

**Former Barn, Pincents Manor Hotel, Pincents Lane,
Tilehurst, West Berkshire**

An Archaeological Watching Brief

For Mr M Webb

by Jennifer Lowe

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PMH08/105

January 2009

Summary

Site name: Former Barn, Pincents Manor Hotel, Pincents Lane, Tilehurst, West Berkshire

Grid reference: SU 6515 7216

Site activity: Watching Brief

Date and duration of project: 15th September–16th October 2008

Project manager: Jennifer Lowe

Site supervisor: Jennifer Lowe

Site code: PMH08/105

Summary of results: No archaeological finds or features were recorded during the course of the watching brief

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

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Former Barn, Pincents Manor Hotel, Pincents Lane, Tilehurst, West Berkshire An Archaeological Watching Brief

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Report 08/105

Introduction

This report documents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out at Pincents Manor Hotel, Pincents Lane, Tilehurst, West Berkshire (SU6515 7216) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Michael Whiteway of Michael Whiteway Construction and Development Consultant, Lime Tree Cottage, New Lane, Hill, Tilehurst, Reading, RG30 4JJ, on behalf of Mr M Webb, Pincents Manor Hotel, Pincents Lane, Tilehurst, West Berkshire, RG31 4UQ.

Planning consent (app no 07/01426/FUL) and listed building consent (07/01427/LBC) have been granted by West Berkshire Council to construct a replacement structure on the site of the former barn (which burnt down) at Pincents Manor Hotel. The consents are subject to a condition which requires an archaeological watching brief to be carried out during the groundworks for the new barn.

This is in accordance with the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance, *Archaeology and Planning* (PPG16 1990), and the Council's policies on archaeology. The field investigation was carried out to a specification approved by Mr Duncan Coe, the West Berkshire Archaeological Officer. The fieldwork was undertaken by Simon Cass, James Lewis, Jennifer Lowe and Danielle Milbank, between 15th September 2008 and 16th October 2008 and the site code is PMH08/105.

The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited at West Berkshire Museum in due course.

Location, topography and geology

The site is located on the western fringes of Reading, in the suburb of Tilehurst (Fig 2). The site itself is in a more remote location away from the residential properties of Tilehurst but close to an area of commercial use. Pincents Manor Hotel is situated on the western side of Pincents Lane with the new barn located immediately adjacent to the hotel. According to the British Geological Survey (BGS) the underlying geology is Reading Beds, and a clean light orange sand was observed in the foundation trenches. The site lies at a height of approximately 64m above Ordnance Datum.

Archaeological background

The archaeological potential of the site stems from its location on the site of an early post-medieval farm complex. The farm site is recorded on Rocque's map of Berkshire (1761) and is thought likely to indicate an earlier (medieval) manorial centre (Lobb and Rose 1996, fig. 19). A modest range of sites and finds of other periods is recorded for the immediate environs of the site, and a wide range of sites and deposits of many periods are recorded more generally for the gravel terrace of the Kennet Valley to the west.

Objectives and methodology

The purpose of the watching brief was to excavate and record any archaeological deposits affected by the new construction work. In general this was to involve examination of areas of topsoil stripping, landscaping, ground reduction and the digging of trenches for foundations and services as necessary.

A range of archaeological research topics could potentially be addressed on the site. For instance there is a possibility that deposits relating to the former barn, such as floors, drains and other features relating to its use, may be identified. Similarly, features relating to its construction such as foundation pads, beam slots or post holes may also be recorded, as well as dating evidence for the earlier components of the barn. Equally there is the possibility that features not relating to the former structure could be recorded, including evidence of the postulated medieval manorial site. This could take the form of rubbish pits, occupation deposits (floors, walls, etc) or boundary features such as ditches or gullies. Both artefacts and stratigraphy could be used to provide a chronological framework for the site, from which further research topics such as the nature of the site, its subsistence, its external links and status might be investigated.

Results

Slab removal

The initial work on site involved the breaking out of the concrete slab (*c.* 0.2m thick) from the former barn on site. Once the slab had been removed, the sub-surface was inspected but no natural or archaeological deposits were evident.

Geotechnical test pit

A small test pit was dug to establish the depth of the natural geology (Fig. 3). The test pit was 1.60m by 1.60m and 1m deep. The stratigraphy revealed comprised 0.10m of demolition rubble overlying 0.30m of a redeposited

orange brown sand which contained small fragments of brick. This in turn overlay natural clean orange yellow sand natural. No archaeological finds or deposits were revealed.

Foundation trenches

The excavation of the foundation trenches was monitored on several occasions (Fig. 3). Excavation took place without any further ground reduction below that of the previous floor slab. The trenches were typically found to be 0.80–0.90m wide and varied in depth from 1m to 1.23m deep. A zone for a stair well and lift pit at the north-eastern end of the new structure required a wider excavation (Fig. 3). The stratigraphy observed in the foundation trenches comprised 0.57m of made ground overlying a yellow orange sand natural (Fig. 4). A late post-medieval brick built soakaway was observed in the north-western corner of the foundation plot (Fig. 3). The structure was approximately 1.5m in diameter and was observed to a depth of 2.60m. No archaeological finds or features were recorded in the foundation trenches.

Finds

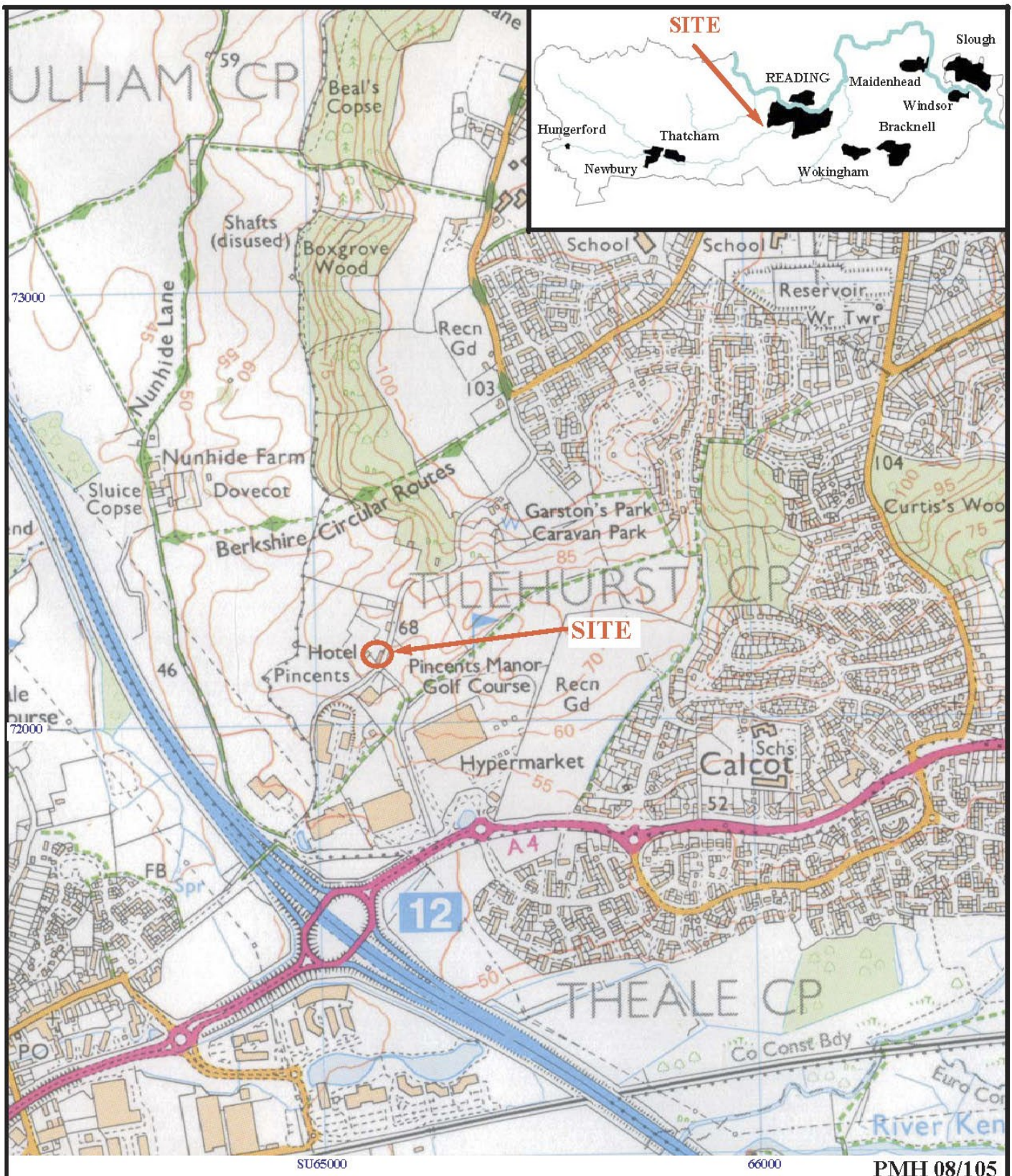
No archaeological finds were recovered during the course of the watching brief.

Conclusion

No archaeological deposits relating to the medieval manor or post-medieval farm were recorded during the course of the watching brief. The stratigraphy observed, comprised modern made ground overlying the natural geology which suggests that some truncation had occurred on the site, possibly when the modern floor (concrete slab) was laid within the former barn. This truncation may have destroyed shallower features such as floors and drains associated with the original barn. However deeper features such as medieval pits or ditches would have survived such a degree of truncation, so that their absence may suggest that no medieval or earlier activity was present within the area examined on site.

References

- BGS, 1946, *British Geological Survey*, 1:50000, Sheet 268, Drift Edition, Keyworth
Lobb, S, J and Rose, P, G, 1996, *Archaeological survey of the Lower Kennet Valley, Berkshire, Wessex*
Archaeol Rep 9, Salisbury
PPG 16, 1990, *Archaeology and Planning*, Dept of the Environment Planning Policy Guidance 16, HMSO

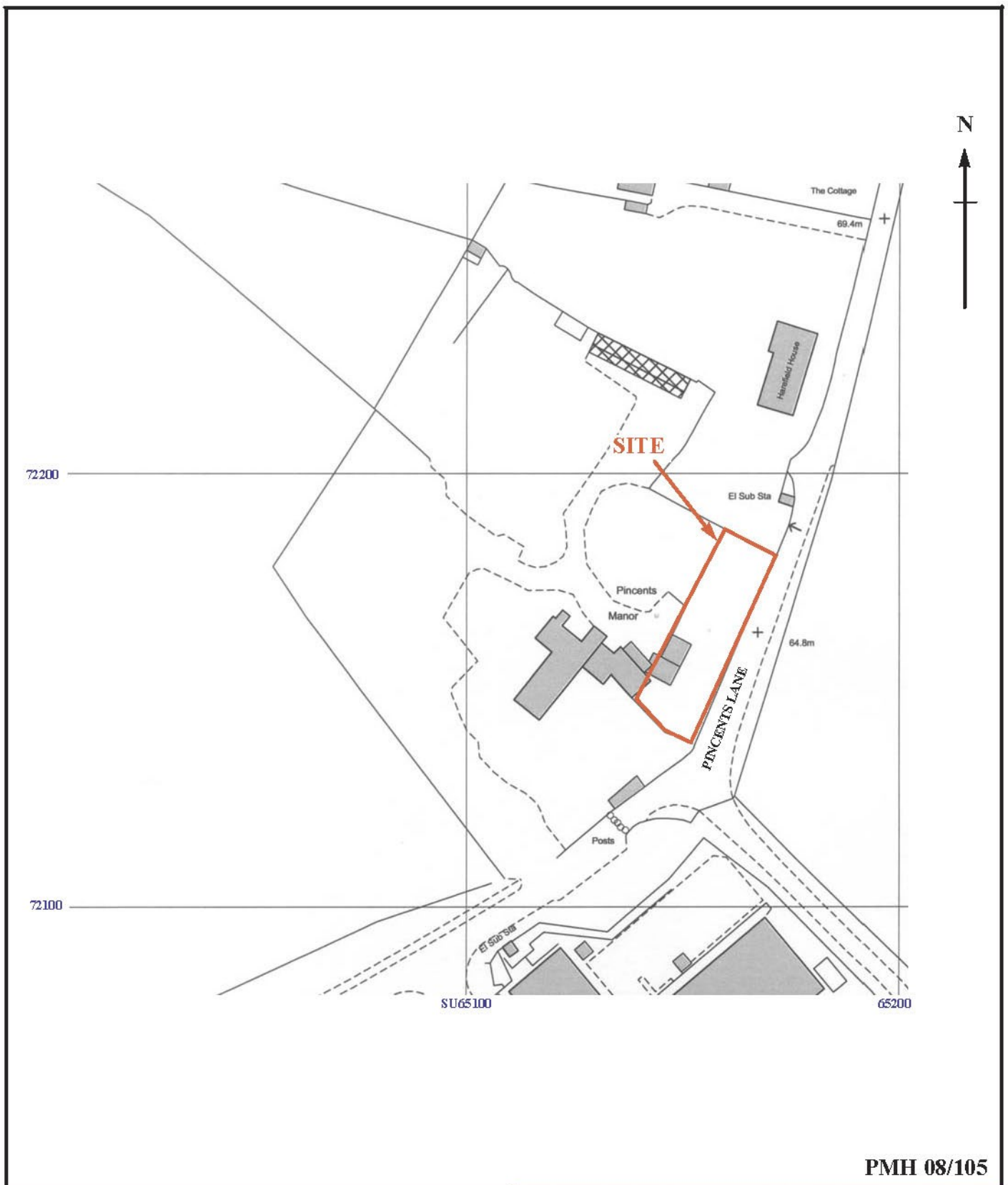


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Figure 1. Location of site in relation to Tilehurst and within Berkshire.

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Figure 2. Location of site off Pincents Lane.

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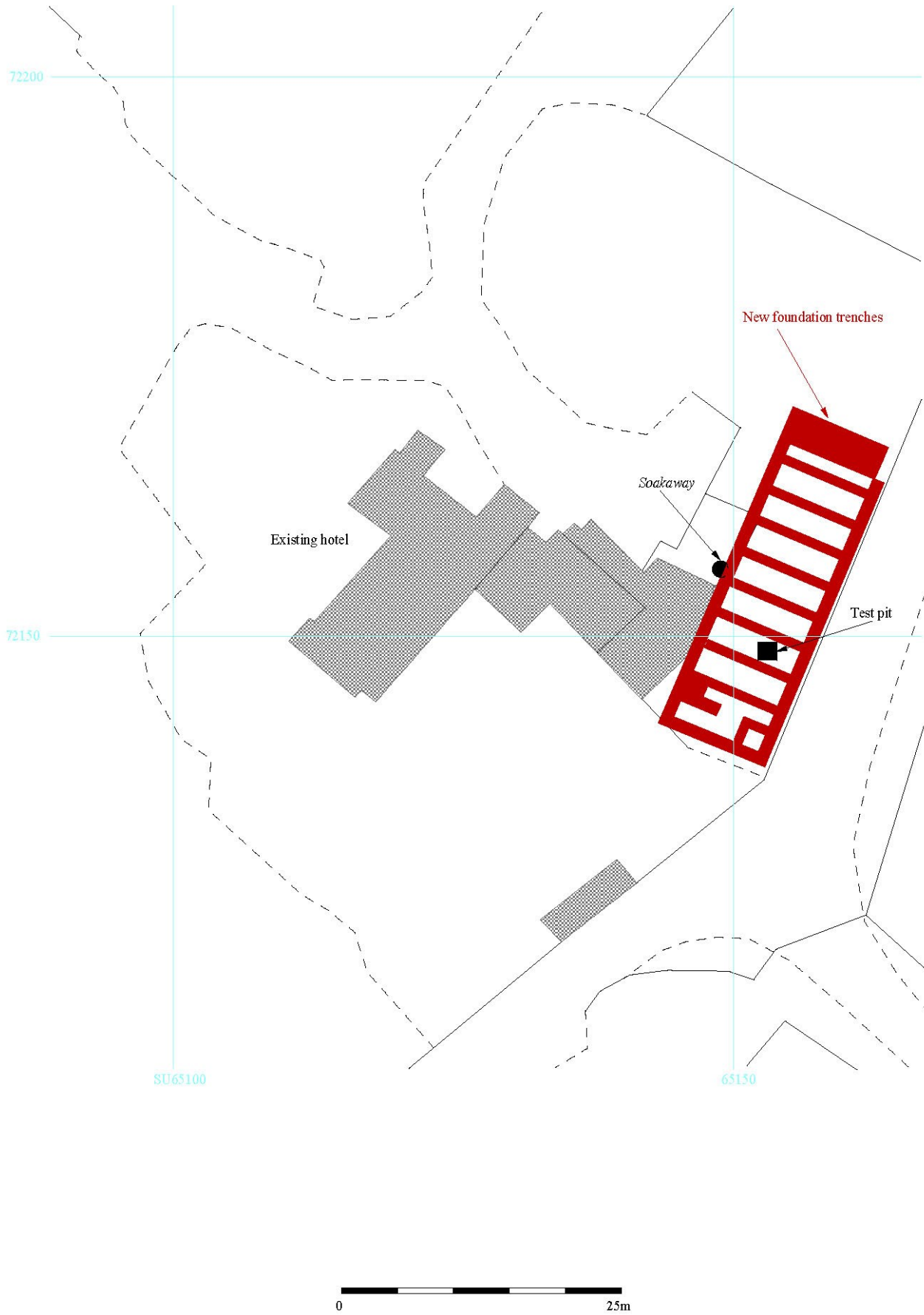


Figure 3. Location of areas observed in watching brief.

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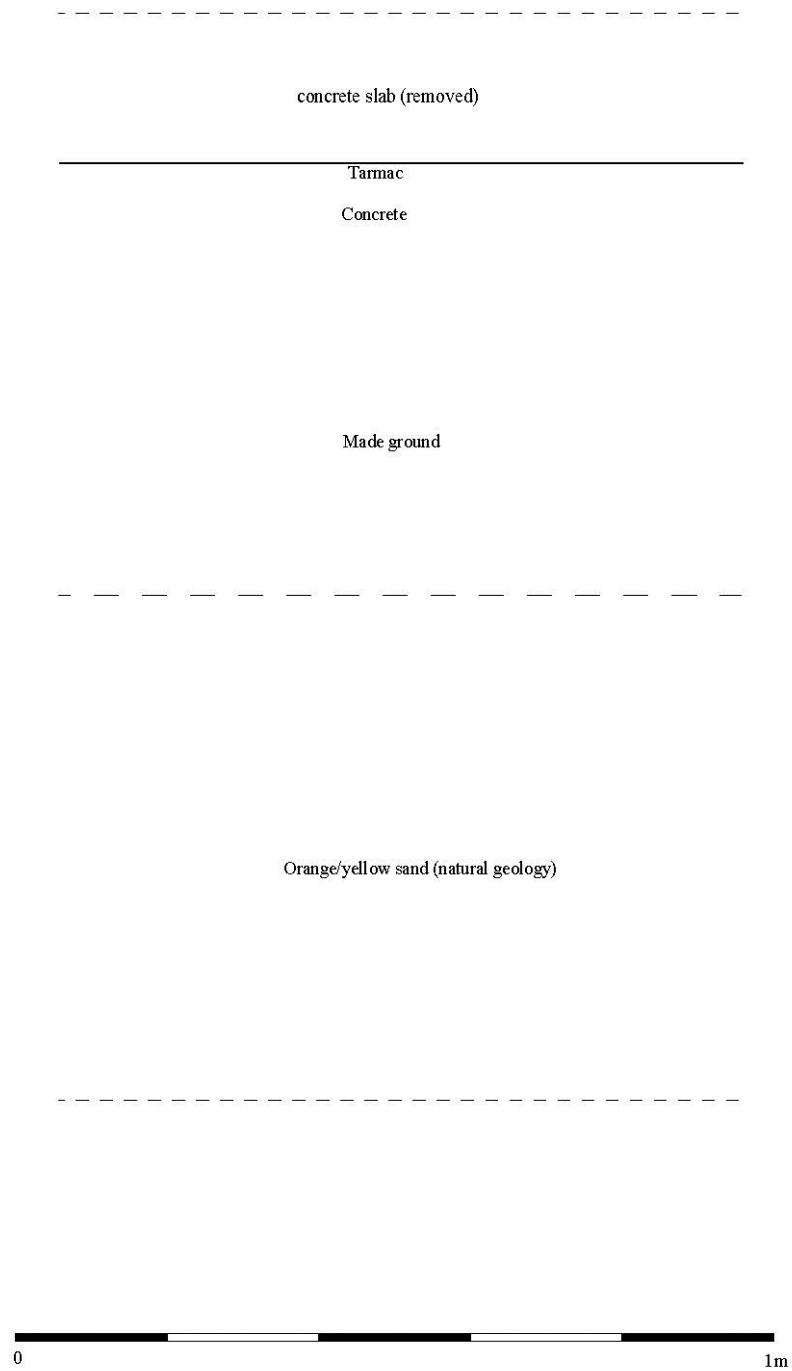


Figure 4. Representative section of footing trenches.