



# Fort Nelson Portsdown Hill Road, Hampshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



Scheduled Monument Number: 1001860  
Scheduled Monument Consent: S00241433  
Ref: 256370.03  
December 2021



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## Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by T Coleborn and Son Ltd, on behalf of Hampshire County Council, to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Fort Nelson, Portsdown Hill Road, Fareham, PO17 6AN. The monitored works consisted of excavations within the “Redan” rampart, part of the scheduled monument in order to investigate and repair the causes of damp in the brick masonry structure below.

The watching brief was carried out as a condition of scheduled monument consent, which was granted by Historic England to investigate the cause to the water penetration by undertaking excavation at two locations in order to stop water penetration and subsequent damage to the historic fabric of the structure below.

The archaeological monitoring of the hand excavated test pits only encountered made ground deposits which overlaid the bitumen roofing for the structures below. No *in-situ* archaeological features or deposits were encountered. A selection of modern artefacts was recovered from the works, but due to their age and context they were not retained.

## Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank T Coleborn and Sons Ltd, on behalf of Hampshire County Council, for commissioning the archaeological watching brief, in particular Barry Thomas. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful for the advice of Iain Bright of Historic England, who monitored the project, and to George Groves and his team for their cooperation and help on site.



# Fort Nelson Portsdown Hill Road Hampshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project and planning background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by T Coleborn and Son Ltd, on behalf of Hampshire County Council (“the Client”), to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Fort Nelson, Portsdown Hill Road, Fareham, PO17 6AN (**Figure 1**). The monitored works consisted of excavations within the “Redan” rampart, part of the scheduled monument (SM HA 329, HA 1001860), in order to investigate and repair the causes of damp in the brick masonry structure below.

1.1.2 The watching brief was carried out as a condition of scheduled monument consent (SMC), which was granted by Historic England (S00241433) to investigate the cause to the water penetration by undertaking excavation at two locations in order to enact repairs and stop water penetration and subsequent damage to the historic fabric of the structure below:

*Paragraph 3 (b) - No ground works shall take place until the applicant has confirmed in writing the commissioning of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which has been submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State advised by Historic England.*

1.1.3 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) which detailed the aims, methodologies and standards to be employed (Wessex Archaeology 2021a). The Inspector of Ancient Monuments at Historic England (HE) approved the WSI, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (LPA), prior to fieldwork commencing. The watching brief was undertaken between the 15 November and 16 November 2021.

#### 1.2 Scope of the report

1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the results of the watching brief, to interpret the results within their local or regional context (or otherwise), and to assess their potential to address the aims outlined in the WSI, thereby making available information about the archaeological resource (a preservation by record).

#### 1.3 Location, topography and geology

1.3.1 The watching brief was located at Fort Nelson, Portsdown Hill Road, Fareham, PO17 6AN. Fort Nelson is a hilltop fortification with views across Portsmouth Harbour to the south and surrounded by grass chalkland.

1.3.2 Existing ground levels are at 84 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD), having risen from 39 m aOD 100 m to the south.

1.3.3 The underlying geology is mapped as Portsdown Chalk Formation – Chalk, with no overlying Superficial Deposits noted (British Geological Survey accessed November 2021).



## 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 A brief archaeological and historical background of the fort is presented below, taken from <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1350616> (accessed 21 November 2021).

### 2.2 Archaeological and historical context

2.2.1 Fort Nelson is one of five forts along the chalk ridge of Portsdown Hill, built for the defence of Portsmouth against landward attack in the 1860s. They were constructed as part of the same defensive system as three forts in the east entrance of the Solent, and Fort Brockenhurst in Gosport. They are collectively known as Palmerston's Follies, as their purpose was to protect against French invasion, a threat that had passed by the time they were constructed.

2.2.2 Building commenced in 1862 and was completed in 1872. The walls are of brick in English bond with the outer face of the defensive walls being of flint with horizontal and vertical bands of brickwork and a blind arcade at the upper level. The roof is of rammed earth and turf. The structure is partly within and above the natural ridge; a polygonal plan with four vertical faces to the deep dry ditch, a fire step, behind the parapet, and two-storeyed caponiers at the three corners. Within this outer framework is an embankment with open gun emplacements at the top, and a pair of Haxo casemates at the south end of the perimeter. Below the central parade ground there are brick-arched passageways, ammunition stores, staircases to the several parts, and behind the caponiers, sunken embrasures for mortars. The rear (south) of the fort has a high set of barracks surrounding a redan (triangular court), and the south face is a high brick wall, originally protected by the continuous ditch (now infilled). There is an entrance on each side of the central pointed projection, once approached by a drawbridge, having the only architectural feature, comprising a bold Norman doorway of stone with recessed orders.

2.2.3 The fort contains many interesting details of fortification design, and remains virtually unaltered, except for the making of new vehicular entrances when the fort became used as a store. The forts were never attacked, and Fort Nelson became neglected, but is now being restored as a museum.

## 3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### 3.1 Aims

3.1.1 The aims of the watching brief, as stated in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2021) and as defined in the ClfA *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a), were to:

- allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of the development or other works;
- provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard;





- guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits; and
- ensure that all work was undertaken in a manner compliant with the conditions of the SMC.

### **3.2 Objectives**

3.2.1 In order to achieve the above aims, the objectives of the watching brief, also defined in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2021), were to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the specified works area;
- record and establish, within the constraints of the works, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains (a preservation by record);
- place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and
- make available information about the archaeological resource on the site by preparing a report on the results of the watching brief.

## **4 METHODS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the detailed methodology set out within the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2021) and in general compliance with the standards outlined in ClfA guidance (ClfA 2014a). The methods employed are summarised below.

### **4.2 Fieldwork methods**

#### *General*

4.2.1 The watching archaeologist monitored the hand excavation of the two investigation pits to locate the drainage pipes. Where necessary, the surfaces of uncovered archaeological deposits were cleaned by hand to aid visual definition. A sample of archaeological features and deposits was hand-excavated, sufficient to address the aims of the watching brief.

4.2.2 Spoil from machine stripping and hand-excavated archaeological deposits was visually scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval. Artefacts were collected and bagged by context. All artefacts from excavated corrected, although those from features of modern date (20th century or later) were recorded on site and not retained.

#### *Recording*

4.2.3 All exposed archaeological deposits and features were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording system. A complete record of excavated features and deposits was made, including plans and sections drawn to appropriate scales (generally 1:20 or 1:50 for plans and 1:10 for sections) and tied to the Ordnance Survey (OS) National Grid.

4.2.4 A Leica GNSS connected to Leica's SmartNet service surveyed the location of archaeological features. All survey data is recorded in OS National Grid coordinates and



heights above OD (Newlyn), as defined by OSTN15 and OSGM15, with a three-dimensional accuracy of at least 50 mm.

- 4.2.5 A full photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure long term accessibility of the image set.

### 4.3 Finds and environmental strategies

- 4.3.1 Strategies for the recovery, processing and assessment of finds and environmental samples were in line with those detailed in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2021). The treatment of artefacts and environmental remains was in general accordance with: *Guidance for the collection, documentation, conservation and research of archaeological materials* (ClfA 2014b), *Environmental Archaeology: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Methods, from Sampling and Recovery to Post-excavation* (English Heritage 2011) and ClfA's *Toolkit for Specialist Reporting* (Type 1: Description).

### 4.4 Monitoring

- 4.4.1 The Inspector of Ancient Monuments at Historic England monitored the watching brief on behalf of the LPA. Any variations to the WSI, if required to better address the project aims, were agreed in advance with the client and the Inspector of Ancient Monuments at HE.

## 5 STRATIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

### 5.1 Test pit 1

- 5.1.1 Test Pit 1 was located on the south-western section of the Redan rampart (**Figure 2, Plate 1**) and measured 1.67 m by 1.20 m wide. An initial 0.20 m thick deposit of dark greyish brown silty loam topsoil/turf overlaid two made ground deposits. The initial deposit, a dark greyish brown loamy soil was recorded as being 0.20 m deep and which covered the second deposit, a light greyish brown coarse sand which continued to 1.60 m below ground level (bgl). Both deposits contained deposited chalk and flint inclusions as well as ceramic building material (CBM) fragments (**Plate 2**).

- 5.1.2 The bitumen roof of the structure below was encountered at 1.60 m bgl and the current drainage components, 105, were located immediately above, with the drainage pipe set into a gully/rut within roof.

- 5.1.3 The excavated material was reinstated following completion of the repairs (**Plate 3**)

### 5.2 Test pit 2

- 5.2.1 Test Pit 2 was located on the south-eastern section of the rampart, and was slightly smaller than Test Pit 1, measuring 1.10 m by 1 m wide (**Figure 2, Plate 4**). A similar turf/topsoil deposit was initially encountered, although it was noted to only be 0.05 m thick and overlaid a single made ground deposit of mid greyish brown loamy silty clay, which contained abundant chalk and sparse flint inclusions, and occasional CMB fragments (**Plate 5**).

- 5.2.2 The same bitumen roof seen in Test Pit 1 was encountered at a depth of 1.40 m bgl, and the current drainage system was positioned immediately above it in a similar fashion.

- 5.2.3 The excavated material was reinstated following completion of the repairs (**Plate 6**).



## 6 FINDS EVIDENCE

### 6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 A selection of artefacts was recovered from the made ground deposits within both test pits (animal bone, Ceramic Building Material (CBM), a metal object, and a sweet wrapper). Due to their clearly modern date, these were photographed on site but not retained for further analysis.

## 7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE

### 7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 No archaeological deposits suitable for environmental sampling were encountered during the monitored works

## 8 CONCLUSIONS

### 8.1 Summary

- 8.1.1 The archaeological monitoring of the hand excavated test pits only encountered made ground deposits which overlaid the bitumen roofing for the structures below. No in-situ archaeological features or deposits were encountered. A selection of modern artefacts was recovered from the works, but due to their age and context they were photographed but not retained.

### 8.2 Discussion

- 8.2.1 Given that the test pits were located directly above or immediately next to the current drainage system, it was expected to encounter only made ground deposits and disturbance. It is probable that any excavations elsewhere away from these current systems would encounter an intact stratigraphic sequence and/or archaeological features/deposits.

## 9 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION

### 9.1 Museum

- 9.1.1 The archive resulting from the watching brief is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury. Hampshire Cultural Trust has agreed in principle to accept the archive on completion of the project, under the accession code **AY747**. Deposition of any finds with the museum will only be carried out with the full written agreement of the landowner to transfer title of all finds to the museum.

### 9.2 Preparation of the archive

#### *Physical archive*

- 9.2.1 The physical archive, which includes paper records, graphics, artefacts and ecofacts, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Hampshire Cultural Trust, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014c; Brown 2011).
- 9.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the **accession code**, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive currently comprises the following:
- 1 file/document case of paper records

### *Digital archive*

- 9.2.3 The digital archive generated by the project, which comprises born-digital data (eg site records, survey data, databases and spreadsheets, photographs and reports), will be deposited with a Trusted Digital Repository, in this instance the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), to ensure its long-term curation. Digital data will be prepared following ADS guidelines (ADS 2013 and online guidance) and accompanied by metadata.

## **9.3 Selection strategy**

- 9.3.1 It is widely accepted that not all the records and materials (artefacts and ecofacts) collected or created during the course of an archaeological project require preservation in perpetuity. These records and materials will be subject to selection in order to establish what will be retained for long-term curation, with the aim of ensuring that all elements selected to be retained are appropriate to establish the significance of the project and support future research, outreach, engagement, display and learning activities, ie the retained archive should fulfil the requirements of both future researchers and the receiving Museum.
- 9.3.2 The selection strategy, which details the project-specific selection process, is underpinned by national guidelines on selection and retention (Brown 2011, section 4) and generic selection policies (SMA 1993; Wessex Archaeology's internal selection policy) and follows ClfA's 'Toolkit for Selecting Archaeological Archives'. It should be agreed by all stakeholders (Wessex Archaeology's internal specialists, external specialists, local authority, museum) and fully documented in the project archive.
- 9.3.3 In this instance, given the relatively low level of finds recovery, the selection process has been deferred until after the fieldwork stage was completed. Project-specific proposals for selection are presented below. These proposals are based on recommendations by Wessex Archaeology's internal specialists and external specialists and will be updated in line with any further comment by other stakeholders (museum, local authority). The selection strategy will be fully documented in the project archive.
- 9.3.4 Any material not selected for retention may be used for teaching or reference collections by Wessex Archaeology.

### *Documentary records*

- 9.3.5 Paper records comprise site registers (other pro-forma site records are digital), drawings and reports (Written Scheme of Investigation, client report). All will be retained and deposited with the project archive.

### *Digital data*

- 9.3.6 The digital data comprise site records (tablet-recorded on site) in spreadsheet format; finds records in spreadsheet format; survey data; photographs; reports. All will be deposited, although site photographs will be subject to selection to eliminate poor quality and duplicated images, and any others not considered directly relevant to the archaeology of the site.

## **9.4 Security copy**

- 9.4.1 In line with current best practice (eg, Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.



## **9.5 OASIS**

- 9.5.1 An OASIS (online access to the index of archaeological investigations) record (<http://oasis.ac.uk>) has been initiated, with key fields completed (**Appendix 2**). A.pdf version of the final report will be submitted following approval by the Inspector of Ancient Monuments at HE, on behalf of the LPA. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be integrated into the relevant local and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) ArchSearch catalogue.

## **10 COPYRIGHT**

### **10.1 Archive and report copyright**

- 10.1.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative/digital archive relating to the project will be retained by Wessex Archaeology under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The client will be licenced to use each report for the purposes that it was produced in relation to the project as described in the specification. The museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*.
- 10.1.2 Information relating to the project will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) where it can be freely copied without reference to Wessex Archaeology for the purposes of archaeological research or development control within the planning process.

### **10.2 Third party data copyright**

- 10.2.1 This document and the project archive may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (eg, Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which Wessex Archaeology are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferable by Wessex Archaeology. Users remain bound by the conditions of the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of such material.



## REFERENCES

- ADS 2013 *Caring for Digital Data in Archaeology: a guide to good practice*. Archaeology Data Service and Digital Antiquity Guides to Good Practice
- British Geological Survey *Geology of Britain Viewer* <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> (accessed November 2021)
- Brown, D H 2011 *Archaeological Archives: a guide to best practice in creation, compilation, transfer and curation* (revised edition). Archaeological Archives Forum
- CIfA 2014a *Standard and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief* (revised edition June 2020). Reading, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
- CIfA 2014b *Standard and Guidance for the Collection, Documentation, Conservation and Research of Archaeological Materials* (revised edition October 2020). Reading, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
- CIfA 2014c *Standard and Guidance for the Creation, Compilation, Transfer and Deposition of Archaeological Archives* (revised edition June 2020). Reading, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists
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- CIfA *Toolkit for Specialist Reporting* <https://www.archaeologists.net/reporting-toolkit> (accessed November 2021)
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- SMA 1993 *Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections*. Society of Museum Archaeologists
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## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1 Test pit Summaries

NGR coordinates and OD heights taken at centre of each test pit; depth bgl = below ground level

| Test Pit 1        |                     | Length 1.67 m            | Width 1.20 m   | Depth 1.60 m  |
|-------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|--|---------------|
| Easting 460704.78 |                     | Northing 107112.17       |  | 91.26 m OD    |
| Context Number    | Fill Of/Filled With | Interpretative Category  | Description  | Depth BGL     |
| 101               |                     | Topsoil                  | Topsoil / turf. Dark greyish brown loam. Very common rooting. Fairly tight compaction. Common sub-rounded and rounded stones (mostly flint) $\leq 0.03$ m. Sparse CBM fragments. Clear horizon below.                                    | 0 – 0.20 m    |
| 102               |                     | Made ground              | Dark greyish brown loamy soil with abundant chalk pieces $\leq 0.02$ m, moderate flints $\leq 0.06$ m and moderate CBM (mostly broken bricks and tiles). Common rooting. Moderate compaction and friable. Clear horizon above and below. | 0.20 – 0.40 m |
| 103               |                     | Made ground              | Light greyish brown coarse sand. Abundant chalk pieces and blocks $\leq 0.20$ m. Occasional CBM fragments and moderate flints $\leq 0.06$ m. Fairly loose and very friable. Clear horizon above and below.                               | 0.40 – 1.60 m |
| 104               |                     | Roof                     | Bitumen.   | 1.60 m        |
| 105               |                     | Drainage pipes and gully | Group number assigned to current drainage components overlying 104.  | 1.60 m        |

| Trench No 2       |                     | Length 1.10 m           | Width 1 m   | Depth 1.40 m |
|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|---|--------------|
| Easting 460722.44 |                     | Northing 107116.23      |   | 91.27 m OD   |
| Context Number    | Fill Of/Filled With | Interpretative Category | Description   | Depth BGL    |
| 201               |                     | Topsoil                 | Topsoil / turf. Dark greyish brown loam. Very common rooting. Fairly tight compaction. Occasional sub-rounded and rounded stones (mostly flint) $\leq 0.03$ m. Sparse CBM fragments. Clear horizon below. | 0 – 0.05 m   |



|     |  |             |  |               |
|-----|--|-------------|--|---------------|
| 202 |  | Made ground | Mid greyish brown loamy silty clay. Abundant chalk pieces and blocks ≤0.45 m. Occasional CBM fragments and sparse flints ≤0.12 m, one though 0.29 m. Fairly loose and very friable, especially in the lower half. Clear horizon above and below. | 0.05 – 1.40 m |
| 203 |  | Roof        | Bitumen.   | 1.40 m        |
| 204 |  | Drain       | Drainage. Plastic drainage pipe, drainage chamber and drainage gully. Plastic pipe sits on top of the gully on the roof. Plastic pipe covered with large ridge tiles.  | 1.40 m        |





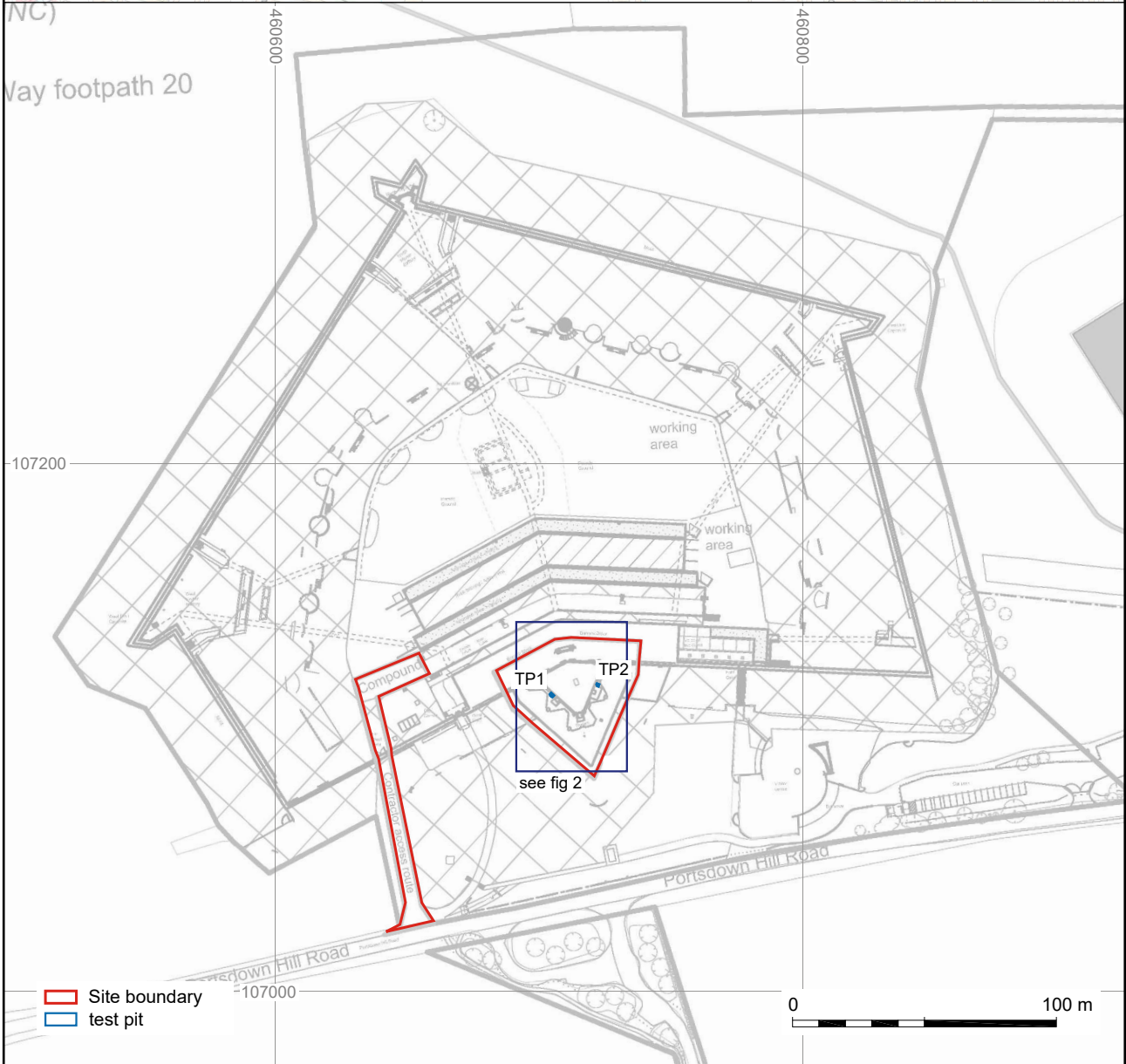
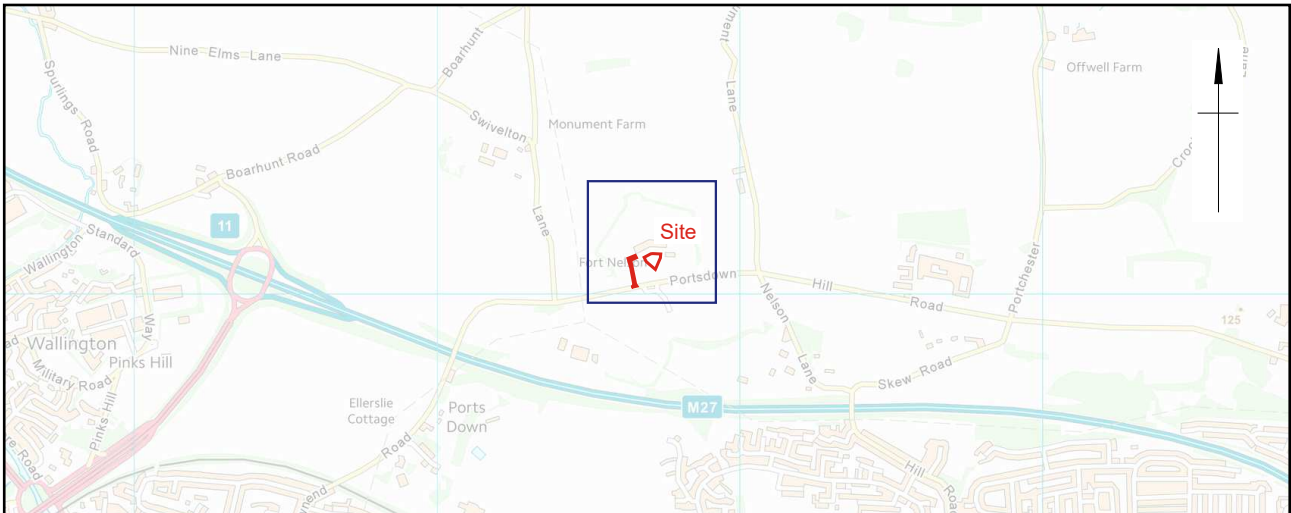
## Appendix 2 OASIS record


|                                   |  |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| OASIS ID (UID)                    | wessexar1-502945   |
| Project Name                      | Fort Nelson, Portsdown Hill Road, Hampshire  |
| Activity type                     | Watching Brief   |
| Project Identifier(s)             | AY747, 256370  |
| Planning Id                       | S00241433  |
| Reason For Investigation          | Scheduled monument consent   |
| Organisation Responsible for work | Wessex Archaeology   |
| Project Dates                     | 15-Nov-2021 - 16-Nov-2021  |
| Location                          | Fort Nelson, Portsdown Hill Road,<br>Hampshire NGR : SU 60705 07170<br>LL : 50.8608619377745, -1.13884689767513<br>12 Fig : 460705,107170  |
| Administrative Areas              | Country :<br>England<br>County :<br>Hampshire  |
| Project Methodology               | <p>Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by T Coleborn and Son Ltd, on behalf of Hampshire County Council, to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Fort Nelson, Portsdown Hill Road, Portchester, Fareham, PO17 6AN. The monitored works consisted of excavations within the "Redan" rampart, part of the scheduled monument (SM HA 329, HA 1001860), in order to enact repairs to defective drainage pipes which were causing damp to penetrate the brick masonry structure below.</p> <p>The watching brief was carried out as a condition of scheduled monument consent (SMC), granted by Historic England (S00241433), to investigate the cause to the water penetration by undertaking excavation at two locations in order to stop water penetration and subsequent damage to the historic fabric of the structure below.</p> |
| Project Results                   | <p>The archaeological monitoring of the hand excavated test pits only encountered made ground deposits which overlaid the bitumen roofing for the structures below. No in-situ archaeological features or deposits were encountered. A selection of modern artefacts were recovered from the works, but due to their age and context were photographed and not retained.</p>   |
| Keywords                          |  |



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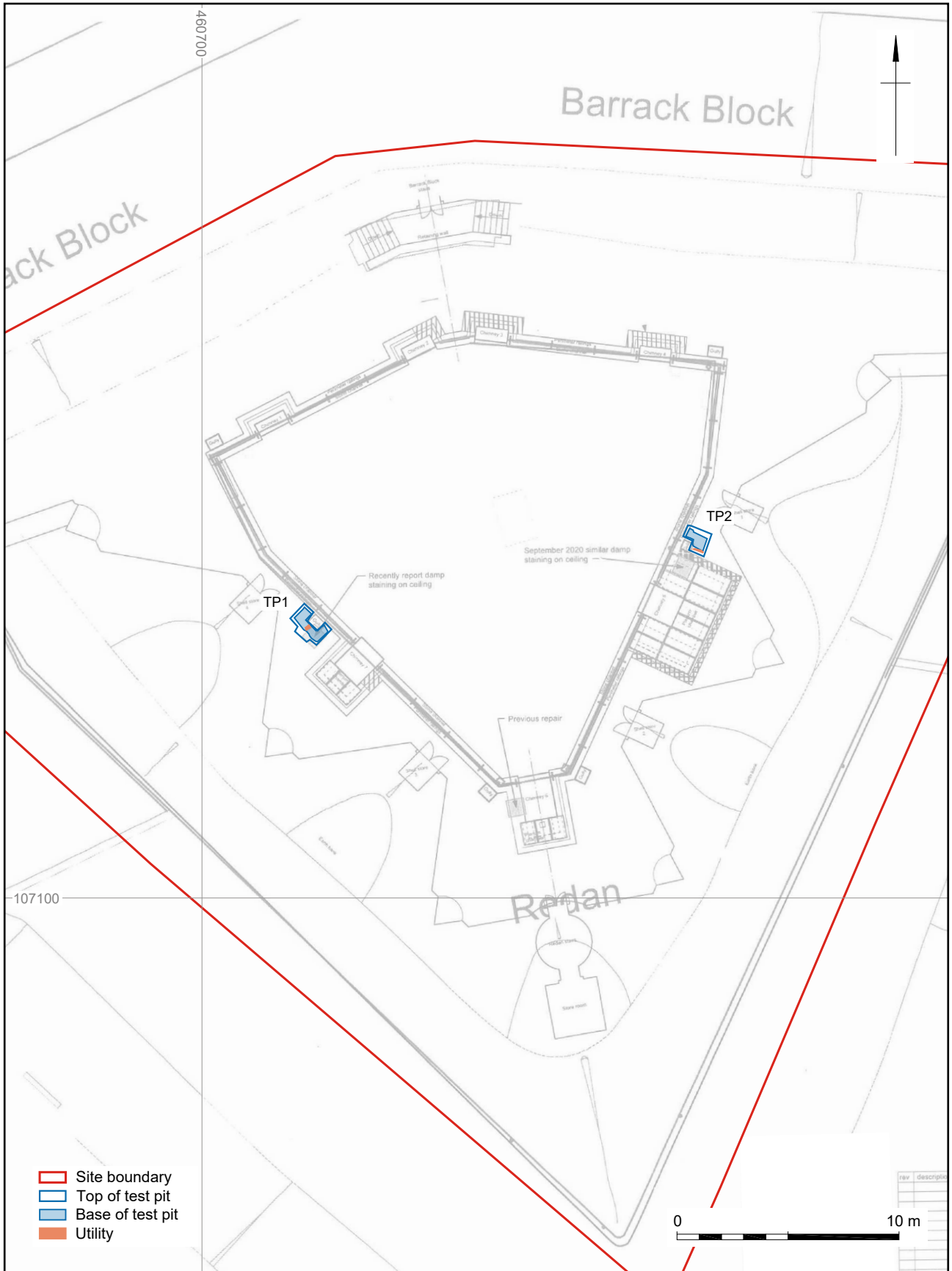
|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| HER             | Historic England review - unRev -<br>STANDARD Winchester HER - unRev -   |
| HER Identifiers | HER Monument No - SM HA 1001860, HER Monument No -<br>SM HA 329  |
| Archives        | Documentary Archive, Digital Archive - to be deposited with<br>Hampshire County Council Arts & Museums Service under the<br>Accession code AY747 |




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|---|--|-----------------------|
|  | Coordinate system: OSGB36  |                       |
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Overall location plan

Figure 1



|   |  |  |                       |
|---|--|--|-----------------------|
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Roof level - Redan roof plan showing test pit locations

Figure 2



Plate 1: Location of test pit 1, viewed from the east



Plate 2: North-west facing section of test pit 1 (2 x 1 m)


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Plate 3: South-east facing section of test pit 1 once backfilled



Plate 4: Location of test pit 2, viewed from the south-east



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Plate 5: North-east facing section of test pit 2 (2 x 1 m)



Plate 6: South-west facing section of test pit 2 once backfilled

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