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**Ailsa Lodge, Erskine Ferry Road,
Bishopton**

**Archaeological Watching Brief
Report No. 1596**

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 General

- 1.1.1 This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd (CFA) in January 2009 at Ailsa Lodge Care Home, Erskine Ferry Road, Bishopton, Renfrewshire (NGR: NS 4475 7195) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Argus Construction Ltd.
- 1.1.2 The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the watching brief were based on a verbal brief developed during consultations with West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS). The ToR was designed to fulfil the requirements of Renfrewshire Council as advised by WoSAS.

1.2 Background

- 1.2.1 Planning permission has been granted by Renfrewshire Council (ref 05/0394/PP and 05/0462/LB) for an extension to Ailsa Lodge Care Home, Bishopton subject to a condition requiring an archaeological watching brief. The property is to be extended to the east to provide further residential accommodation.
- 1.2.2 Prior to the commencement of work, the proposed development area comprised two annexes constructed in sandstone block-work with pitched slate roofs, which were attached to the east-facing gable end of the main building. The remainder of the proposed development area was grassed and landscaped. To the south, the site was bordered by a car park which immediately fronts onto the B815. To the east, Ailsa Lodge was enclosed by high garden walls, which bound a lawn to the north and east. Immediately to the west were the upstanding buildings that comprise Ailsa Lodge (Fig. 2). Prior to groundworks commencing the eastern annexe was demolished to ground level (Fig. 6)
- 1.2.3 Ailsa Lodge is a former Church of Scotland manse and is C(s) Listed (HB No. 10893). The present building dates to the mid-19th century, and is a 2-storey building constructed in L-plan. It is believed that the incumbent of Erskine Parish lived in a building on this spot after Paisley Presbytery was set up in 1590. The site is also thought to lie close to a 7th century river crossing on the way to Iona.
- 1.2.4 The close proximity of the Erskine Parish Church and its graveyard meant there was significant potential for features connected to ecclesiastical activity on the site to be uncovered. It was also possible this may have included the recovery of human remains.
- 1.2.5 Old Erskine Parish Church is thought to date to the late medieval period and is believed to have stood to the east of the present church. Having become ruinous, it was pulled down in 1813. Two separate enclosures depicted on Roy's map (04/8f) might represent the church and manse and an enclosing hachured feature might represent a ditch. Map regression work suggests that

an even earlier church may have stood to the east of this one, possibly on the site of Ailsa Lodge.

- 1.2.6 Although no previous invasive archaeological fieldwork is known to have taken place within the development site, a watching brief was conducted on groundworks for the construction of the west wing (Kirby 2006). The previous watching brief uncovered a north-south orientated ditch with a width of c.1.8m and a maximum depth of 0.9m. The preferred interpretation of this feature was that it might represent a Vallum surrounding an earlier church that may have stood on the site of Ailsa Lodge during the Early Christian period.

1.3 Objectives

- 1.3.1 The aims of the watching brief were to determine the location, character, extent and quality of any features or objects of archaeological importance that may survive within the application area, and which may be damaged or destroyed by this development.

2. WORKING METHODS

- 2.1 CFA Archaeology Ltd follows the Institute of Field Archaeologists' Code of Conduct, Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs.
- 2.2 The foundations of the extension measured 23m east-west by 8m north-south, and were excavated as two parallel east-west orientated trenches, conjoined at the eastern end by two perpendicular trenches running north-south.
- 2.3 The excavation of the foundation trenches was carried out using a 360° tracked excavator under constant archaeological supervision. The sections of all trenches were cleaned and checked for archaeological features.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

- 3.1 Numbers in bold and parentheses refer to contexts, a list of which is contained in Appendix 1. All references to individual features within trenches are prefixed by the letter **T** to denote the trench location (Fig. 2).
- 3.2 Two east-west orientated foundation trenches (**T1 – T2**) were excavated. These trenches were linked at the eastern end of the building footprint by two north-south orientated foundation trenches (**T3** and **T4**).
- 3.3 The overlying deposit across the site was a friable, greyish-mid brown silty topsoil (**01**), c. 0.3m in depth, with common inclusions of fragmented and crushed sandstone and mixed gravels. The deposit was occasionally interspersed by fragments of glass, slate and a mix of 19th century pottery.

- 3.4 The underlying natural deposits (**02** & **03**) consisted of firm greyish-purple clay and friable, fine-medium sand with iron pan and angular stone fragments occasionally seen. Both deposits were recorded at depths of >0.4m.
- 3.5 The watching brief noted a number of modern, north-south orientated services running across the site.

Trench 1

- 3.6 Two features were located in **T1**, these were the probable remains of a garden wall (**04**) (Fig. 3) and the foundations of the recently demolished eastern annexe (**05**) (Fig. 5 & 6).
- 3.7 Feature **04** (Fig 2 & 3) was observed as two uneven and irregular courses of sandstone cobbles and boulders constructed in a drystone style. The individual stone size and angularity varied considerably, with the largest example recorded measuring 0.4 by 0.25m. The excavation of **T1** had, in its position, respected the south-facing elevation of **04**, presenting a neat face/elevation of stonework within the trench. The feature measured c. 6.6m east-west and measured on average 0.3m in depth. No dating evidence was recovered.
- 3.8 The preferred interpretation is that this is the remains of a garden wall which probably dates to activity around the manse during the mid-19th century or later. It is worth noting that the surrounding, upstanding walls to the north and east were composed of comparable stonework and constructed in a similar style.
- 3.9 Towards the western end of **T1**, the remains of the fragmented and shattered sandstone foundations (**05**) (Fig 2 & 5) which supported the recently demolished eastern annexe were observed. These remains continued east-west and beyond the excavated depth of 0.8m, which was the limit of excavation in this area. Foundation **05** was also visible in the north-facing section of **T1**, which coincided, as expected, with the former building's east-facing gable. In short, masonry foundation **05** correlates precisely with the footprint of the annexe, prior to its recent alteration and demolition, and is therefore broadly dated to the mid-19th century or later.

Trench 2

- 3.10 The remains of a masonry foundation structure (**06**), 0.9m wide by >1m north-south, were identified in **T2** (Fig. 4). This masonry consisted of shattered, angular sandstone fragments, bonded by a strong, pinkish grey, coarse mortar with common gravel inclusions. The structure (**06**) was located 0.7m below the present ground surface and survived to a maximum height of 0.3m. Section evidence showed **06** had probably been truncated to its recorded height by the cut for a salt-glazed drainpipe. It is unclear whether this structure was demolished to its recorded height in order to incorporate the drainpipe, or whether the structure had already been partially demolished before the pipe was inserted. A large fragment of ornate sandstone cornice had been reused within the fabric of the masonry; this stone came from the exterior of a grand

building of 17th-19th century date and would have been located immediately below the level of the eaves (Fig. 7).

- 3.11 It is unclear to which period of historical activity these foundations belong or indeed the nature of the structure represented. The position of **06** does not correspond with the present, mid-19th century building footprint. The provenance of the re-used cornice is unknown, and it remains possible that it was imported onto site as building material from another location; however, it does provide a broad terminus post quem for the structure, and it is the preferred interpretation that this structure belongs to the earliest phases of construction of the former manse, broadly dating the structure to the mid-19th century or slightly earlier.

Trench 3 & 4

- 3.12 There were no archaeological features identified in foundation trenches **T3** and **T4**.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 A watching brief carried out during ground-works for an extension to Ailsa Lodge identified the following features:
- An east-west orientated drystone masonry structure which is interpreted as the probable remains of a garden wall associated with the mid-19th century manse.
 - The fragmented sandstone remains for the foundations of the recently demolished eastern annexe of the manse.
 - The remains of a sandstone foundation footing, which had a fragment of re-used cornice of 17th-19th century date incorporated into its fabric. This structure was probably truncated to some extent by the incorporation of a salt-glazed drain and is probably contemporary with or slightly earlier than the construction of the present manse in the mid-19th century.
 - No further archaeological discoveries were made. Where the foundation trenches did not cut the features described above, they will be preserved in situ.
- 4.2 The project archive will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS) and copies of the report will be lodged with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service
- 4.3 A summary statement of the results of this watching brief, submitted for publication in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, (Appendix 3) will be sufficient to disseminate the results of this work.

5. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Kirby. M 2006 *Ailsa Lodge Archaeological Watching Brief, Erskine Ferry Road, Bishopton, Renfrewshire*. CFA report no. 1212.

APPENDIX 1

Context Register

Context	Description
01	Topsoil
02	Natural Subsoil
03	Natural Subsoil
04	Probable remains of a former garden wall orientated east-west in T1
05	The foundation remains of the recently demolished eastern annex of Ailsa Lodge in T1
06	The fragmentary sandstone remains of an earlier manse with re-incorporated masonry in T2

APPENDIX 2

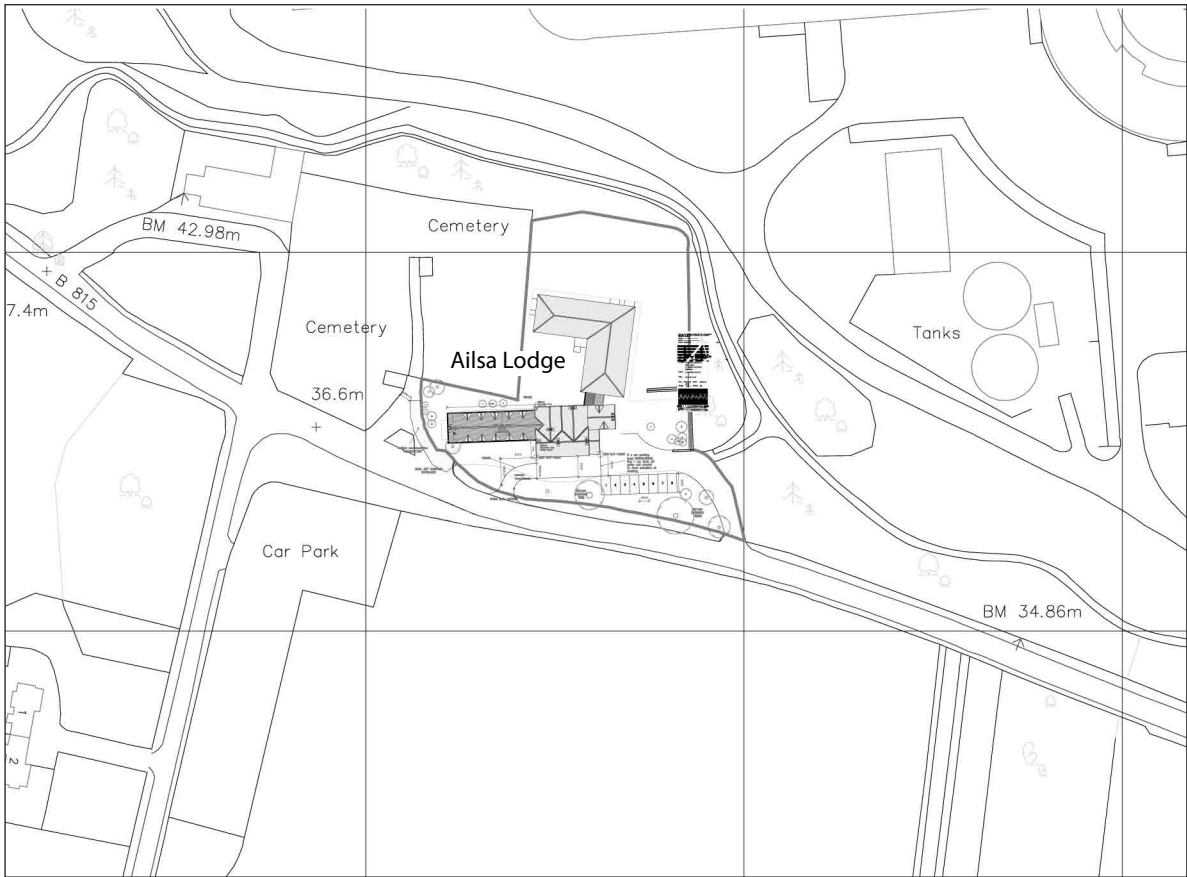
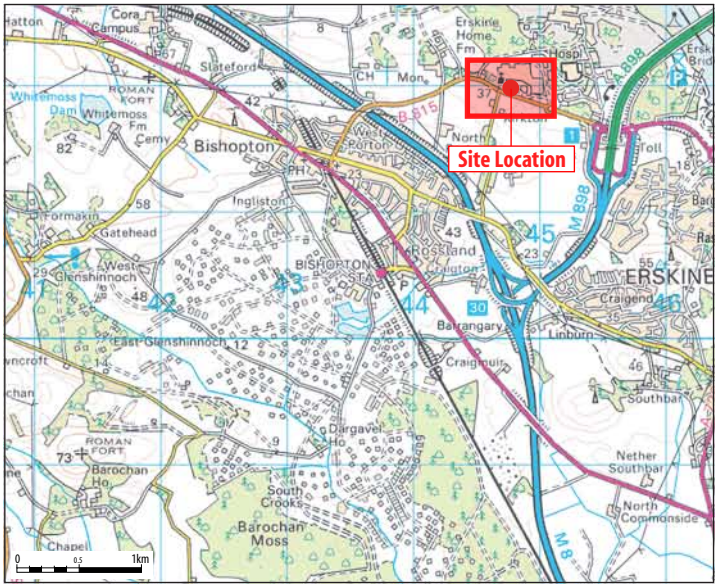
Digital Photographic Register

Photo No.	Contexts/description	Taken from	Conditions
1	Shot of probable garden wall [04], south-facing elevation (1 of 3)	S	Bright
2	Shot of probable garden wall [04], south-facing elevation (2 of 3)	S	Bright
3	Shot of probable garden wall [04], south-facing elevation (3 of 3)	S	Bright
4	General shot of northern, east-west orientated trench	E	Bright
5	General shot of sandstone foundations of demolished eastern annex	W	Bright
6	Oblique shot of probable garden wall [04]	SW	Bright
7	General shot of site and east-facing gable end of lodge after demolition of eastern annex	E	Bright
8	General shot of site and southern, east-west orientated trench	E	Bright
9	General shot of eastern extent of site	S	Bright
10	General shot of site	SE	Bright
11	Shot of sandstone foundations [05], post demolition	S	Bright
12	Oblique shot of foundations [05], post demolition of eastern annex	W	Bright
13	General shot of site and demolished remains of eastern annex	W	Bright
14	Sandstone foundations of wall [06] covered by salt glazed drain	N	Bright
15	Sandstone foundations of wall [06] covered by salt glazed drain	SW	Bright
16	Shot of fragmented sandstone foundations [05] of demolished eastern annex	N	Bright
17	Shot of fragmented sandstone foundations [05] of demolished eastern annex	N	Bright
18	General shot of fragmented sandstone demolition rubble	-	Bright
19	General shot of worked stone removed from wall foundation [06]	-	Bright

APPENDIX 3

Discovery & Excavation in Scotland Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Renfrewshire Council
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Ailsa Lodge, Erskine Ferry Road, Bishopton, Renfrewshire
PROJECT CODE:	AILS
PARISH:	Erskine
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Phil Moore
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	CFA Archaeology Ltd
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Watching brief
NMRS NO(S):	NS47SW 24.01
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Residential
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	N/A
NGR (2 letters, 6 Figures)	NS 4475 7195
START DATE (this season)	9 th January 2009
END DATE (this season)	9 th January 2009
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	<p>An archaeological watching brief was conducted by CFA Archaeology Ltd in January 2009 at Ailsa Lodge, Renfrewshire. A watching brief conducted by CFA in 2006, during groundworks for the construction of an extension to the west of Ailsa Lodge, recorded a large ditch which was interpreted as a Vallum and evidence of Early Christian ecclesiastical occupation on the site.</p> <p>During the 2009 watching brief on an extension to the east, the following archaeological features were recorded: an east-west orientated drystone masonry structure which is interpreted as the probable remains of a garden wall; the fragmented sandstone remains for the foundations of the recently demolished eastern annexe; the remains of a sandstone foundation footing, which had a fragment of re-used cornice incorporated into its fabric. The wall was probably truncated to some extent by a salt glazed drain and is probably synonymous with the construction of the present manse in the mid-19th century.</p> <p>No trace of the previously recorded Vallum could be seen.</p>
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	None
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	N/A
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Argus Construction Ltd
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	The Old Engine House, Eskmills Park, Musselburgh, East Lothian, EH21 7PQ
EMAIL ADDRESS:	cfa@cfa-archaeology.co.uk
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	<p>The National Monuments Record of Scotland</p> <p>West of Scotland Archaeology Service</p>



Key:

Scale:

Fig. No:

1

Revision:

A

Client:

Argus Construction

Title:

Location Map

Project:

Ailsa Lodge, Erskine Ferry Road, Bishopston,
Archaeological Watching Brief



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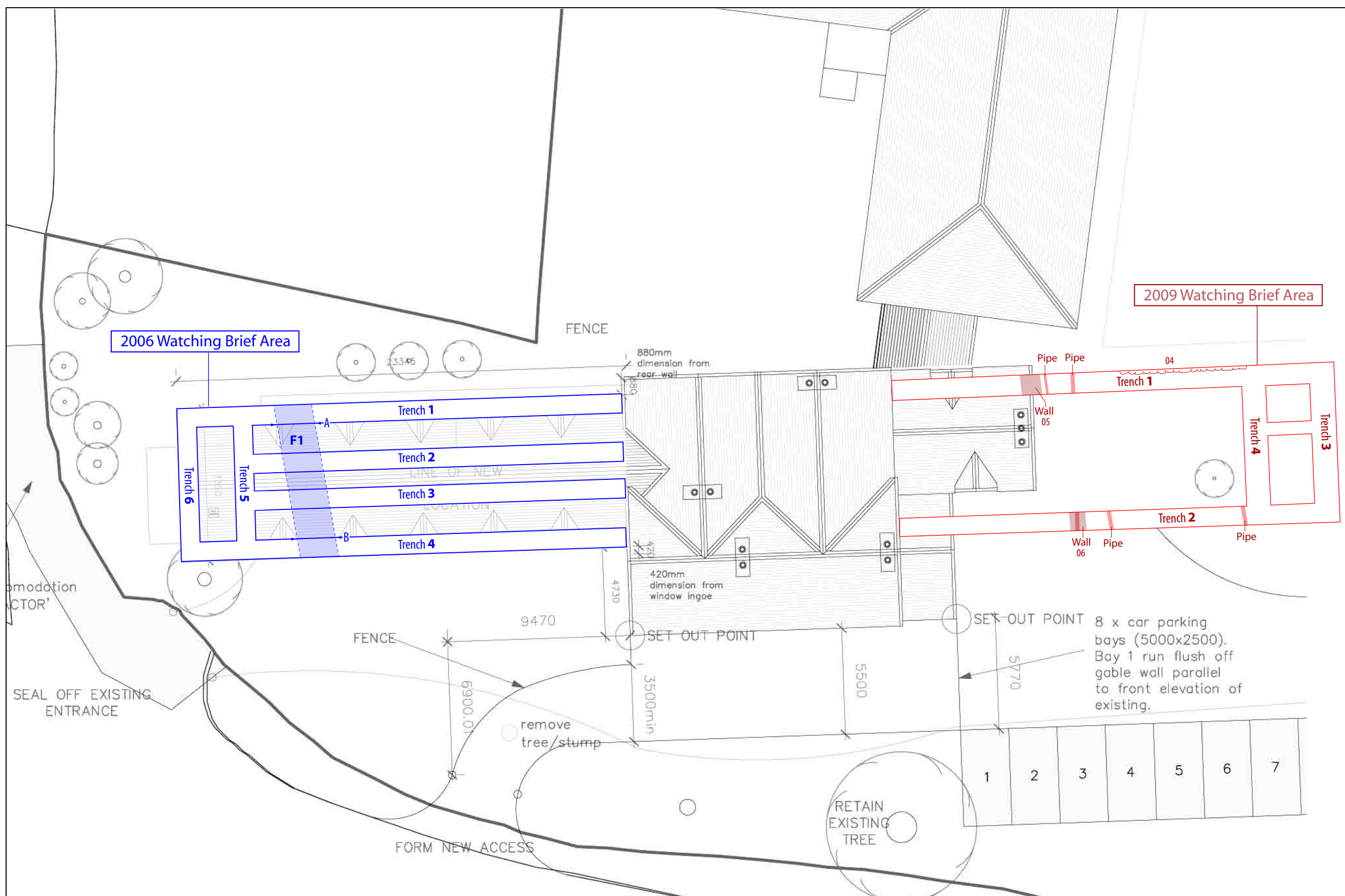




Fig 3 - Oblique shot of probable garden wall foundation (04)



Fig 4 - Sandstone wall foundations below salt-glazed drain (06)


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Fig 5 - Shot of fragmented sandstone foundations of demolished eastern annexe



Fig 6 - General shot of site and trench 2



Fig 7 - Architectural fragment

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