

St Vincent's College Gosport Hampshire



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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St Vincent's College, Gosport, Hampshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

Between the 11th and 18th of September 2008, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the St Vincent's College, Gosport, Hampshire (NGR: SU 609 006). The work was commissioned by Hampshire County Council in advance of the construction of a single storey children's centre. The watching brief revealed a stone wall originally forming the inside face of the tidal pound supplying Forton Mill, the corner of the Forton Barracks perimeter wall as constructed in 1807 and the later perimeter wall associated with the expansion of Forton Barracks in 1891.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Between the 11th and 18th of September 2008, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Vincent's College, Gosport, Hampshire (NGR: SU 609 006). The work was commissioned by Hampshire County Council in respect of a planning application for a single storey new building (Planning Application No. K7136/60).
- 1.1.2 As part of the planning consent a condition requiring the implementation of an archaeological watching brief during the period of the groundworks was attached.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief (OA, 2008).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located on level ground adjacent to the children's nursery buildings at St Vincent's College, Mill Lane, Gosport, Hampshire (NGR: SU 609 006). The site is currently a grassed area, c500 m², bounded to the north and east by college access roads, to the south by netball courts and to the west by Mill Lane. The site lies at approximately 4 m above OD. Approximately 50 m to the north of the site lies a creek leading off Portsmouth Harbour.
- 1.2.2 The underlying geology is Raised Marine Deposits overlying Wittering Formation (of the Bracklesham Group) (British Geological Survey Sheet 331).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA 2008) and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The following is a brief reproduction of a cartographic regression survey of the site and its environs, carried out for Hampshire County Council in advance of geotechnical groundworks.

- 1.3.3 The earliest map to show the site in any satisfactory detail is the 1843 OS map (Fig. 4). This shows the site of a flour mill some 50 m north of the proposed development, that lay immediately west of the creek. South of the site is located Forton Barracks (for the Royal Marine Light Infantry) and associated structures. To the east is recorded a coal yard. Of these features surrounding the present day site, the Flour Mill (Forton Mill) is undoubtedly the oldest, and this is evidenced by the name of nearby Mill Lane. The land to the west at this time appears to have been open in nature and the land to the southwest appears to comprise houses and gardens.
- 1.3.4 By the 1891 OS (Fig. 5), the site of the Mill had been re-routed and an unnamed structure has been placed on the site. A boat house or slip-way has been added to the Harbour creek. Little further development occurred on the site until by 1943 further unidentified structures had been developed on the site and a swimming pool had been located 50 m to the east. The Forton Barracks had by now been renamed *HMS Vincent (Boys Training Establishment)*. The additional unknown buildings may well have been storage buildings related to the war effort.
- 1.3.5 The modern day OS map shows the development site as a plain grassed area with all previous building works now vanished. The Barracks and Training Establishment have become St Vincent's College and Leisure Centre.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological deposits or features that may be disturbed or destroyed during any intrusive groundworks.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted as a series of monitoring visits during the period of any activities that may have impinged upon any archaeological deposits. These activities included reduction of the site level, excavation of pits for the foundation pads and the excavation of the service trenches.
- 2.2.2 A plan was maintained showing the extent of any intrusive works at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations and features were photographed using digital photography, colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

3.1.1 The excavation of all the pits for the foundation pads as well as the general ground reduction was monitored. For the purposes of the report only a representative sample of the stratigraphy observed within the pits for the foundation pads will be described and illustrated (See Figure. 3), since this is felt to be sufficient to enable a cross-section of the site to be determined. The implications of the cross-section and the chronology of the site will be described in *Discussion and Conclusions*.

Section 1

3.1.2 This was located in the north-east corner of the site in a pit measuring 2 m by 1.2 m by 2.3 m deep.

3.1.3 The underlying estuarine deposit, a dark blue-grey silt clay (4) was encountered at a depth of 1.5 m below the current ground level. This deposit could be seen to be in excess of 0.7 m deep. Driven into this layer were a series of 0.25 m square wooden piles supporting a wooden platform constructed using 0.3 m wide by 0.075 m thick planks (8). The tops of the piles and the bottom of the planks were flush with the top of layer 4.

3.1.4 Constructed on top of the wooden platform was a substantial brick foundation composed of a 1 m square corner pillar and a north-south aligned wall (6). These consisted of 9 courses of hand moulded red brick laid using English stretcher bonding and lime mortar. The bricks measuring 0.225 m x 0.105 m x 0.063 m. An east-west brick wall 0.75 m wide with 0.5 m height remaining (5) could be observed built directly upon the square pillar, but it was not possible to observe if a similar structure survived upon the north-south running foundations.

3.1.5 Overlying layer 4 and butting up to the brick foundations was a 0.75 m deep layer of dark yellow-green silt clay (7). This contained lenses of yellow-brown clay and small brick fragments suggesting that it was a layer of made ground. This was overlaid by a 0.5 m deep layer of dark yellow-brown silt clay (2) which also contained lenses of gravel and small fragments of brick and stone suggesting made ground.

3.1.6 Visible during the excavation of the pit but not shown in the section was the later phase of construction, wall (15) and its associated foundations (17), butting up to the west face of structure 6 (See Section 5 for more details)

3.1.7 Sealing layer 2 was a 0.25 m deep layer of mixed silts containing numerous brick, mortar and concrete fragments (1) indicative of demolition debris.

Section 2

3.1.8 This was located 6 m north-east of the centre of the site in a pit measuring 2.1 m long, 1.2 m wide and 2.5 m deep.

- 3.1.9 The underlying estuarine clay (4) was encountered at a depth of 1.9 m below the current ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.5 m deep layer of dark green-grey sandy silt clay (3). This contained small fragments of abraded shell, suggesting an estuarine deposit. Cut approximately 0.1 m deep into this layer was a construction cut (9). Built into this was a vertically faced wall (10) using dressed ashlar blocks with an average size of 0.6 m x 0.25 m x 0.2 m and lime mortar (Fig. 2). This structure was aligned north-south and measured 1.1 m high with a calculated width of 0.9 m.
- 3.1.10 Butting up to the west face of this wall was a 1 m deep layer of dark yellow-brown silt clay, a continuation of layer 2. This was overlaid 0.4 m deep deposit of the demolition layer (1).

Section 3

- 3.1.11 This was located 2 m east of the centre of the site in a pit measuring 1.2 m x 1.5 m by 2.5 m deep.
- 3.1.12 A layer of grey sandy clay with shingle inclusions (13) was encountered at a depth of 2.25 m below the current ground level. This layer was very similar to layer 3 and probably represents an estuarine deposit. This was overlaid by a 1 m deep layer of very dark clay silt (12). This deposit produced numerous fragments of hand moulded brick, creamware pottery, stoneware pottery and bottle glass indicating a probable rubbish dump. Overlying this was a 0.25 m deep layer of light green-grey sandy silt clay (11), also a probable estuarine deposit. This was sealed by a 0.75 m deep continuation of the made ground (2). A 0.2 m deep layer of the demolition material (1) completed the section.

Section 4

- 3.1.13 This was located in the centre of the site in a pit measuring 1.2 m square by 1.6 m deep.
- 3.1.14 A continuation of the dark green-grey sandy silt clay (3) was encountered at a depth of 1.5 m below the current ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.8 m deep layer of very dark grey clay silt (14). This was very similar to the estuarine deposit 4 except for its very high organic content and may represent a discrete change in composition within the area. This was sealed by a 0.5 m deep layer of the made ground 2, overlaid by the demolition debris (1), 0.2 m thick.

Section 5

- 3.1.15 This was located close to the north-west corner of the site in a pit measuring 1.2 m square by 2.8 m deep.
- 3.1.16 The dark grey estuarine clay (4) was encountered at a depth of 1.3 m below the current ground level and could be seen to be in excess of 1.5 m deep in section. This was overlaid by a 0.4 m deep continuation layer of the dark green-grey sandy silt clay (3). This was sealed by the made ground (2), 0.65 m deep.

3.1.17 Cut into the surface of this layer was an east-west aligned trench 1.1 m deep by approximately 1.4 m wide (16). This feature could be seen to run the full length of the northern edge of the site, butting up to Structure 6 (See Section 1). This was filled with portland cement concrete (17) for its full depth. Built on top of this foundation was a 0.7 m wide wall (15), constructed using red hand-moulded bricks laid using English stretcher bond and cement mortar. Only two courses of this wall survive but it could be seen to run the full length of the concrete foundations 17 (Fig. 2). The demolition layer (1) butted up either side of this wall.

Section 6

- 3.1.18 This was located on the southern edge of the site in a pit measuring 1.1 m by 1.8 m and was excavated to a depth of 2.2 m
- 3.1.19 A continuation of the layer of grey sandy clay with shingle inclusions (13) was encountered at a depth of 2.1 m below the current ground level. Overlying this was a 1 m deep layer of the estuarine deposit 4. This was overlaid by a 0.3 m deep lens of black silt clay (14) which contained a very high organic content, but no finds. This was sealed by a 0.5 m thick continuation of the made ground 2, which in turn was overlaid by the demolition layer 1, 0.2 m deep.

Section 7

- 3.1.20 This was located on the eastern edge of the site in a pit measuring 1.9 m by 1.5 m and 1.7 m deep.
- 3.1.21 The grey sandy clay 13 was encountered again at a depth of 1.6 m below the current ground level, overlaid by a 0.6 m deep layer of the estuarine clay 4. Sealing this was a 0.2 m deep continuation of the layer of dark green-grey sandy silt clay (3). Overlying this was a 0.25 m deep layer of mixed blue-green and green-grey clay silt (16) which also contained many lenses of gravel and which represents a layer of made ground. This was overlaid by a 0.25 m deep layer of clean shingle (15) which also represents a layer of made ground. Overlying this was a 0.2 m deep continuation of the demolition layer 1.

Section 8

- 3.1.22 This was located in the south-east corner of the site in a pit measuring 1.5 m by 1 m and 2.3 m deep.
- 3.1.23 The grey sandy clay 13 was encountered at a depth of 2.1 m below the current reduced ground level. Overlying this was the estuarine clay 4, 0.9 m deep. This was sealed by a continuation of another estuarine deposit, the green-grey clay (3). Cutting this layer was the 1 m deep vertically sided and flat based foundation trench (18). This was aligned slightly to the east of north-south. Built within this trench was a brick wall (21) constructed using hand-moulded red brick measuring 0.225 m x 0.105 m x 0.063 m laid using English stretcher bonding and lime mortar. No separate foundations were visible with the bottom course of the bricks being laid directly on

the clay 4. The top of the wall had been truncated leaving only 13 courses of brick surviving in situ.

- 3.1.24 Butting up to the western face of the wall was a continuation of the re-deposited shingle 15, 0.2 m deep. The demolition layer 1 ran across both the top of the wall and layer 15.

Section 9

- 3.1.25 This was located on the western edge of the site in a pit measuring 1.8 m by 1.5 m and was 2.8 m deep.
- 3.1.26 A layer of coarse shingle in a yellow banded sandy clay matrix (20) was encountered at a depth of 2.7 m below the reduced ground level. This was overlaid by a 0.3 m deep layer of a blue-grey clay (19) which contained sea shells indicative of an estuarine deposit. Overlying this was the dark blue-grey silt clay 4, 1 m deep. This was sealed by the 1.3 m deep deposit of the made ground 2. As on the rest of the site, this was overlaid by the demolition layer 1.

3.2 **Finds**

- 3.2.1 All the datable artefacts recovered were post-medieval in date with the vast majority being 18th/19th-century sherds of pottery and fragments of bottle glass from Layer 12. Examples of both modern frogged bricks and earlier hand-moulded bricks were observed within Layer 2; these were evaluated on site but were not retained.
- 3.2.2 Fragments of brick, clay pipe and pottery were recovered from layer 3, an estuarine deposit, but it was felt these were intrusive, sinking into the layer from the deposit above.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

- 3.3.1 Due to the relatively recent deposition of the datable layers encountered, it was felt that little further information would be recovered from palaeo-environmental sampling.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 The presence of estuarine deposits (layers 3, 4, 13, 14, 19 and 20) within the bases of all the foundation pits show that the area of the site was originally part of Forton Lake, an estuary running off Portsmouth Harbour to the north-east. The distribution of the deposits may indicate the edge of the original foreshore. This estuary extended much further to the south-west than its present day truncated form. The tidal estuary was exploited to power tidal mills with a mill shown to have been located close to the site on Issac Taylor's map of Hampshire dated 1759. This mill was originally owned by St Swithuns Priory and was mentioned on a local Charter dated between 1239-43.

- 4.1.2 The last phase of the tidal mill, known as Forton Mill, can be seen on the Ordnance Survey maps dated between 1843 and 1893 (Fig. 4) showing the mill buildings located 90 m north-west of the development area and the edge of the tidal pound curving across the site with the continuation of Mill Lane following its eastern edge. Overlaying a plan of the current site onto this map shows that the stone wall 10 observed within 4 of the Foundation pad pits coincides with the inside edge of the causeway carrying Mill Lane. It is probable that this stone wall represents a retaining wall built to stop erosion of the causeway by the tide.
- 4.1.3 The stratigraphy observed to the east of wall 10, particularly that within section 7, suggests that the area of the estuary east of the wall was then reclaimed with layers of made ground (15 and 16) being deposited to raise the ground level above the tidal range.
- 4.1.4 The overlaying of the plan of the current site with this Ordnance Survey map also shows that the north-west corner of the boundary wall for Forton Barracks for this period is located over the brick walls (5 and 6) observed within Section 1, the north-south wall (6) and the east-west wall (5) corresponding with the two walls observed running off from the corner. A probable continuation of the north-south wall (21) was also observed within section 8.
- 4.1.5 The wooden pile and platform foundations observed supporting the corner of walls 5 and 6 in section 1 are almost identical to those observed supporting the western range of the Grand Store in Woolwich Arsenal, whose construction was started in 1806 (OA, 2002). It is known that the construction of Forton Barracks commenced in 1807 and it probable that a known method of construction was used, including possibly the same military contractors. The size of bricks would also indicate a construction date of this period.
- 4.1.6 Examination of section 1 shows that the timber piling was constructed flush with the surface of the existing estuarine deposit 4 and the brick walls constructed prior to the deposition of the layers of made ground 2 and 7, again a method of construction also observed at Woolwich Arsenal. It is probable that construction of the stone wall 10 facing the tidal pound and the construction of the barracks are contemporary, with the opportunity taken to reclaim part of the estuary allowing expansion of the site formerly occupied by Fortune Hospital.
- 4.1.7 Cartographic evidence on the Admiralty Chart of 1858 (HWTMA/NAS, 2006) suggests that by the time of the publication of the chart the mill pound had been reclaimed and that the tidal mill was no longer in use. The deposition of large amounts of refuse (layer 12) observed east of wall 10 within section 3 and in adjacent foundation pad pits to the north, north-west and west suggest that this was deposited as part of this process, with an hiatus in reclamation allowing layer 11 to accumulate over it prior to the overall deposition of the made ground, layer 2.

- 4.1.8 By 1848 the barracks had been handed over to the marines. By the 1890s the barracks had been expanded with the boundary altered to run along the northern edge of the development area and a rectangular building labelled as a lecture hall on some maps appearing within the development area (Fig. 5). The concrete foundations 17, and the associated east-west brick wall 15 (section 5) observed within all of the foundation pad pits along the northern edge of the site appear to be part of this expansion. The construction cut 16 for the concrete foundation cuts the made ground (2) deposited during the 1850s infilling of the tidal pound while the concrete foundations abut the 1807 brick wall 6, confirming the timeline.
- 4.1.9 This building survived until the abandonment of the barracks in the 1960s. The site was redeveloped as part of St Vincent's college and the building was demolished. This event accounts for the overall spread of demolition debris (layer 1) observed throughout the site.
- 4.1.10 The watching brief has shown that the area of the development was part of Forton Lake until the late post-medieval period with the area being reclaimed from the estuary in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. No evidence to suggest any earlier activity on the site was encountered during the course of the watching brief.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

| <i>Context</i> | <i>Type</i> | <i>Depth/ Height</i> | <i>Width</i> | <i>Comments</i> | <i>Finds</i> | <i>Date</i> |
|----------------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 1 | Layer | 0.2 m | > 8 m | Made ground, crushed demolition debris | Brick, concrete | C20th |
| 2 | Layer | 0.5 m - 1.1 m | - | Made ground, imported clay | Brick | C18th/ C19th |
| 3 | Layer | 0.3 m - 0.5 m | - | Estuarine deposit | Brick, pottery, clay pipe | C18th |
| 4 | Layer | 0.6 m - 1.2 m | - | Estuarine deposit | - | - |
| 5 | Structure | 0.5 m | 0.73 m | Base of brick wall | Brick | c1807 |
| 6 | Structure | 0.9 m | 1.0 m | Brick foundations | Brick | c1807 |
| 7 | Layer | - | 0.75 m | Made ground | Brick | c1807 |
| 8 | Structure | > 0.8 m | 1.1 m | Wooden piles and platform | - | c1807 |
| 9 | Cut | 0.1 m | 0.85 m | Construction cut for wall 10 | - | C18th/ C19th |
| 10 | Structure | 1.1 m | 0.85 m | Stone retaining wall, inside face of tidal pound supplying Forton Mill | - | C18th/ C19th |
| 11 | Layer | 0.25 m | - | Estuarine deposit | - | - |
| 12 | Layer | 1.0 m | 7.5 m | Layer of rubbish tipping | Brick, pottery, glass | C19th |
| 13 | Layer | > 0.2 m | - | Estuarine deposit | - | - |
| 14 | Layer | 0.8 m | 4 m | Very organic silt, possible sewage disposal ? | - | C18th/ C19th |
| 15 | Wall | 0.2 m | 0.75 m | Boundary/building wall from 1890 expansion of barracks | Brick | C19th/ C20th |
| 16 | Cut | 1.1 m | 1.2 m | Construction cut for concrete foundations 17 | - | C19th/ C20th |
| 17 | Structure | 1.1 m | 1.2 m | Concrete foundations for wall 15 | - | C19th/ C20th |
| 18 | Cut | 1.0 m | - | Construction cut for wall 21 | - | C19th |
| 19 | Layer | 0.25m | - | Estuarine deposit | - | - |
| 20 | Layer | > 0.1 m | - | Shingle | - | - |
| 21 | Wall | 1.2 m | - | Continuation of wall 6 | Brick | C19th |

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Hampshire and Wight Trust for Marine Archaeology and Nautical Archaeology Society (HWTMA/NAS), 2006: *Forton Lake Archaeology Project - Year One Report*

IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D. Wilkinson)

OA, 2002 *The Royal Arsenal Woolwich, Berkeley Homes Residential Development, Phase 1: Interim Report*

OA, 2008 *St Vincent's Collage, Gosport, Hampshire: Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief*

Tim Lambert, 2008 *A brief history of Gosport*

White Young Green Environmental, 2008 *Ground Investigation Report of the St Vincent's College, Gosport*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: St Vincent's College, Gosport, Hampshire

Site code: A2008.34

Grid reference: SU 609 006

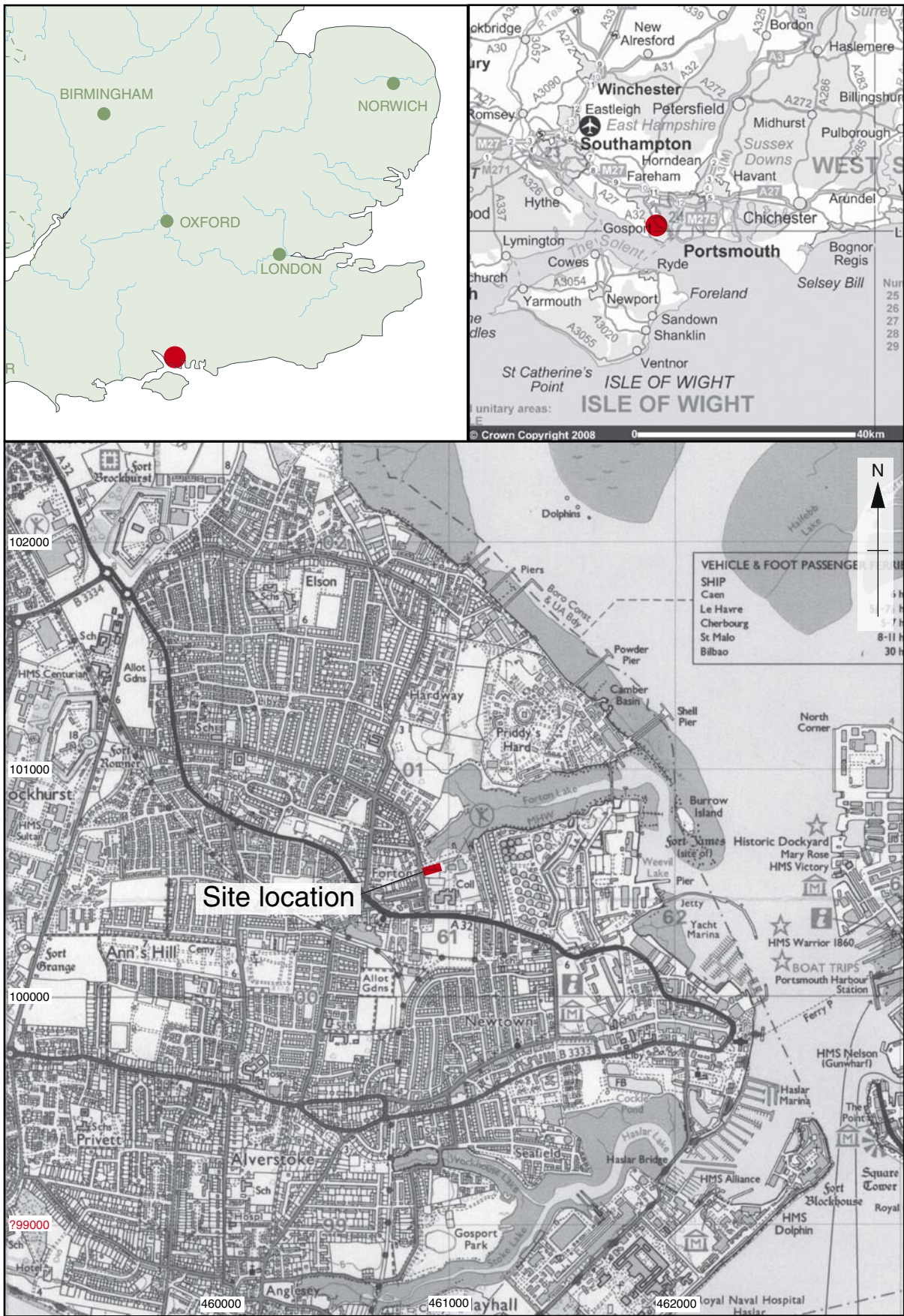
Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of building foundations and service trenches

Date and duration of project: 11th to 18th September 2008, 6 site visits

Area of site: 600m²

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed worked estuarine deposits, a stone wall originally forming the inside face of the tidal pound supplying Forton Mill, the corner of the Forton Barracks perimeter wall as constructed in 1807 and the later perimeter wall associated with the expansion of Forton Barracks in 1891. Evidence was also observed allowing a chronology of the land reclamation of the area to be established.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Hampshire County museum Service in due course under the following accession number: A2008.34.



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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Site plan

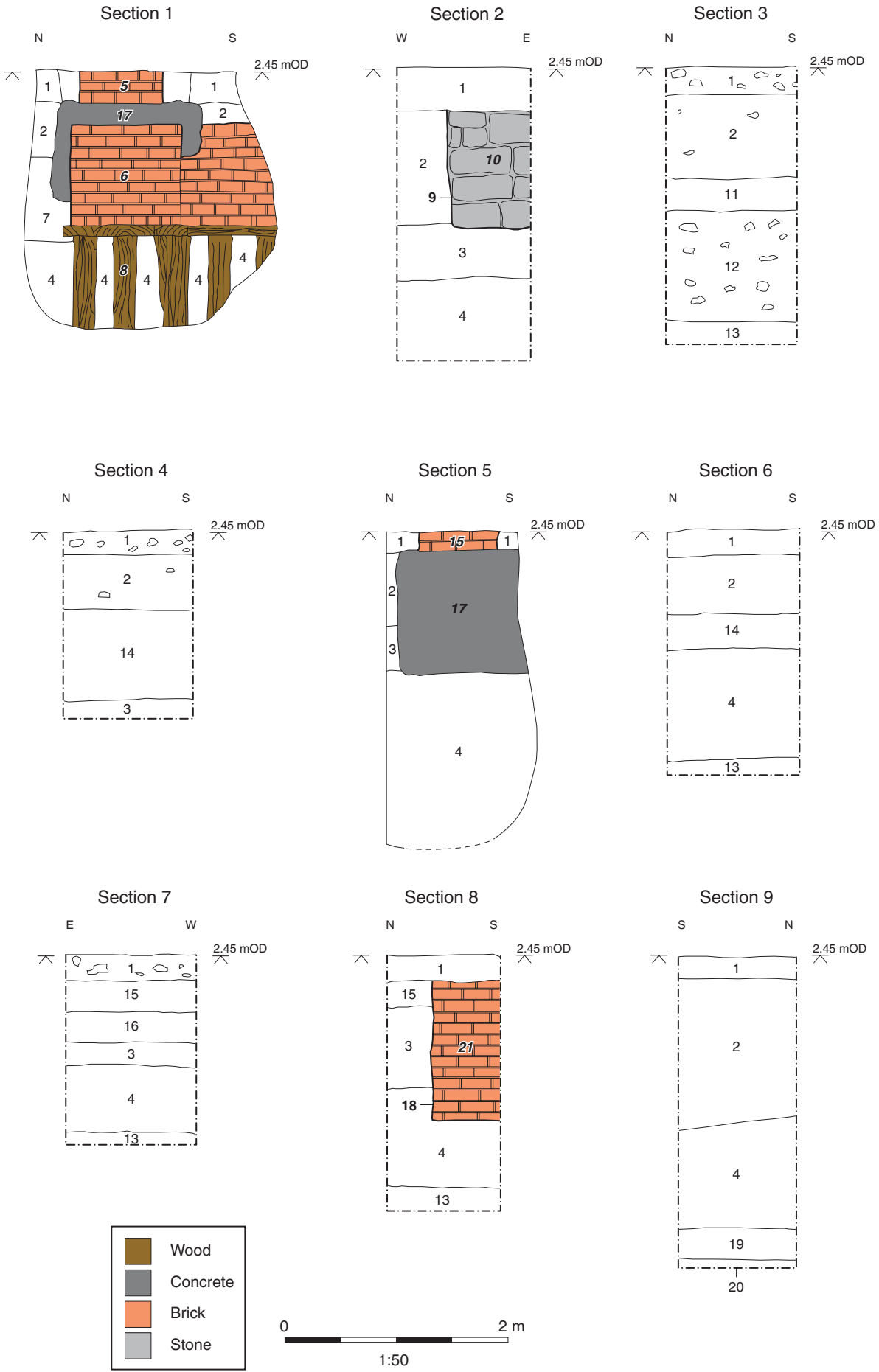


Figure 3: Sections

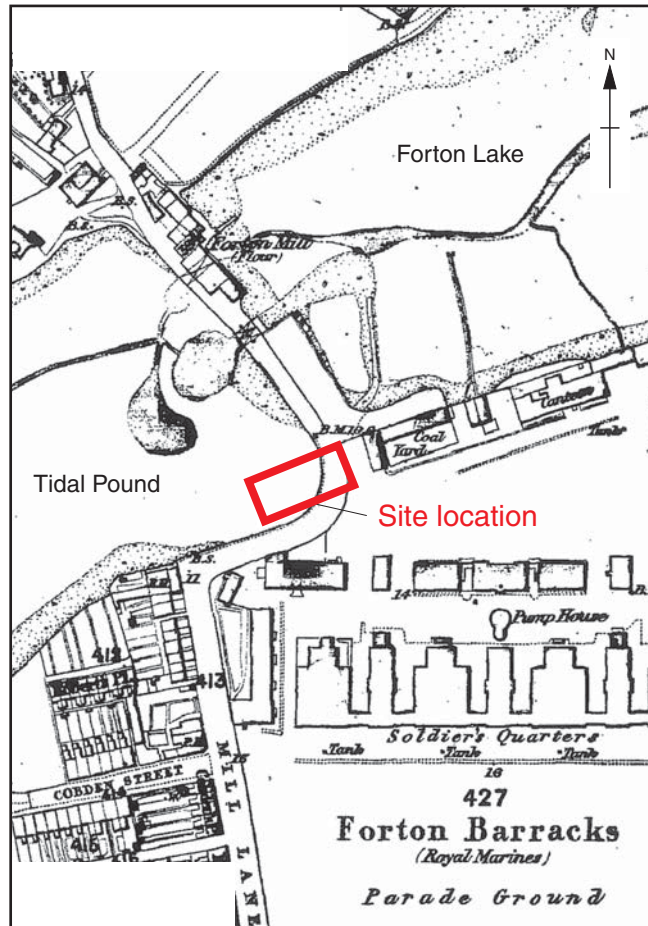


Figure 4: Detail of Ordnance Survey map 1843 - 1893

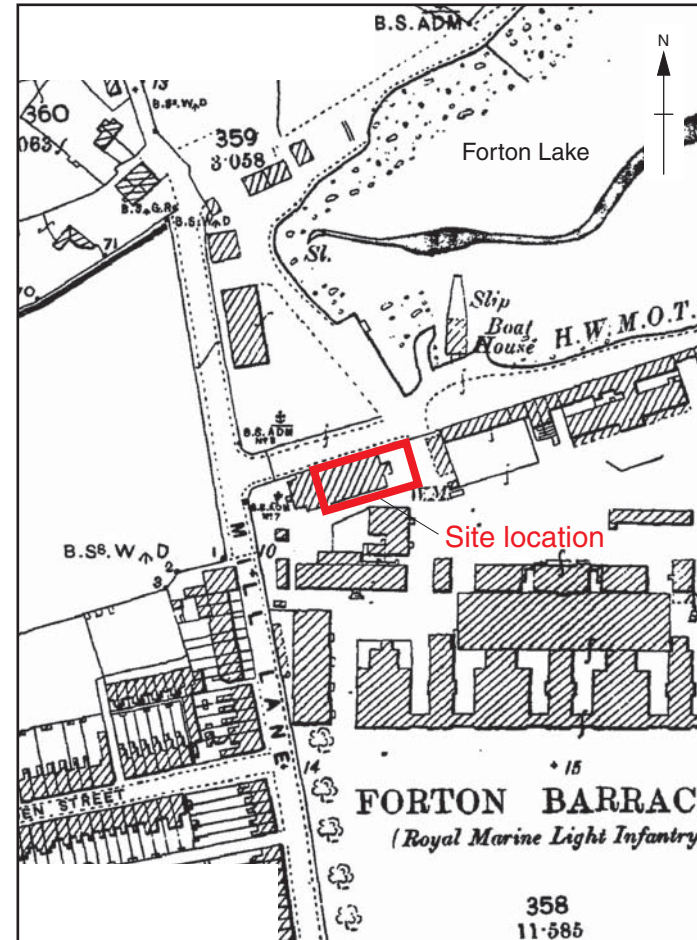






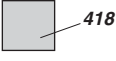








Figure 5: Detail of Ordnance Survey map 1891 -1912



| | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | Section line and number |
|  | Section through feature not illustrated with section drawing |
|  | Limit of excavation |
|  | Sondage / Interior limit of excavation |
|  | Fill line and number |
|  | Cut line and number |
|  | Structure number |
|  | Unclear boundary |
|  | Stones |
|  | Hachures indicate inclination of slope inside excavated feature |
|  | Levels |
|  | Grid point |
|  | Continuation line (trench edge continues) |



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