the eastern side of the existing cable line. Most of the new trench was dug through the backfilling of the previous trench but earlier deposits, cut by this previous trench were exposed along much the eastern face of the new trench, which was slightly wider than its predecessor.

6.4.2 The stratified deposits exposed in the east face of the trench projected between 0.10 and 0.25m into the new excavation. On the western side they had been cut away not only by the previous electric cable trench but also by an earlier trench below. The original electric cable trench would seem to have been dug along the line of an earlier, deeper service trench that continued below the base of the present excavation. It was not ascertained what this earlier trench contained.

6.4.3 The layers predating the service trenches consisted of various mixed dumps of brown clay and

chalk rubble overlain by road surfaces and their associated make up layers. Details were recorded in two representative block sections (Fig. 3, Sections 1 & 2, Figs 9 & 10) set about 16 metres apart along the trench (Fig. 2). No good dating evidence was recovered but brick and very occasional Welsh slate fragments present in a number of these deposits indicate a broadly eighteenth- or nineteenth-century date for them. There was no suggestion of any stratified medieval deposits here.

6.4.4 In the area of Section 1 was a succession of dump deposits (Fig. 3, S. 1, Contexts 6, 7 & 8), the highest one of which (Context 6), a 0.40m thick layer of chalk rubble, supported an early road surface (Context 5). The early road was subsequently sealed by make-up layers (Contexts 3 & 4) that supported two subsequent asphalt road surfaces (Contexts 1 & 2), the highest one of which (1) forms the present metalling of West Norman Road.

6.4.5 *Early road metalling, Contexts 5 and 16* (Figs 3, 9 & 10)

For a distance of around 20 metres, the eastern face of the new trench revealed a thin, near continuous layer of compacted soil and pea shingle, clearly representing an early road surface (Contexts 5 & 16). This surface appeared to be laid to a more shallow gradient than the modern road above, so that in the area of TP5, at the south end of the trench, it was at -0.29m below present ground level, whilst at the site of Section 2, some 11 metres to the south of TP6, it was at -0.77m. At a point about 8 metres south of TP 6 it dipped below the base of the excavated trench.

6.4.6 *Brick manhole, Context F. 9* (Figs 2 & 11)

At one point about 10 metres north of TP5, the eastern edge of the trench grazed the side of a brick manhole (Context 9). This projected into the trench for a distance of between 0.10 and 0.22m. It was 1.90m across and at least 0.40m high (5 courses). The structure was cut in from above the level of the early metalling (Context 5) and its top lay at about 0.23m below present ground level.

6.5 *Trench between TP 6 and TP 1, West Norman Road (north section), 39m* (Figs 2 & 12)

6.5.1 This section of trench was about 39m in length and ran roughly north-south along the line of West Norman Road (Fig. 2). It was about 0.65m wide and between 0.60 and 0.80m deep. The new trench appeared to be entirely cut through the backfilling of the previous cable trench which largely consisted of mixed grey soil and chalk rubble with occasional large chalk lumps and very occasional pieces of broken-up road asphalt. At the south end of this section of trench an early drainage gully was exposed (Context 23, see below).

6.5.2 *Drainage gully, Context F. 23* (Fig. 12)

Immediately north of TP 6, in front of the stable block (south end) the trench revealed a shallow drainage gully lined with granite setts (Context 23) running diagonally across the road. This gully was sealed by the upper modern asphalt surface of West Norman Road but appeared to be contemporary with the lower asphalt surface. The gully was preserved undamaged and the new cable was tunnelled under it.

As seen in the new trench, the gully was 0.40m wide and 0.02m deep, with the individual setts employed about 0.20m in thickness (Fig. 12). Traces of the same structure were noted beyond the new trench, on the eastern side of West Norman Road. Fairly certainly, this gully was concerned with surface drainage away from the yard area in front of the stables. The stables, themselves, represent the last remaining military stables surviving in the castle (Coad 2001, 38).

The gully may be identified on a large-scale services plan of the castle maintained between 1922 and 1955, where it is shown discharging into a catch pit (C.P.) located on the eastern verge of the road. The capping of this pit is still visible.

6.6 Trench between TP 1 and TP 2, 8m (Figs 2–4 & 13)

6.6.1 This section of trench was about 8m in length and was cut across the northern end of West Norman Road, aligned roughly east–west (Figs 2 & 4). It was between 0.35 and 0.40m in width and about 0.45m deep. Most of the trench was cut through the backfilling of the earlier cable trench but an area of stratified deposits was exposed in the north side of the new trench extending for a distance of about 3.00m east from TP 2 (Fig. 3, Section 3, Contexts 19–21). This included a probable early road surface (Context 19).

6.6.2 Early road (?) surface, Context 19 (Figs 3 & 13)

A 0.08m thick layer of fairly compact light grey-brown gritty loam containing very frequent small brown flint pebbles (= pea shingle) was revealed in the northern face of the trench, east of TP 2 (Fig. 3, S. 3, Context 19). Buried at a depth of about 0.15m, directly below the modern asphalt surfaces (Contexts 17 & 18), this layer fairly certainly represents an earlier road surfacing which might be the same as that represented by Contexts 5 and 16 further to the south (see above).

Context 19 rested on a thin bed of rammed chalk rubble (S. 3, Context 20, Fig. 13). No dateable finds came from either of these two deposits but it was noted that a chalk and clay dump layer below the rammed chalk rubble (20) contained odd fragments of maroon brick of eighteenth- or nineteenth-century date (S. 3, Context 21).

6.7 Trench between TP2 and Spur Casemates, 15m (Figs 2, 3, 14 & 15)

6.7.1 This section of trench was about 15m in length and was aligned roughly north–south (Fig. 2). It was cut across the pavement in front of the westernmost Spur Casemate and was between 0.40 and 0.50m wide and about 0.50m deep. Most of the trench was cut through the backfilling of the earlier cable trench but an area containing stratified deposits was exposed on the east side of the new trench, immediately outside the casemate wall (Fig. 3, Section 4, Contexts 25–27). This included a layer of possibly natural clay (Context 27; Fig. 15), overlain by a thin gravel surface that must represent early surfacing in front of the casemates (Context 26). Further south, a small brick pier, buried below the modern road surface, was partially revealed on the eastern side of the new trench (Context F. 22, see below; Fig. 14).

6.7.2 Brick pier, Context F. 22 (Figs 2 & 14)

In the central sector of this portion of the trench, 6.45m out from the south wall of the casemate, a small brick base or pier was partially revealed in the eastern side of the excavation (Figs 2 & 14). This was buried below the modern tarmac at a depth of 0.10m and measured 0.38m (N–S) by at least 0.22m (E–W). It stood to a height of 0.18m and was constructed of red bricks set in a yellow-grey sandy mortar containing moderate amounts of chalk/lime grit (Fig. 14). The previous cable trench seemed have been cut down its western face and not removed any of it. The structure appeared to be solid and rested on an underlying dump deposit of grey clay loam and chalk rubble that occurred along this part of the trench. The purpose of this base remains unclear. It was set at a slight angle to the casemate wall. The general construction suggests a late nineteenth- or early twentieth-century date. The present cable trench was again cut down its western face without damage.

6.7.3 Clay layer, Context 27 (Figs 3 & 15)

Immediately south of the casemate wall, a small area of stiff orange clay was revealed at a depth of about 0.26m (S. 4, Context 27). Containing a quantity of natural flint nodules this had every appearance of being a natural undisturbed Clay-with-flints deposit (Fig. 15). Such drift material does occur on Castle Hill and there can be no doubt that Context 27 is derived from this deposit. What is less certain, however, is whether this was a genuine, untouched geological deposit or material that had been redeposited during the extensive post-medieval earthmoving that has clearly taken place in

this area. On balance, the writer's view is that this probably was undisturbed natural clay, but too little was seen for this to be certain.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The trenching undertaken along West Norman Road has provided another opportunity to archaeologically examine an area within the outer bailey of Dover Castle. Most of the trench was cut through the backfilling of an earlier cable trench but some sections of earlier stratified deposit and occasional structural remains, all of later post-medieval date, were revealed. No traces of any medieval or early post-medieval structures or deposits were exposed.

7.2 The original configuration of Castle Hill in this area is now difficult to fully understand, but it would seem that the ground here fell away moderately steeply to the west and more gently to the south. During the construction of the medieval castle the local topography was significantly modified but the original westerly slope allowed the base of the inner curtain wall to stand on land significantly higher than that of the outer curtain wall. Little more is known about the detail of medieval activity in this area. Evidently there were medieval structures built against the outer curtain wall and surely some sort of connecting road or trackway must have existed, but its exact course is unknown.

7.3 From the observed stratified deposits, it would seem that much of the area of West Norman Road is occupied by dumps of late eighteenth- or more probably nineteenth-century, soil and rubble. Most of the layers exposed have fragments of brick of that date in them. It is not certain what groundworks/landscaping was undertaken in this area during those times but it seems possible that the natural chalk surface has been extensively reduced and terraced here as part of the extensive works carried out at the castle between the 1750s and 1860s. Presumably, there had once been some sort of medieval trackway in this area, between the two curtain walls but perhaps this skirted the back of the outer wall further to the west than the modern road line observed (see below).

7.4 Based on eighteenth century plans it appears that the inner curtain wall had once been encircled by a ditch, but this has now been infilled and its exact position is not known. The ditch seems to have been infilled sometime during the nineteenth century and other terracing and landscaping work apparently occurred during this period, significantly modifying the medieval arrangements.

7.5 Traces of 'early' road metalling were revealed in the 2021 trench (Contexts 5, 16 & 19) but it seems unlikely that this pre-dates the early nineteenth century. Sometime after road surface 5/16/19 had gone out of use, up to 0.60m of soil and rubble was spread across it. These deposits supported the subsequent asphalt roadway still in use today. Variations in the thickness of the dump layers implies that the gradient of the new road, in relation to its predecessor had been altered, perhaps to create a more even slope.

7.6 No further analysis of the information recorded in 2021 is warranted at present but this information could usefully feed into any future study concerned with charting the extent of the later post-medieval landscaping and groundworks that have occurred on the site, and defining areas where there is still some potential for the survival of earlier stratified deposits.

7.7 Copies of this report will be provided to Historic England, English Heritage, KCC Heritage Conservation Group and CAT's on-line library. A copy will also be placed on the OASIS database.

8. Bibliography

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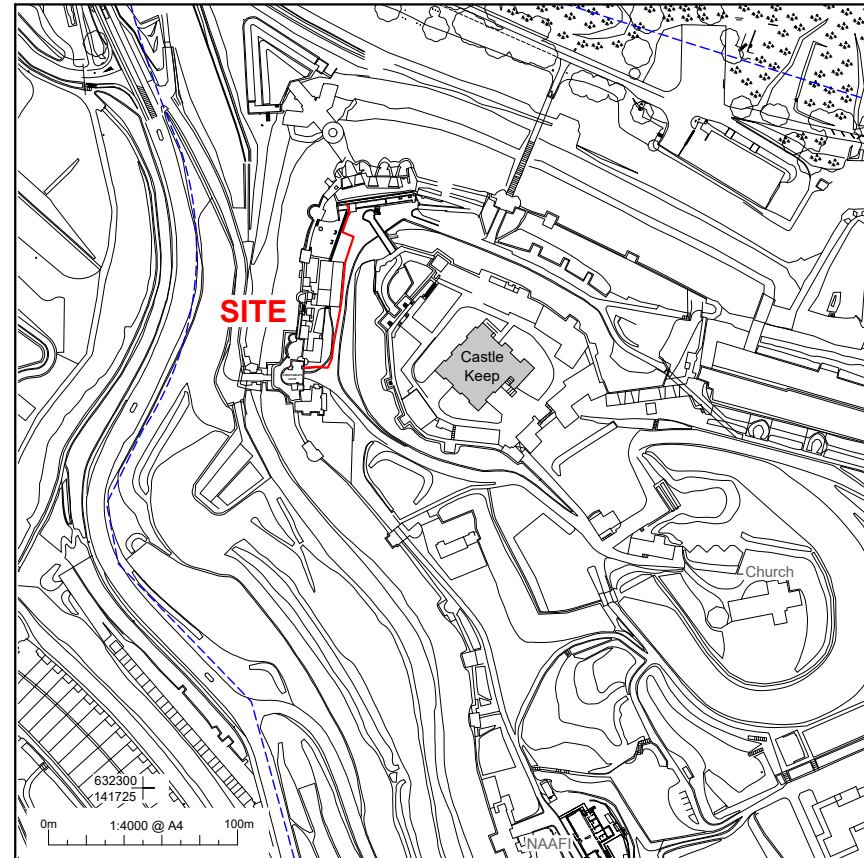
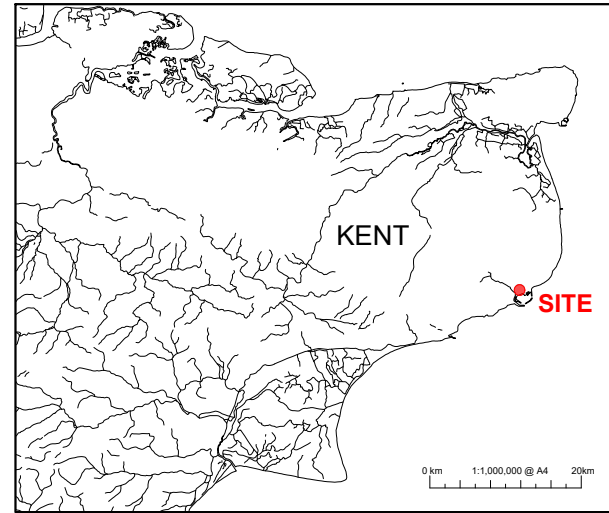


FIG. 1



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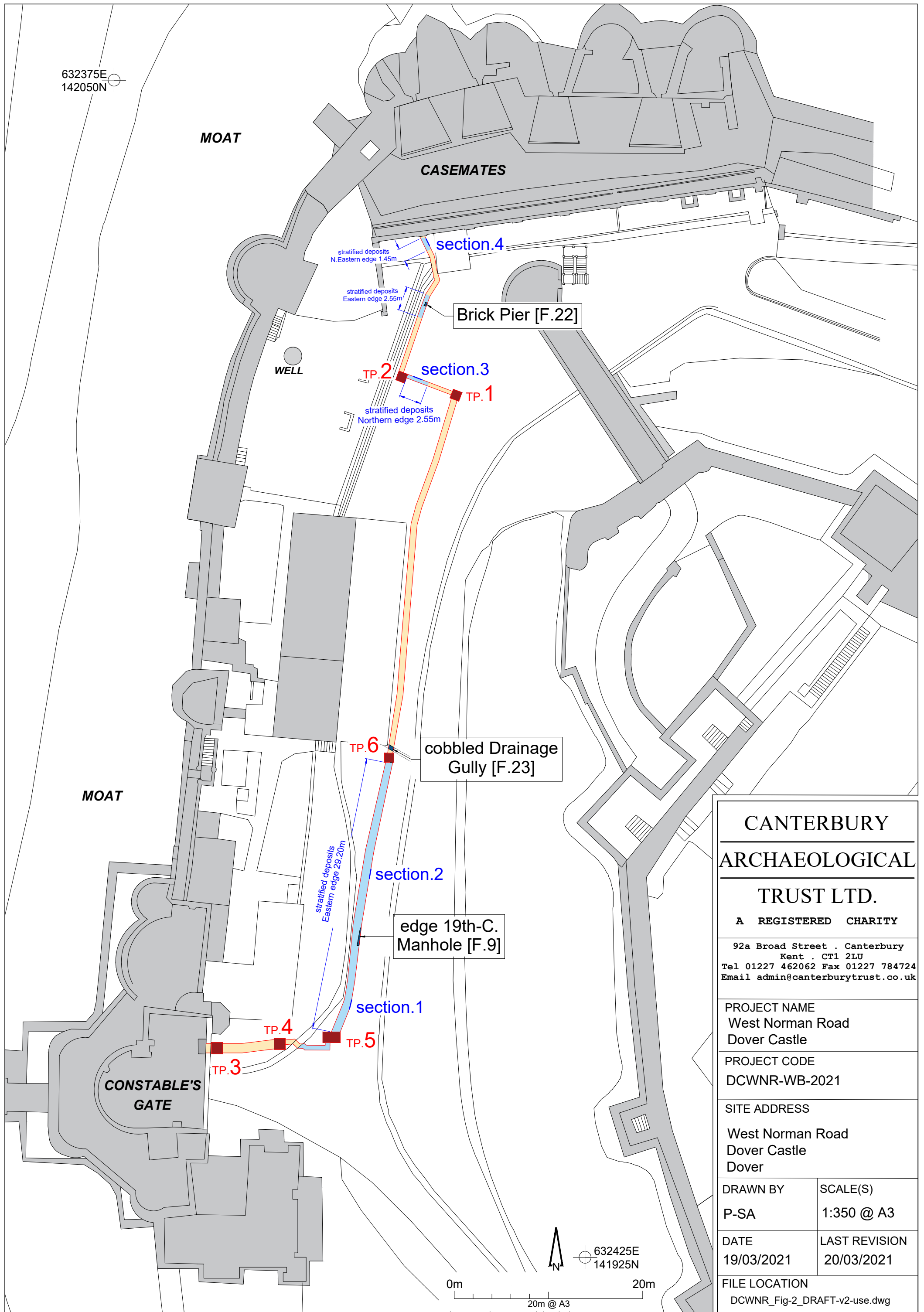
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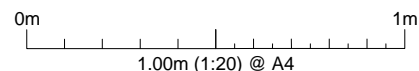
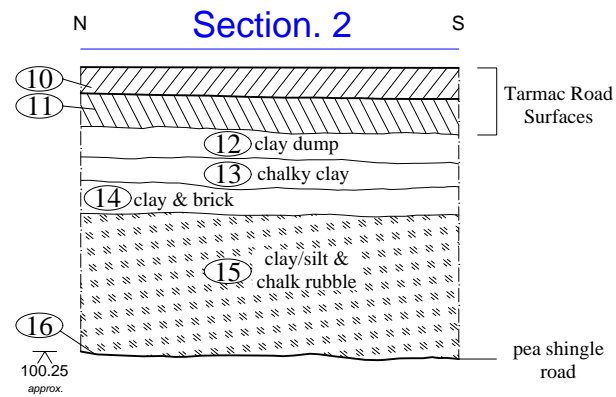
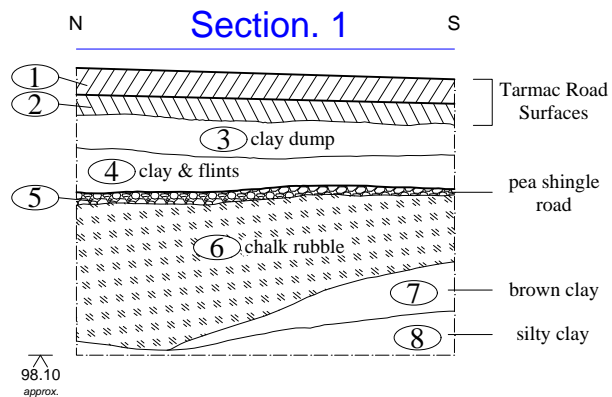
Fig. 1 General maps showing location of watching brief



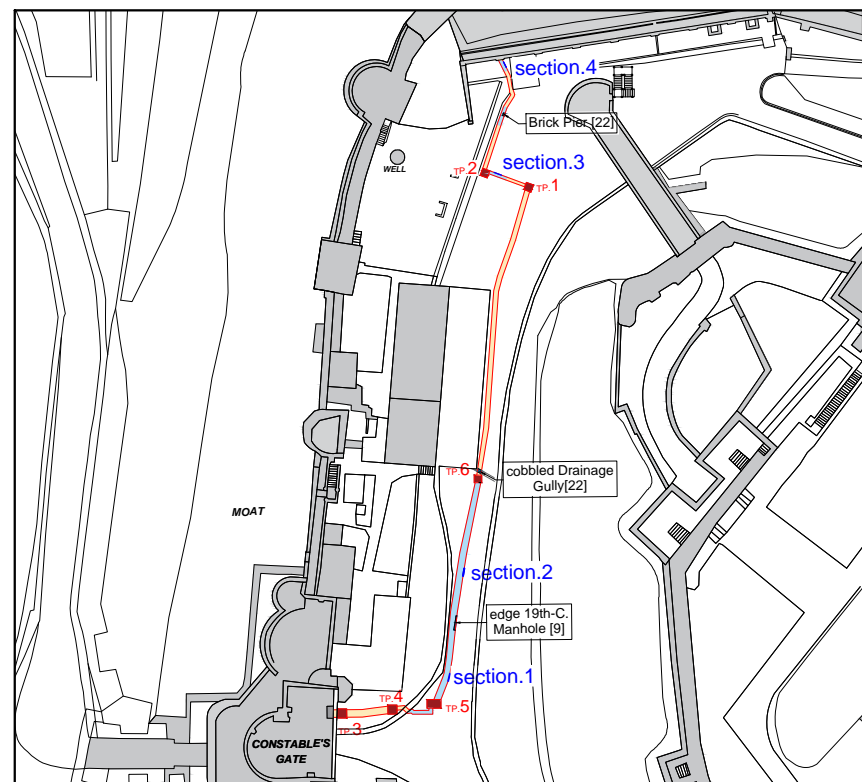
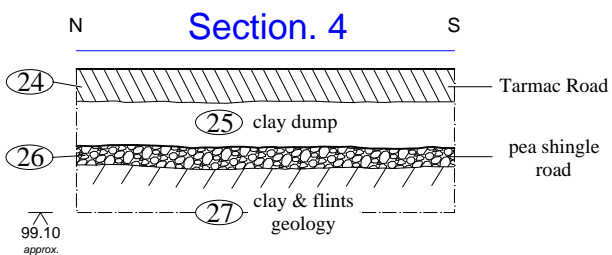
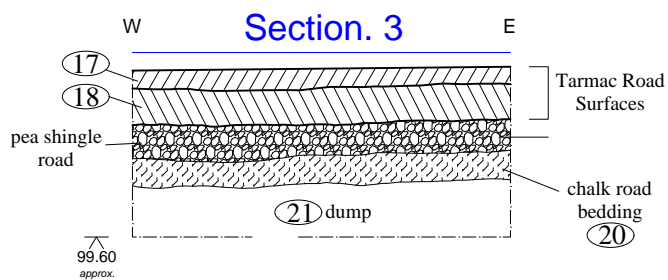
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PROJECT NAME West Norman Road Dover Castle	
PROJECT CODE DCWNR-WB-2021	
SITE ADDRESS West Norman Road Dover Castle Dover	
DRAWN BY P-SA	SCALE(S) 1:350 @ A3
DATE 19/03/2021	LAST REVISION 20/03/2021
FILE LOCATION DCWNR_Fig-2_DRAFT-v2-use.dwg	

Fig. 2 Location plan showing position of excavated trench and position of observed features and deposits

Fig. 3



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P-SA	1:20 @ A4 1:1000 inset
DATE	LAST REVISION
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Fig.3 Sections through recorded deposits with inset location plan



Fig. 4 Trenching work in the area of Test Pits 1 and 2, looking south-east



Fig. 5 Trenching between Test Pits 6 and 1, showing earlier cable line marked by cover tiles, looking north



Fig. 6 General view of trenching on eastern side of Constable's Gate-tower, looking west



Fig. 7 Detail of construction of east wall of Constable's Gate-tower below ground. Scale, 50cm

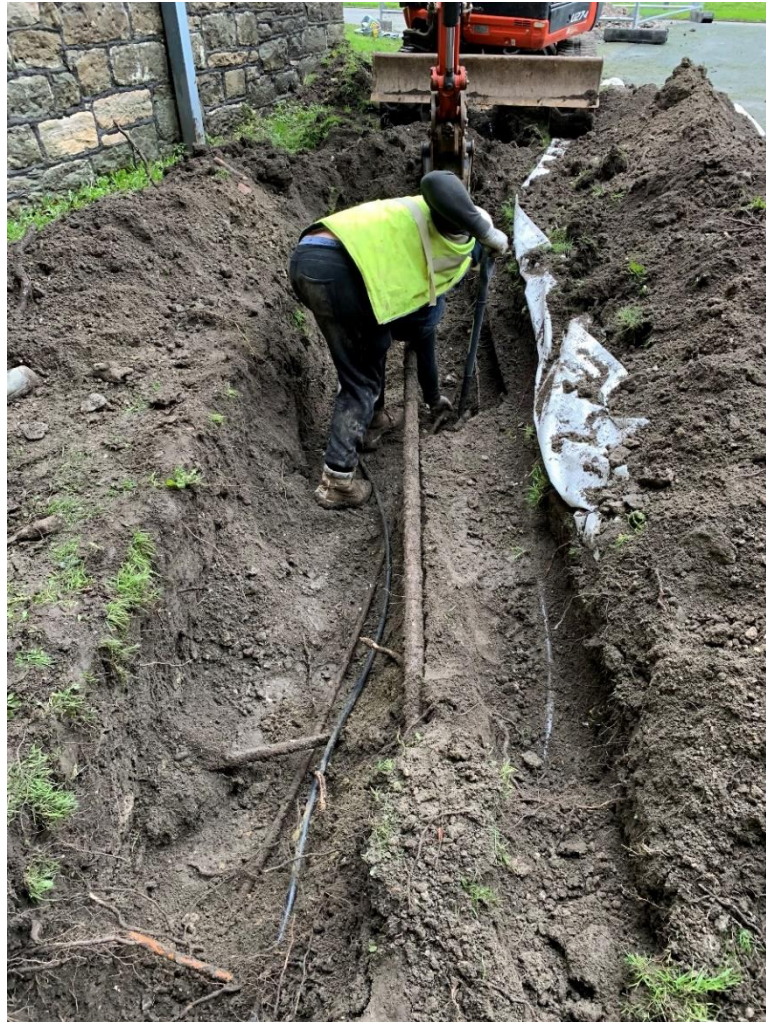


Fig. 8 Trenching across the grassed area east of Constable's Gate-tower showing numerous services present

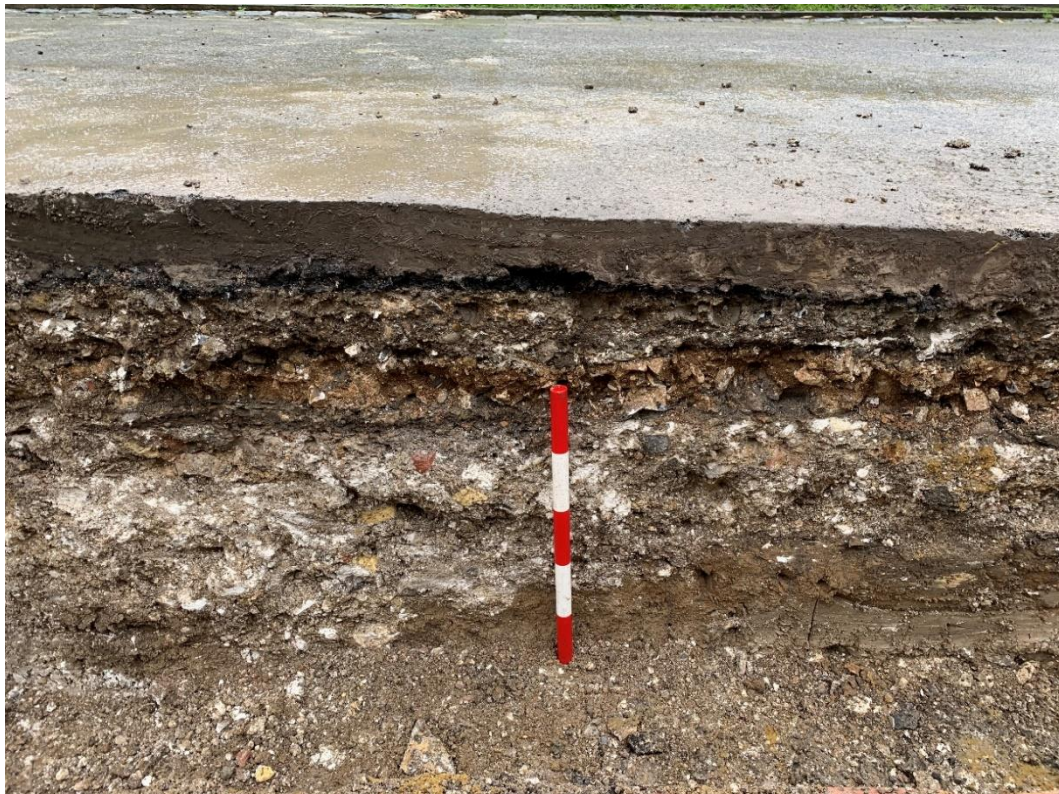


Fig. 9 Section 1 showing early road surfaces and other stratified deposits in east face of trench. Scale, 50cm



Fig. 10 Section 2 showing early road surfaces and other stratified deposits in east face of trench. Scale, 50 cm

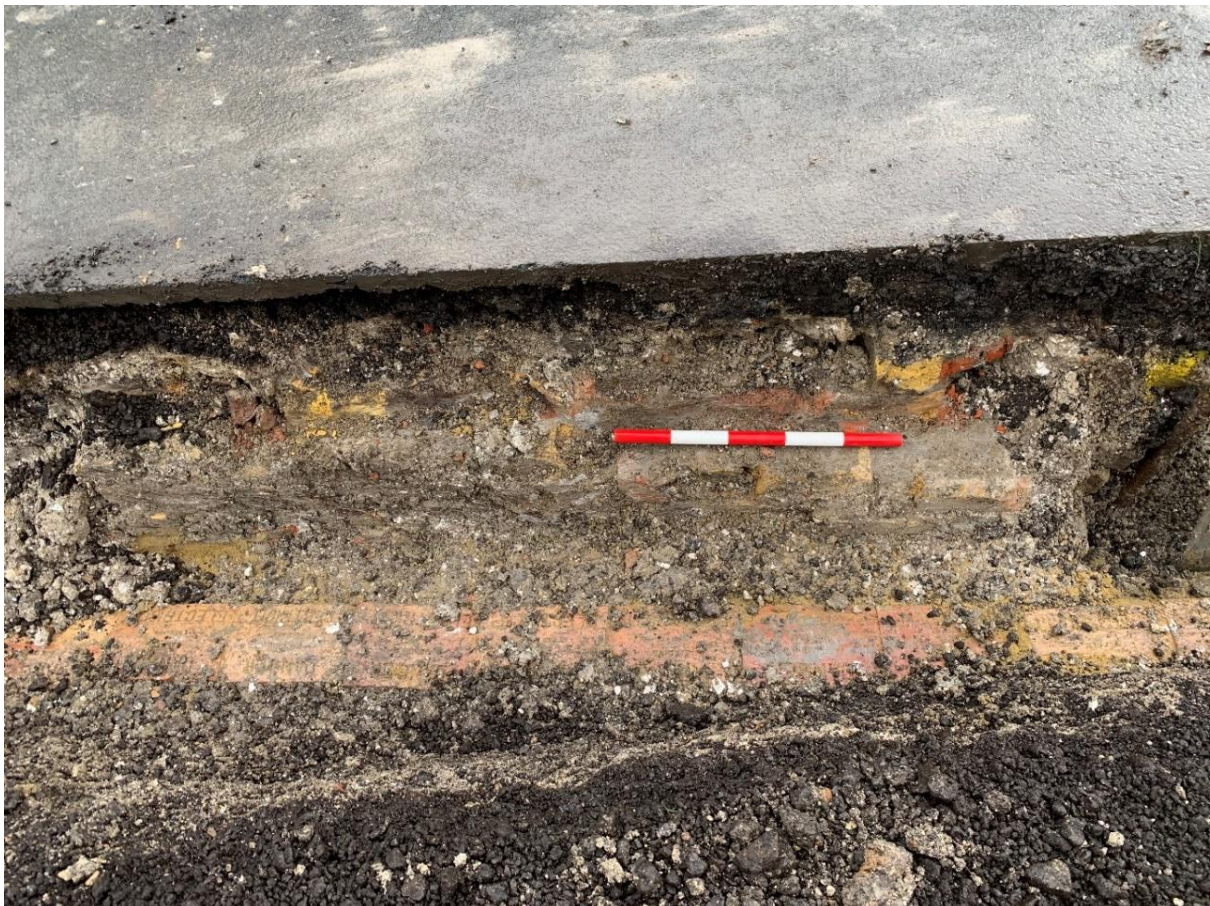


Fig. 11 Detail of nineteenth century brick manhole, Context F. 9, exposed in east face of trench. Scale, 50cm



Fig. 12 Cobbled drainage gully, Context F. 23, exposed to the east of stable block, looking east



Fig. 13 Section 3 showing early road surfaces and other stratified deposits in north face of trench. Scale, 50cm



Fig. 14 Small brick pier, Context F. 22, located south of Spur Casemates, looking east. Scale, 50cm



Fig. 15 Probably natural Clay with flints deposit (Section 4, Context 27) exposed south of Spur Casemates