Former Akzo Nobel Chemical Works, Pier Road, Gillingham, Kent

An Archaeological Evaluation

for CgMs Consulting

by Andy Taylor

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PRG 06/75

July 2006

Summary

Site name: Former Akzo Nobel Chemical Works, Pier Road, Gillingham, Kent

Grid reference: TQ 7790 6945

Site activity: Evaluation

Date and duration of project: 27th June-3rd July 2006

Project manager: Steve Ford

Site supervisor: Andy Taylor

Site code: PRG 06/75

Area of site: *c.* 7.4 hectares

Summary of results: Trenches at the southern end of the site revealed deposits of modern made ground overlying natural geology (variously sands and clays) but no archaeological deposits or finds were observed. More northerly trenches were prone to serious flooding and collapse and revealed made ground overlying alluvium.

Monuments identified: None

Location and reference of archive: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at eth Guildhall Museum, Rochester in due course.

Report edited/checked by:	Steve Ford✓ 14.07.06 Steve Preston✓ 18.07.06

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Former Akzo Nobel Chemical Works, Pier Road
An Archaeological Evaluation

by Andy Taylor

Report 06/75

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out the Former Akzo Nobel Chemical Works, Pier Road, Gillingham, Kent (TQ 7790 6945) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Ms Lorraine Darton, Archaeologist with CgMs Consulting, Morley House, 26 Holborn Viaduct, London, EC1A 2AT on behalf of their client Berkeley Homes (South East London).

Planning consent has been granted by Medway Towns Council for development of the site for housing. The consent is subject to a condition requiring a programme of archaeological investigation designed to permit a strategy to be devised to mitigate the development's effects on any archaeology that might be present.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, Archaeology and Planning (PPG16 1990), and Medway Towns Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification prepared by Ms Darton of CgMs and approved by Mr Simon Mason and monitored by Mr David Britchfield, Archaeological Officers with Kent County Council Heritage Group, advisers to the Council. The fieldwork was undertaken by Andy Taylor and Sue Burden between 27th June and 3rd July 2006 and the site code is PRG06/75. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at the Guildhall Museum, Rochester, in due course.

A desk-top study was carried out by CgMs (Darton and Meager 2005), which highlighted the archaeological potential of the site. In summary the site is located on an area of land that has been known to be higher and drier than its surroundings and the north of the site had potential for archaeological remains to survive below deep alluvial sequences. To the south of the site Roman funerary activity has been identified and to the south-east a possible *mansio* (official inn serving the Roman imperial postal service) has recently been excavated.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on an irregular sub-rectangular plot of land measuring *c.*7.4 hectares. The site is situated on the northern margins of Gillingham and on the north side of Pier Road with the River Medway on the northern boundary of the site (Fig. 2) and is currently occupied by the disused buildings of the former chemical works,

prior to demolition. The underlying geology comprises Thanet Beds overlain by Holocene alluvial deposits (BGS 1977) and the site lies at a height of *c*.5.50m above Ordnance Datum. The northern portion of the site had been reclaimed from the estuary mud flats in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site has been highlighted in a desk-based assessment (Darton and Meager 2005). In summary, at a general level of analysis this potential stems from its location on the margins of the Thames Estuary which is considered as an archaeologically rich location from early prehistoric times, and where archaeological sites are buried by peat or alluvium, can produce well preserved archaeological deposits rich in organic remains in contrast to dry land sites where organic remains have inevitably decayed. (Williams, and Brown 1999).

The southern area of the site is situated on what has been identified as higher and drier ground with the remainder of the site containing deep alluvial sequences, which may seal archaeological deposits. A possible *mansio*, comprising a complex of Roman buildings, burials and mausolea has been identified, and recently excavated, 1.5km to the south-east of the site. There is also the possibility of Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Neolithic remains on the extreme southern area of the site. A possible timber building labelled *Herring-hang* on the 1840 Tithe map may be located to the north of the site (Darton and Meager 2005).

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the presence/absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any archaeological deposits within the area of development. It was proposed to excavate eight trenches varying from 20m to 40m in length, each 2m wide. The trenches were located to avoid areas of upstanding structures and other areas of known high levels of contamination.

A total of eight trenches were dug by a JCB-type machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket (Fig. 3). The trenches measured between 14.50m and 22.40m in length and were positioned as near as possible to their intended positions, although restrictions due to access and a road which needed to be retained resulted in some having to be slightly re-positioned. This repositioning took place in consultation with the monitor and archaeological consultant. All spoilheaps were monitored for finds.

A complete list of trenches giving lengths, breadths, depths and a description of sections and geology is given in Appendix 1.

Results

Trench 1 (Pl. 1)

This trench was 17.0m long and surprisingly only 0.65m deep. It was aligned north north east- south south west and was located towards the south western margins of the site. The stratigraphy was straightforward and comprised made ground (brick rubble) overlying sand with brick and tile pushed in, overlying clean sand which was the natural geology. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were recorded.

Trench 2

This trench was 16.0m long and 2.50m deep. It was aligned west north west - east south east and was also located towards the south western margins of the site. The stratigraphy consisted of Tarmac overlying scalpins overlying brick rubble made ground with large concrete chunks. This in turn overlying a dark grey silty clay containing brick and tile fragments which was found to overlie a clean orange-brown clay which was the natural geology. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were recorded.

Trench 3

This trench was 20.0m long and 3.00m deep. It was aligned north east - south west and was also located towards the south centre of the site. The stratigraphy consisted of concrete overlying brick rubble made ground overlying sand containing brick and tile fragments overlying sand. Although the latter sand contained a high level of contamination, it is most likely to be an outcrop of the natural geology. This trench was located in an area of waterlogging and was prone to collapse. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were recorded.

Trench 4 (Fig. 4)

This trench was 19.20m long and 2.05m deep. It was aligned north east - south west and was located towards the southern margin of the site. The stratigraphy comprised topsoil overlying Tarmac overlying scalpins overlying brick rubble made ground. This overlay a buried topsoil which overlay a clean orange-brown clay which was the natural geology. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were recorded.

Trench 5

This trench was 20.00m long and 1.40m deep. It was aligned east - west and was located towards the southern margin of the site. The stratigraphy consisted of Tarmac overlying brick rubble made ground overlying concrete overlying a greeny grey sandy silt which was the natural geology. A test pit was dug at the west end of the trench to a depth of 3.0m to confirm this interpretation and revealed that at further depth the natural geology became a mid grey silty sand No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were recorded.

Trench 6

This trench was 19.50m long and 1.52m deep. It was aligned north north east - south south west and was located towards the eastern margin of the site. The stratigraphy consisted of concrete overlying made ground overlying a mid grey brown clay containing concrete. As with Trench 3, this trench encountered an area of standing water and repeatedly collapsed making further investigation impossible and the natural geology was not encountered. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were recorded.

Trench 7 (Pl. 2)

This trench was 14.50m long and 1.70m deep. It was aligned north north east - south south west and was located towards the south eastern margin of the site. The stratigraphy in trench 7 comprised pebbles and brick rubble overlying concrete and brick and tile made ground overlying a clean orange-brown clay which was the natural geology. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were recorded.

Trench 8

This trench was 22.40m long and 1.83m deep. It was aligned north west - south east and was the most northerly of the evaluation trenches located towards the centre of the site. The stratigraphy consisted of a chalky made ground overlying a dark grey/black made ground containing brick and tile. This overlay a grey/brown silty clay interpreted as alluvium. Rapid ingress of water and collapse of the trench sides prevented investigation below this level. No deposits or finds of archaeological interest were recorded.

Finds

No finds of archaeological interest were retrieved during the course of the evaluation.

Conclusion

Despite the apparent archaeological potential of the site no features or finds of any archaeological interest were observed during the evaluation. Trenches at the southern end of the site revealed largely *in-situ* natural geology comprising sand and clay beneath variable thicknesses of made ground. The more northerly trenches were dug in areas with deeper made ground and were found to be waterlogged, with rapid ingress of water and collapse of the trench sides. The most northerly of the evaluation trenches revealed alluvium beneath nearly 2m of made ground. Whilst it is possible for *in-situ* archaeological deposits to be present below the alluvium, it is suggested that the great thickness of overlying made ground is probably sufficient to encompass the majority of the foundation groundworks of the proposed new development, which should not therefore threaten any deposits of archaeological interest that might be present.

References

BGS, 1977, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 272, Drift Edition, Keyworth

Darton, L and Meager, R, 2005, 'Archaeological Desk Based Study and Impact Assessment; Former Akzo Nobel Chemical Works, Pier Road, Gillingham, Kent', CgMs Consultancy, London

PPG16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

Williams, J and Brown, N (eds), 1999, *An Archaeological Research Framework for the Greater Thames Estuary*, Chelmsford

APPENDIX 1: Trench details
0m at S or W end

Trench No.	*Length (m)*	*Breadth (m)*	*Depth (m)*	*Comment*
1	17.00	1.60	0.65	0.00m-0.51m made ground; 0.51m-0.60m sand with brick and tile pushed in; 0.60m+ sand natural geology (4.83m AOD). **[Plate 1]**
2	16.00	1.60	2.50	0.00m-0.20m Tarmac; 0.20m-0.46m scalpins; 0.46m-1.80m made ground; 1.80m-2.45m dark grey silty clay; 2.45m+ clay natural geology (2.98m AOD).
3	20.00	1.60	3.00	0.00m-0.25m concrete; 0.25m-0.65m made ground; 0.65m-0.80m sand with brick and tile; 0.80m+ contaminated sand natural geology (4.83m AOD).
4	19.20	1.60	2.05	0.00m-0.63m topsoil; 0.63m-0.70m Tarmac; 0.70m-0.96m scalpins; 0.96m-1.36m made ground; 1.36m-1.84m buried topsoil; 1.84m+ sandy clay natural geology (3.32m AOD)
5	20.00	1.60	1.40	0.00m-0.10m Tarmac; 0.10m-0.50m made ground; 0.50m-0.90m concrete; 0.90m+ greeny grey sandy silt natural geology (4.26m AOD). Test pit at W end 3.00m revealed a mid grey silty sand below 2.00m.
6	19.50	1.60	1.52	0.00m-0.15m concrete; 0.15m-0.81m made ground; 0.81m-1.52m mid brown clay containing concrete and brick and tile. No natural geology exposed due to excessive collapse and flooding.
7	14.50	1.60	1.70	0.00m-0.53m pebbles and brick rubble; 0.53m-1.70m made ground; 1.70m-+ clay natural geology (3.83m AOD). (Test pit at NE end to 2.4m). **[Plate 2]**
8	22.40	1.60	1.83	0.00m-0.93m chalky made ground; 0.93m-1.75m dark grey/black made ground; 1.75m-1.83m alluvium (3.75m AOD). No natural geology exposed due to excessive collapse and flooding.

APPENDIX 2: Kent County Council SMR summary form

Site address: Former Akzo Nobel Chemical Works, Pier Road, Gillingham, Kent

Summary: Trenches at the southern end of the site revealed deposits of modern made ground overlying natural geology (variously sands and clays) but no archaeological deposits or finds were observed. More northerly trenches were prone to serious flooding and collapse and revealed made ground overlying alluvium.

District/Unitary: Medway Towns **Parish:** Gillingham

Periods: Modern only

NGR: TQ 7790 6945

Type of archaeological work: Evaluation

Date of Recording: 27th June-3rd July 2006

Unit undertaking recording: Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

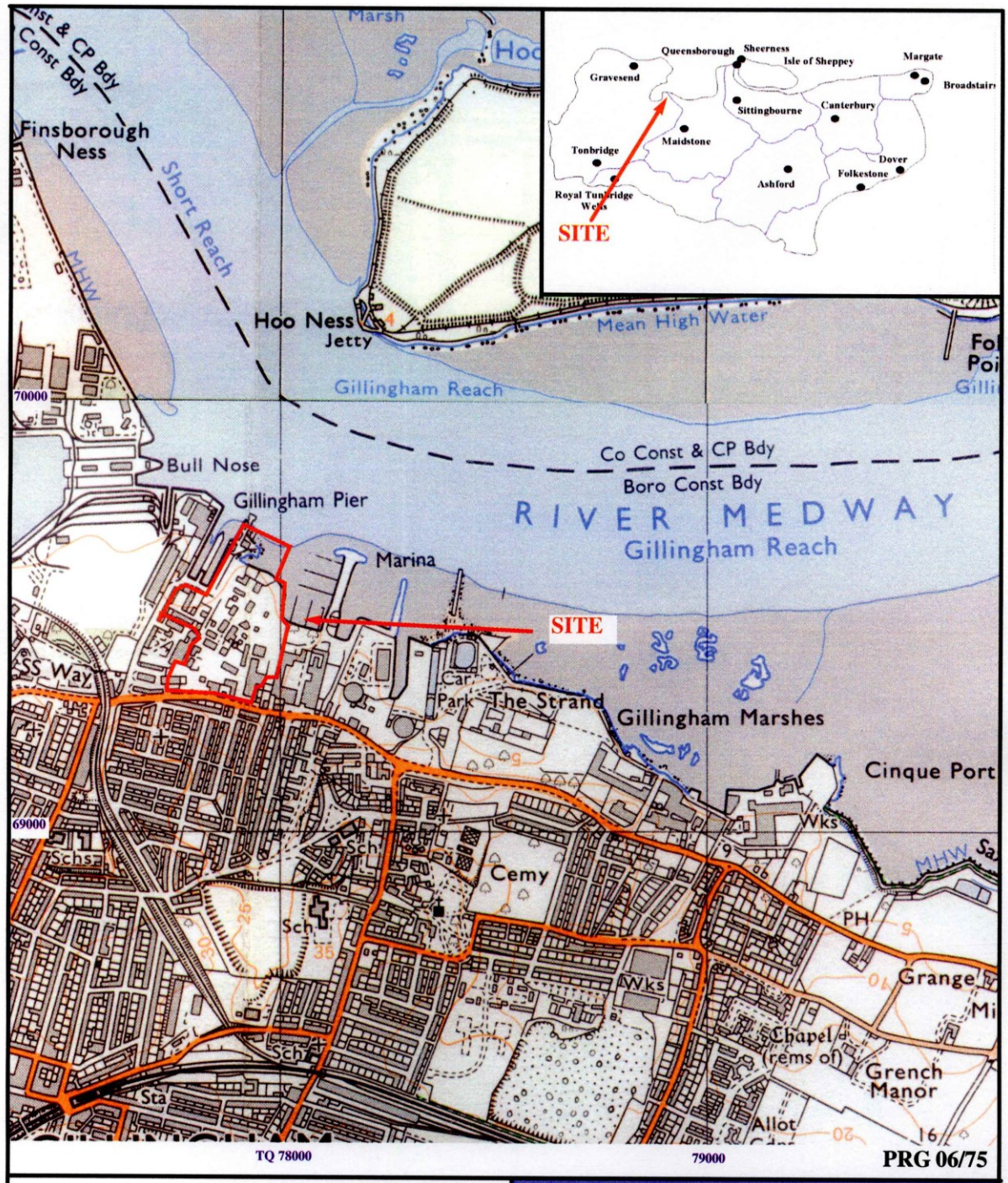
Geology: Thanet Sands and alluvium

Title and author: Former Akzo Nobel Chemical Works, Pier Road, Gillingham, Kent Archaeological Evaluation, by Andy Taylor

Summary of results by period Modern made ground only

Location of archive and finds: The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, RG1 5NR and will be deposited at the Guildhall Museum, Rochester in due course.

Contact at Unit: Steve Ford **Date:** 17.07.2006



Former Akzo Nobel Chemical Works, Pier Road, Gillingham, Kent, 2006
An archaeological evaluation

Figure 1. Location of site within Gillingham and Kent.

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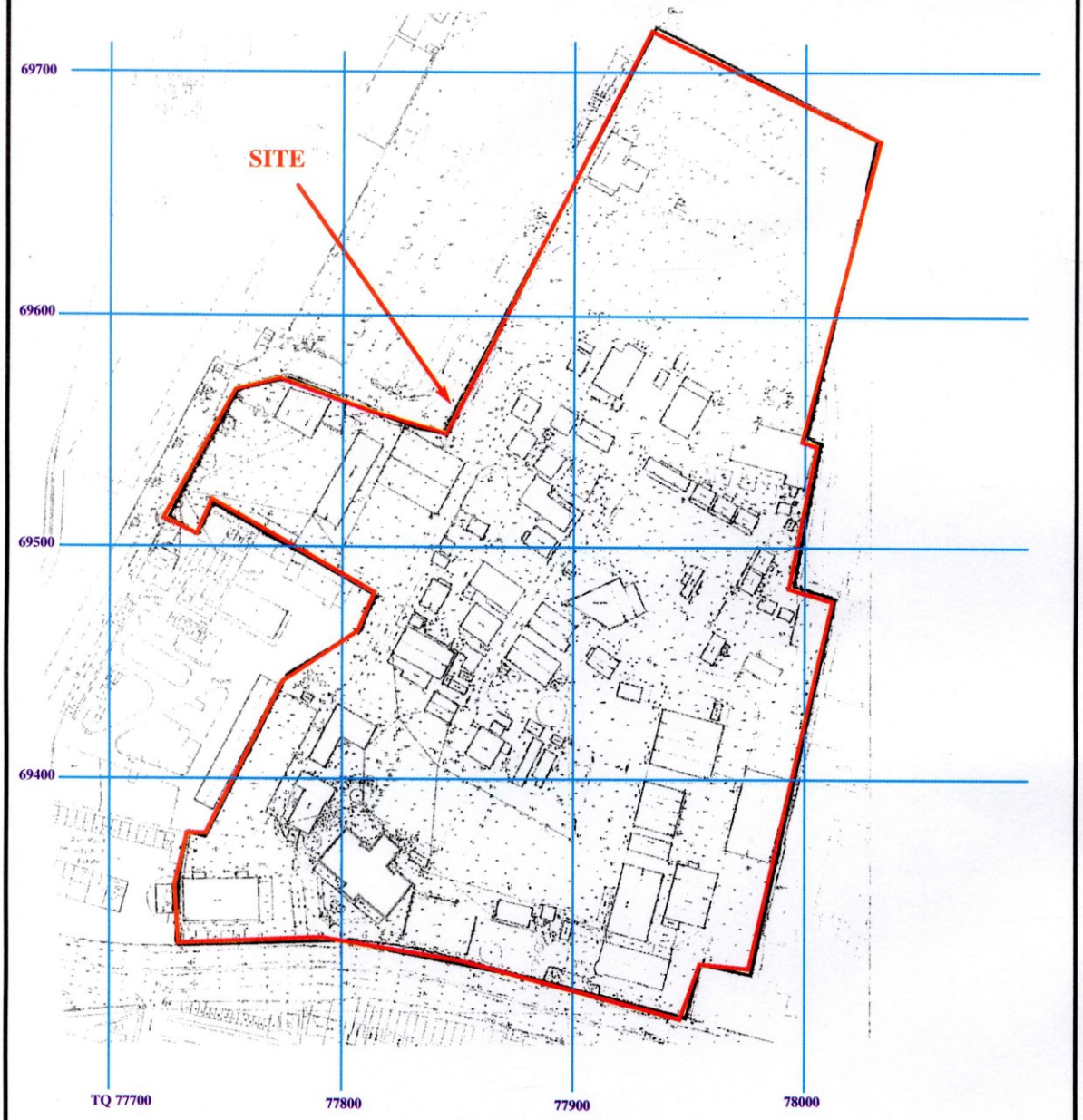

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Figure 2. Detailed location of site on Pier Road.

Reproduced from Site Survey at 1:1250

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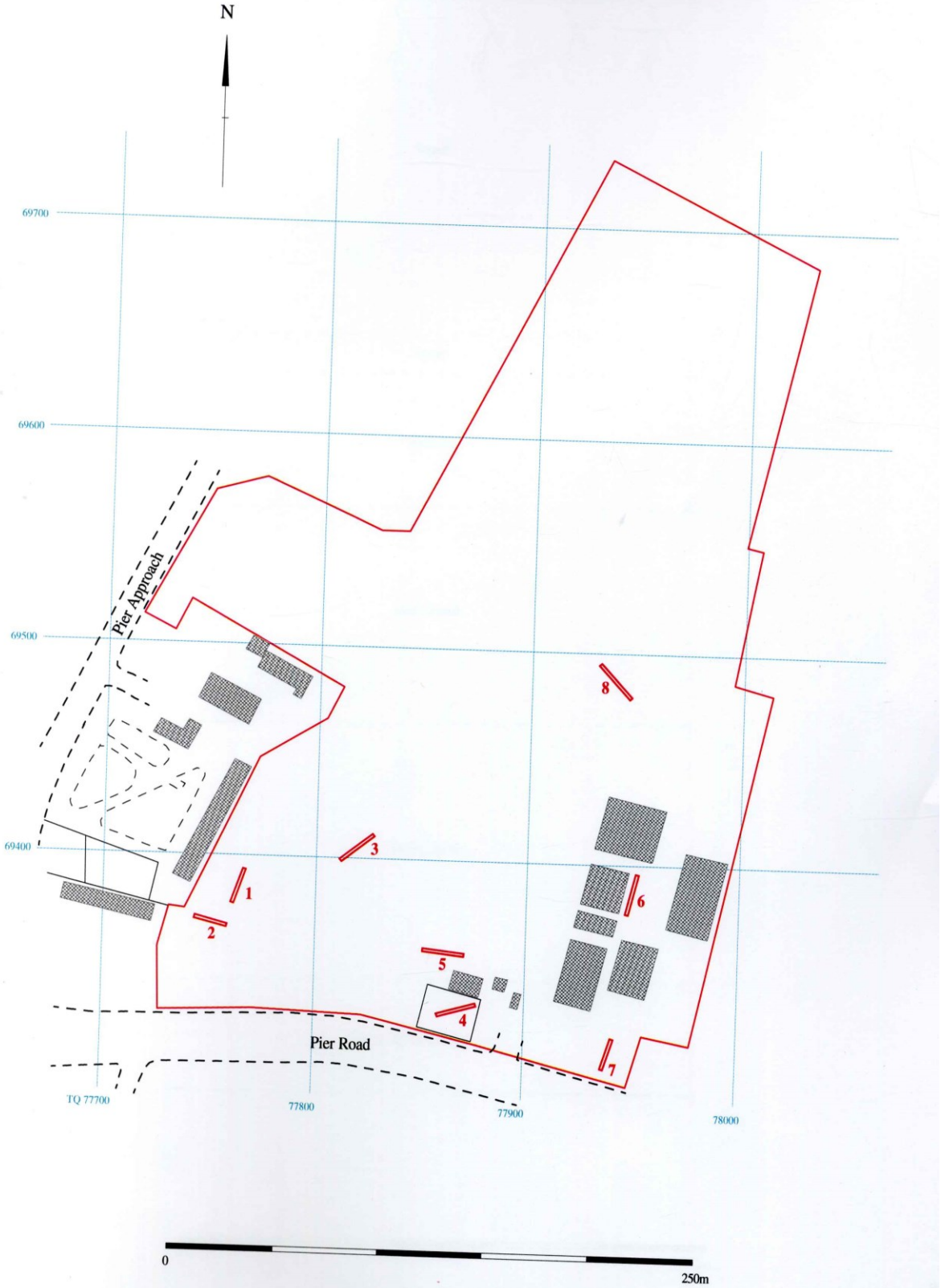

Figure 3: Trench Locations

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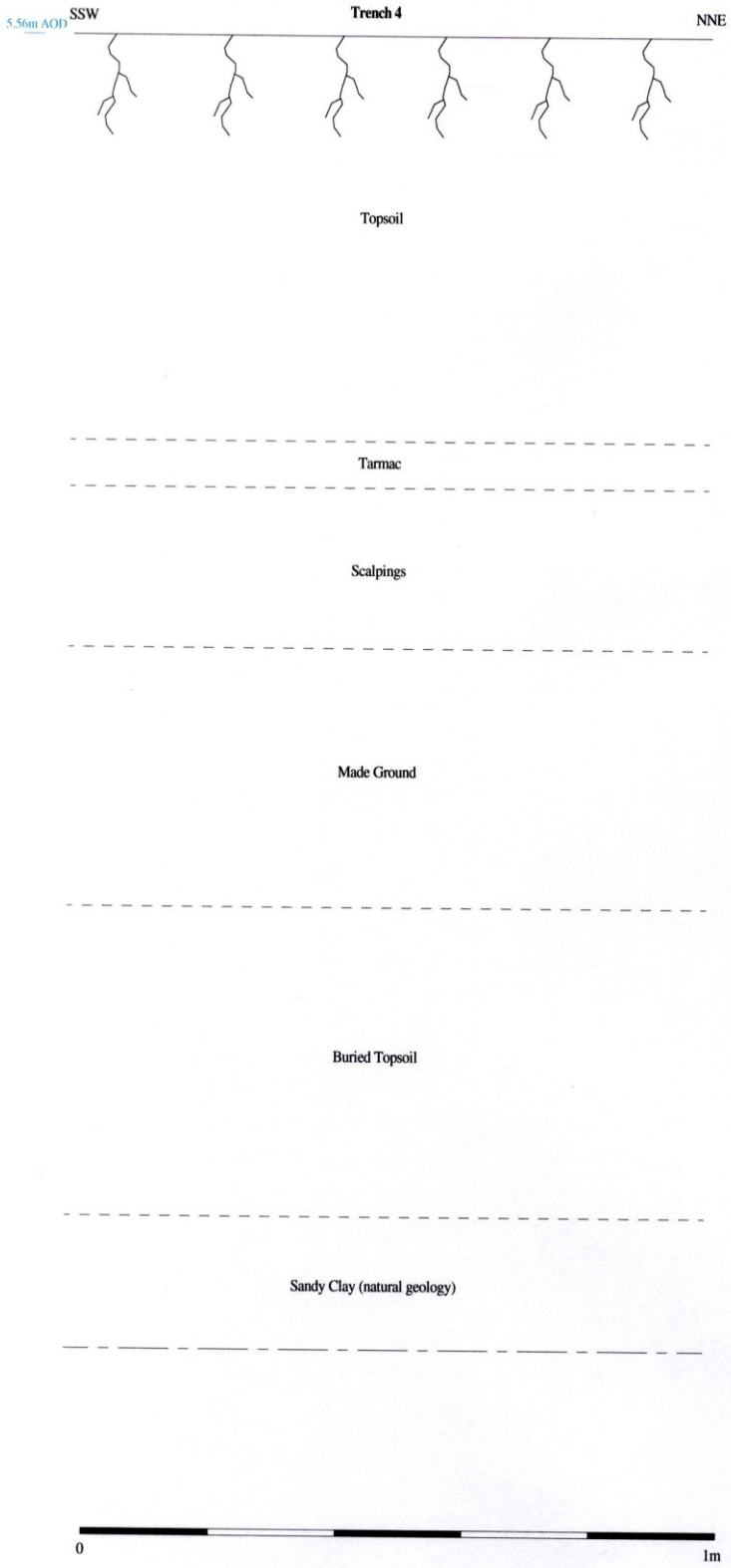

Figure 4: Representative Section

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Plate 1. Trench 1, looking south, scales 2m, 1m.

Plate 2. Trench 7, looking north, scales, 2m, 1m.

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