

# MOUNT WISE PHASE 3A, DEVONPORT, PLYMOUTH

(NGR SX 45839 54199)

## Results of archaeological investigations

Plymouth City Council planning reference 14/1572/FUL,  
condition 21

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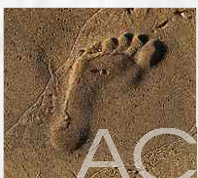
Prepared by:  
Andrew Passmore BSc MCIfA  
and Dr Paul Rainbird

With a contribution by  
Charlotte Coles

On behalf of:  
Henry W Pollard & Sons Ltd

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archaeology

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Report Author(s)	Andrew Passmore and Paul Rainbird
Contributions	Charlotte Coles
Checked by	Paul Rainbird
Approved by	Andrew Passmore

The project was commissioned by Henry W Pollard & Sons Ltd and managed for them by Steve Mahon and for AC archaeology by Andrew Passmore. The fieldwork was carried out by Chris Caine and Naomi Kysh. The illustrations for this report were prepared by Leon Cauchois.

The views and recommendations expressed in this report are those of AC archaeology and are presented in good faith on the basis of professional judgement and on information currently available.

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## Summary

*Archaeological monitoring and recording was carried out by AC archaeology between May and July 2017 during the Mount Wise Phase 3A development, Devonport, Plymouth. Previous archaeological evaluation had, within the application area, exposed remains of the Devonport Dock Lines, defences established in the mid-18th century to protect the dockyard and surrounding barracks.*

*The investigation exposed further lengths of 1750s Dock Line ditch including parts of retaining walls within its sides. The ditch went out of use in the 1850s or 1860s when the defences were realigned and moved to the east. The current investigations have shown that the associated rampart was slighted and backfilled into the ditch. A wall defining one side of a path below the rampart was also exposed.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

- 1.1 This report presents the results of archaeological investigations carried out by AC archaeology between May and July 2017 during the Mount Wise Phase 3A development, Devonport, Plymouth (SX 45839 54199; Fig. 1). The report was commissioned by the principal contractor, Henry W Pollard & Sons Ltd, and was required under condition 21 of the grant of planning permission by Plymouth City Council (planning reference 14/1572/FUL) for "residential development of 59 one and two bedroom apartments and associated works". The scope of the works was set out in a written scheme of investigation submitted with the planning application (Boyd 2014).
- 1.2 The site is located within the southeast part of the wider Mount Wise redevelopment, to the northeast of Admiralty House, and west of the Dock Lines defensive works which in this area form the eastern boundary of Mount Wise. It covers an area of approximately 0.07ha, and is situated on flat land at a height of approximately 25m AOD. The underlying geology consists of Devonian Limestone of the Plymouth Limestone formation (British Geological Survey online viewer).
- 1.3 The development comprises the construction of a single detached apartment block, along with associated access, car parking and landscaping.

### 2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Figs 2 and 3)

- 2.1 The site is located within the Dock Lines, a "bastioned enceinte" enclosing the late 17th-century naval Dockyard and six barrack squares. They were constructed between 1756 and 1765, and were remodelled and improved in 1779-80, 1809-16 and 1853-68 (Pye and Woodward 1996, 152-153). The present earthworks east of the site dates to this last phase of works and replaced the original lines, which were located slightly to the west (*ibid.*, 154).
- 2.2 The Phase 3A development has been the subject of an historic environment assessment (Wapshott and Walls 2014) that outlines the history of the area. The site is located within a bastion on the Richmond Walk length of the original defences. Maps of the 18th and 19th centuries variously depict one, and then two gunpowder magazines located to the west of the bastion defences. By 1821 a parade ground had been laid out to the north of Admiralty House, although the land to the east was recorded as landscaping, presumably representing the rampart of

the Dock Lines. A map of 1854 shows the proposed changes to the defences, but the realignment to the east did not occur until 1861-68. The Ordnance Survey 25-inch military map of 1856-7 records a magazine.

- 2.3 The 1896 revision (published in 1911) records that the magazine had been demolished and the area was a cricket ground, presumably a small practice pitch, located to the south of the main Garrison Cricket ground. More recently the site has been used as tennis courts and later as a car park.
- 2.4 The area was evaluated as part of the wider archaeological trench evaluation in advance of the Mount Wise development (Exeter Archaeology 2006), and was reconsidered in relation to the current scheme in the assessment report. The evaluation (trenches in blue on Fig. 2) identified the inner side of the 1750s/1760s ditch, along with part of the outer face and a footbridge over the ditch (see Fig. 3 showing the location of this footbridge in relation to the later defences). Monitoring of the Phase 2 development (trenches in green on Fig. 2) has identified that the magazine is located outside of the present development area (Wapshott and Walls 2014, fig. 18).

### 3. AIM

- 3.1 The aim of the work was to preserve by record any archaeological features or deposits exposed during the groundworks, with particular reference to the remains of the 1750s/1760s and later Dock Lines.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 Groundworks (ground reduction and excavation of foundation trenches) for the construction of the apartment block were carried out without archaeological supervision. Photographs of this work have been provided by Henry W Pollard & Sons Ltd, and an analysis of these photographs is set out in sections 5.1 and 5.2 below.
- 4.2 Subsequent archaeological investigations involved the monitoring and recording of service excavations around the north and northeast side of the apartment block, and the excavation of two soakaway tanks, as well as the controlled excavation of two evaluation trenches across the line of the 1750s Dock Lines. This work was carried out in accordance with the relevant Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance* documents, as well as the AC archaeology *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2*. Due to health and safety constraints over the size of the deeper trenches where necessary recording was undertaken from the surface, and detailed observations could not be made.

### 5. RESULTS (Figs 2, 4 and 5; Plates 1-11)

#### **Groundworks for the new apartment block**

- 5.1 Prior to the start of the works the area of the development had been a level car park (Plate 1). The car park was built partly on former landscaped grounds at the south end and tennis courts to the north. Beneath the car park tarmac and hardcore (up to 0.50m below car park surface) the site was found to have a very limited depth of deposits above rubble and solid limestone bedrock (Plates 2 and 3). The depth of the deposit beneath the car park layers increased to the southeast where at a depth

of approximately 1m below car park surface archaeological features were exposed, with these comprising walls which matched the position of the Dock Lines.

- 5.2** The Dock Lines walls comprised the inside of the inner ditch line (S603/S604) and two parallel walls (S601 and S602) projecting in an approximately northeast-southwest alignment (Plate 4). These are elements of the Dock Lines previously exposed in the evaluation trenches by Exeter Archaeology. To the east of these a section of wall (S605) probably representing the lining of the outside of the earliest phase of Dock Line ditch was exposed (Plate 5). The features were exposed to a depth of approximately 1.3m and as this was the limit of the formation level the wall foundations and base of the ditch were not exposed.

**Soakaway tank 1**

- 5.3** This tank was located towards the northeast corner of the site, outside of the projected alignment of the 1750s/1760s Dock Lines (Plate 6). It measured 11m long by 5m wide and was excavated to a depth of 2.50m below the ground surface. A probable natural deposit of dark brownish-red friable silty-clay with common limestone inclusions (1003) was exposed from a depth of 1.90m below the surface. Within the southwest side of the trench this was overlain by 0.10m thick buried topsoil consisting of dark brown friable silty-loam (1002), which appeared to have been historically truncated by an episode of landscaping. This was sealed by a 1.55m thick layer of made-up ground (1001) comprising mixed deposits of stone, sand, silty-loam and clay ranging in colour from greyish yellow to mid brown and in consistency from firm to loose. The deposits included various inclusions of limestone and river gravels as well as unfrogged bricks. This made-up ground was sealed by a 0.25m thick layer of mid grey-brown friable silty-loam with occasional sub-rounded gravels (1000). No archaeological features were exposed and no finds recovered.

**Soakaway tank 2 (Fig. 4)**

- 5.4** This tank was located to the east of the northeast corner of the apartment block, and measured 11m long by 5m wide, and was excavated to a depth of 3m below the surface (Plate 7). It was partially located within the projected course of the 1750s/1760s Dock Lines. Natural light red-yellow friable silty-clay with frequent limestone fragments (2002) was exposed at a depth of 2m from the surface, and was overlain by a 0.60-0.80m levelling layer (2001) consisting of mid yellowish-brown friable clayey-loam with abundant limestone boulders and gravel inclusions.

- 5.5** Layer 2001 was cut by the Dock Lines ditch (F2003) that passed through the trench on a north-northeast – south-southwest alignment (Plate 8). The full extent and depth of the ditch was not exposed within the trench. Against the edge of the ditch, at the base of the trench, part of an outer retaining wall (2004) was exposed. This comprised four courses of limestone blocks that only survived within the southern 4m of the trench. The lowest exposed fill (2005) was a deep light yellowish-brown friable clayey-loam with abundant limestone boulders and gravel inclusions, above which was a group (2006) of shallow black and white clay fills. The ditch was sealed by up to 1.40m of a dark grey loose silty-sand levelling deposit containing brick inclusions and service trenches.

**Trench 1 (Fig. 4)**

- 5.6** This trench was located to the south of soakaway tank 2, and measured 7.5m by 2m, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 4.1m below the surface. It was positioned across the projected course of the 1750s/1760s Dock Lines. Due to the presence of electricity cables, the west end of the trench was shortened, and the full extent of the Dock Lines ditch was not exposed.

- 5.7** Natural bedrock (302) was exposed at a depth of 1.80m below the surface, and was overlain by a 1.60m thick layer of mid yellow-brown friable silty-clay with abundant limestone (301). This layer was cut by the Dock Lines ditch (F303) that measured 2.90m deep and a minimum of 4.50m wide. It had steeply sloping sides and a flat base. A limestone revetment wall (306) had been constructed in the upper part of the ditch, onto the bedrock 302 and retaining layer 301. The ditch contained two fills (304 and 305) of mid yellowish-brown silty-clay with frequent limestone fragments. The ditch was sealed by 1.20m of 19th- and 20th-century made ground (300) associated with the former cricket pitch and more recent car park.

**Trench 2 (Fig. 5)**

- 5.8** This trench was located to the north of soakaway tank 2, measured 8.7m by 2m, and was excavated to a maximum depth of 4.15m below the surface. It was positioned across the projected line of the 1750s/1760s Dock Lines.

- 5.9** Solid bedrock (307) was exposed at a depth of 0.35m from the surface. At this level the Dock Lines ditch (F406) was exposed (Plate 9). This had steeply-sloping sides and a slightly curving base, and measured c. 6m wide by 3.80m deep. Fragments of walling in the sides of the ditch, cut into ledges in the bedrock, were noted, but these were very fragmentary. The ditch contained a thin primary fill (405) of dark greyish-black silty-clay with abundant limestone, which was overlain by thick layer (404) of mid reddish-brown silty-clay with rare limestone fragments. Above this was a further fill (403) – a reddish-brown silty-clay with abundant limestone inclusions – that continued west beyond the top of the ditch cut on this side of the trench. The final fill of the ditch (402) was a mid grey-brown silty-clay with abundant limestone inclusions. The ditch was sealed by a 0.10m thick former topsoil (401) of dark brown silty-clay and a 0.25m thick layer of modern levelling (400).

**Service trench (Fig. 5)**

- 5.10** Excavations for three lengths of electricity trenches around the north and northeast sides of the apartment block were monitored. These measured 0.95m wide by on average 0.46m deep. In all trenches the general deposit sequence was either hardcore levelling and concrete surfaces or entirely concrete surfaces, both associated with the 20th-century use of the area as a car park and tennis courts, overlain by modern levelling.

- 5.11** However, to the north of the apartment block excavations were taken to a depth of 0.75m below the surface, and in one location archaeological deposits were present below the base of the concrete (100). The earliest deposit was a layer of loose grey-black silty-clay containing common gravels, glass, brick, lime mortar and fragments and charcoal flecks (105). A north – south aligned wall (102/103) had been cut through this layer (Plates 10 and 11). The surviving foundation of the wall measured 0.80m wide and was constructed of limestone pieces measuring between 0.14m and 0.48m long, bonded in light reddish-brown compact very slightly silty clay with occasional gravel. The wall was overlaid by a layer of mottled yellow compact clay containing brick and slate fragments (101). All recorded deposits were disturbed by an existing service trench (F106) that was partly exposed in the northern side of the current trench.

**6. THE FINDS, by Charlotte Coles**

- 6.1** The only find recovered was a stoneware flagon neck and top – missing its handle – from context 405, the primary fill of the Dock Lines ditch in trench 2. The bottle maker's mark is present and reads "C & J.R. Price Manufacturers Bristol". Research

has shown that the company changed its name multiple times to reflect changes in family members running the business, and that this variation of the name was used between 1849 and 1863 (Hampshire Cultural Trust website). The contents of the vessel is unknown as the makers name of the product is half missing and only reads "...tes & Co". The number "4" is also embossed below the neck possibly indicating the size of the vessel.

## **7. COMMENTS (Fig. 3)**

- 7.1** Historic mapping dating back to 1738 shows the area as fields prior to the establishment of the Dock Lines in the mid-18th century. No features pre-dating the Lines were exposed, and no find either associated with or pre-dating the Dock Lines were recovered.
- 7.2** The investigations have confirmed the previous archaeological evaluations, and provided further observations of the course of the 1750s/1760s Dock Lines to the northeast of Admiralty House. They have shown that the ditch was cut through both bedrock and where present overlying deposits. Remains of limestone revetment walls were recorded on both edges of the ditch, both cut into the bedrock, and retaining soils. Although the remains of these walls were heavily fragmentary the observations confirm the previous investigations that the 1750s/1760s Dock Lines ditch was stone-lined. The Dock Lines were last realigned in 1853-68 when the length within the north-south aligned section within the development site was moved to the east. The find of a flagon dating to between 1849 and 1863 recovered from a primary fill of the ditch confirms that the ditch was infilled after the new defences were constructed. The fills of the ditch were broadly similar across the trenches, and were also similar to the underlying soil through which the ditch was excavated. This observation along with the way the fills in trench 2 slumped into the trench, indicate that these pre-ditch soils were used to form the rampart on the west side of the ditch, and that the rampart was deliberately slighted and backfilled into the ditch when it was realigned in the mid-19th century.
- 7.3** The features S601-S604 represent part of the circuit that appears to have had its line retained through the full history of the defensive work formed in earliest mid-18th century phase and continuing until this part was filled and landscaped in the late 19th and 20th centuries. The purpose of the projecting walls (S601 and S602) is not known, but they are located in the position of a foot bridge marked on a map of 1896 (Fig. 3), previously recorded by Exeter Archaeology, and may have been built to support a bridge crossing the defunct defences and allowing access from the grounds to the east of Admiralty House to a small area of land defined by an angle of the ditch and the quarry to the east. Alternatively, an 1857 map shows a gun platform close to this position (Pye and Woodward 1996, 164, fig. 78) and similar parallel walls for supporting gun platforms have been observed on the Lines to the north at the musketry keep of George's Bastion (Rainbird *forthcoming*).
- 7.4** Wall 103 recorded in the service trench north of the apartment block is located to the west of the course of the Dock Lines ditch. The position and alignment of the wall correlates with the course of a pathway running around the inside of the rampart that is recorded on an Ordnance Survey map of 1857 (Pye and Woodward 1996, fig. 78).



## 8. OASIS ENTRY AND ARCHIVE

- 8.1 An OASIS entry has been completed under the unique identifier **283283**, which includes a digital copy of this report.
- 8.2 The digital archive for the project will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service within three months of the acceptance of this report by Plymouth City Council.

## 9. SOURCES CONSULTED

Boyd, N., 2014. *Project Design for Archaeological Monitoring and Recording for Phase 3A of the Site Adjacent to Discovery Road, Plymouth, South West* Archaeology WSI reference **SWARCHPMWP3114**

Exeter Archaeology, 2006, *Former MoD Site, Mount Wise, Devonport: Archaeology Summary Report*

Pye, A., and Woodward, F., 1996, *The Historic Defences of Plymouth*, Cornwall County Council

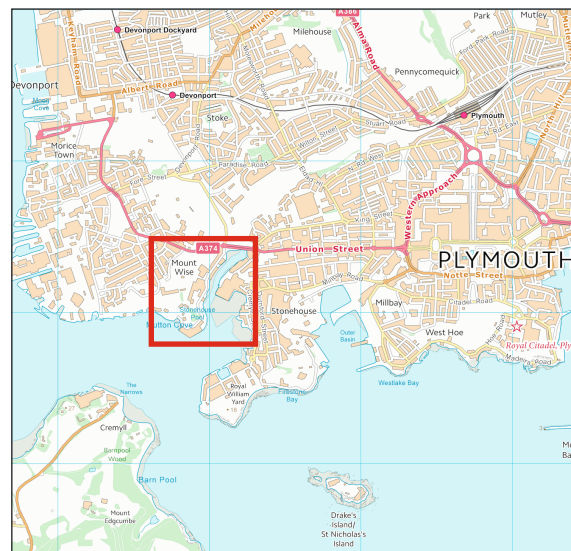
Rainbird, P. *forthcoming, Land behind the Cumberland Centre, Damerel Close, Devonport, Plymouth*. AC archaeology report no. **ACD1010/2/0**

Wapshott, E, and Walls, S., 2014, *Mount Wise Phase 3A, Plymouth, Devon: Results of a Desk-Based Appraisal & Heritage Impact Assessment*, South West Archaeology Report No **140422**

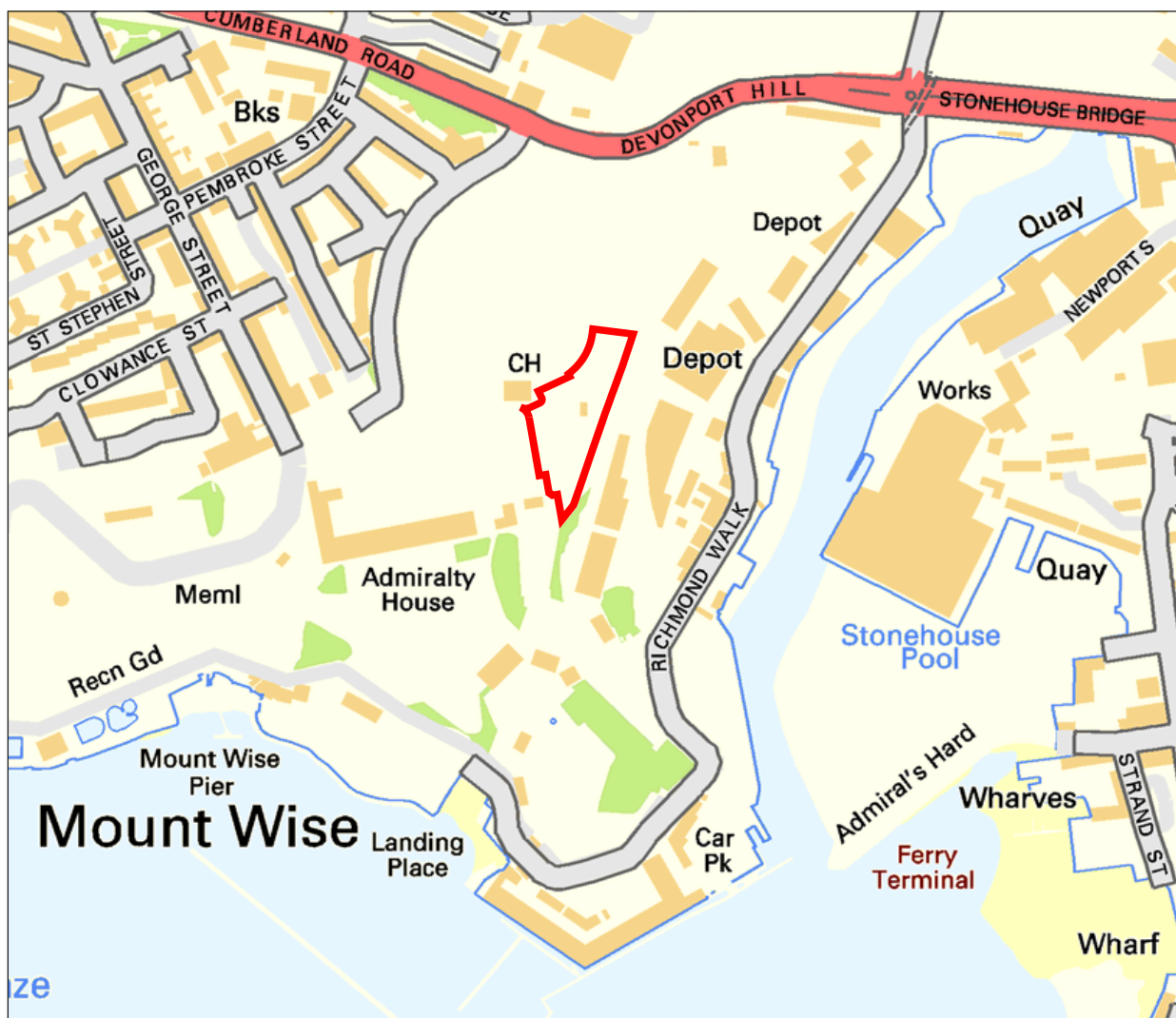
### Websites

British Geological Survey, <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>

Hampshire Cultural Trust, <http://Hctcollections.org.uk/index.asp>



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PROJECT

Mount Wise Phase 3A, Plymouth

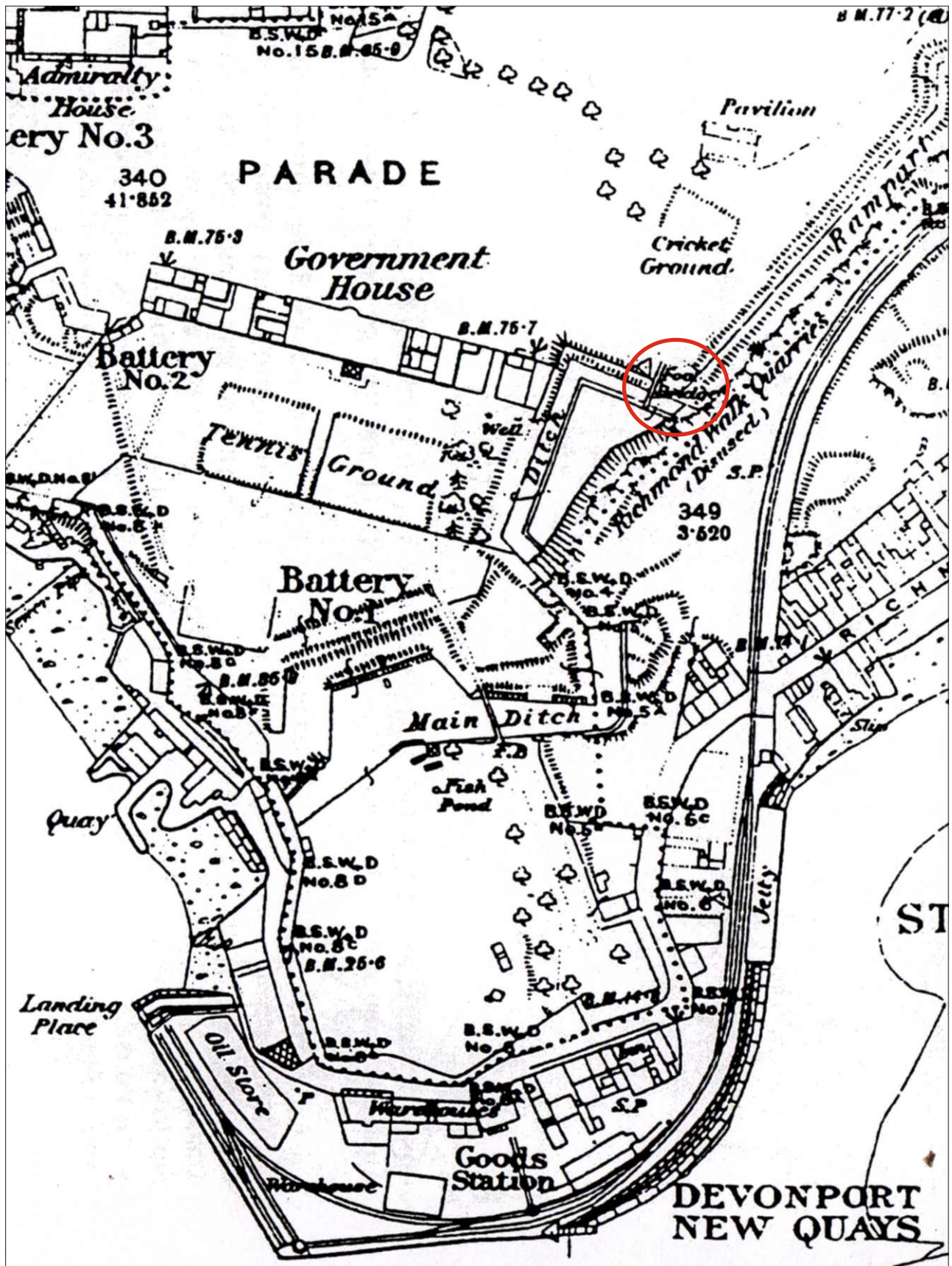
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Fig. 1: Site location









PROJECT

Mount Wise Phase 3A, Plymouth

TITLE

Fig. 3: Extract of 1896 map showing location of foot bridge (PRO: WO 78/2314)



AC archaeology

a) Plan of soakaway tank 2

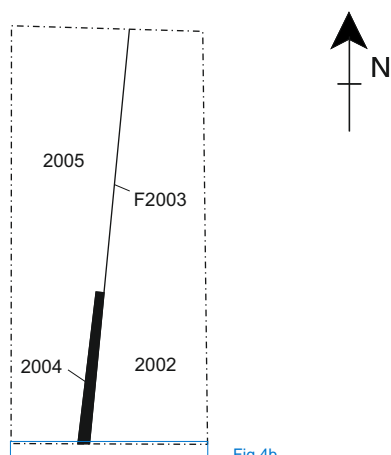
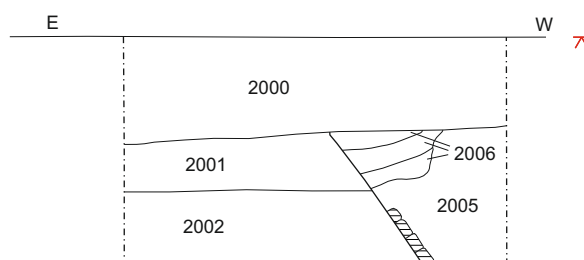


Fig 4b

b) North-facing section of soakaway tank 2

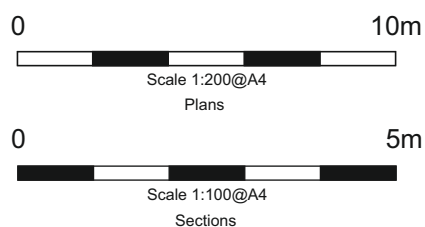
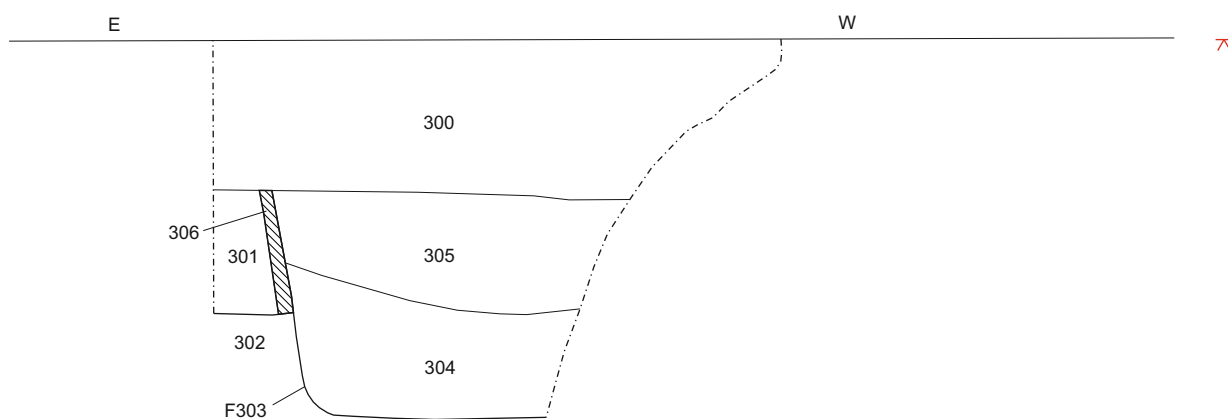


c) Plan of trench 1



Fig 4d

d) North-facing section of trench 1



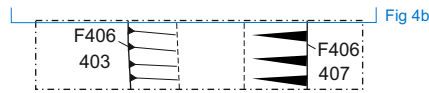
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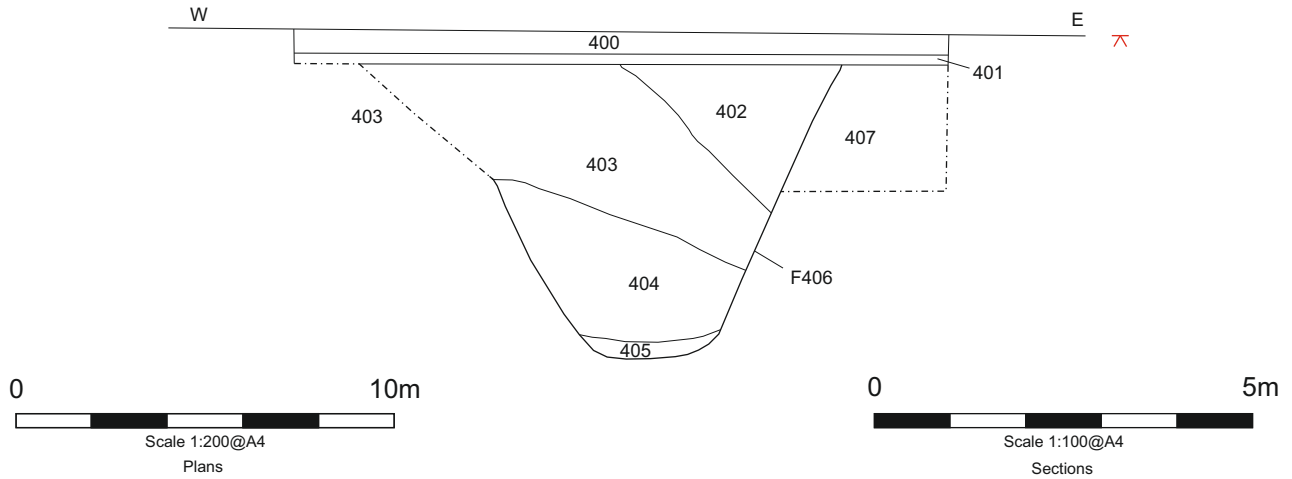
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Fig. 4: Soakaway tank 2 and trench 1, plans and sections

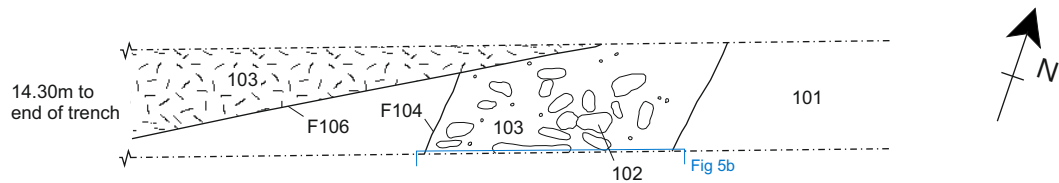
a) Plan of Trench 2



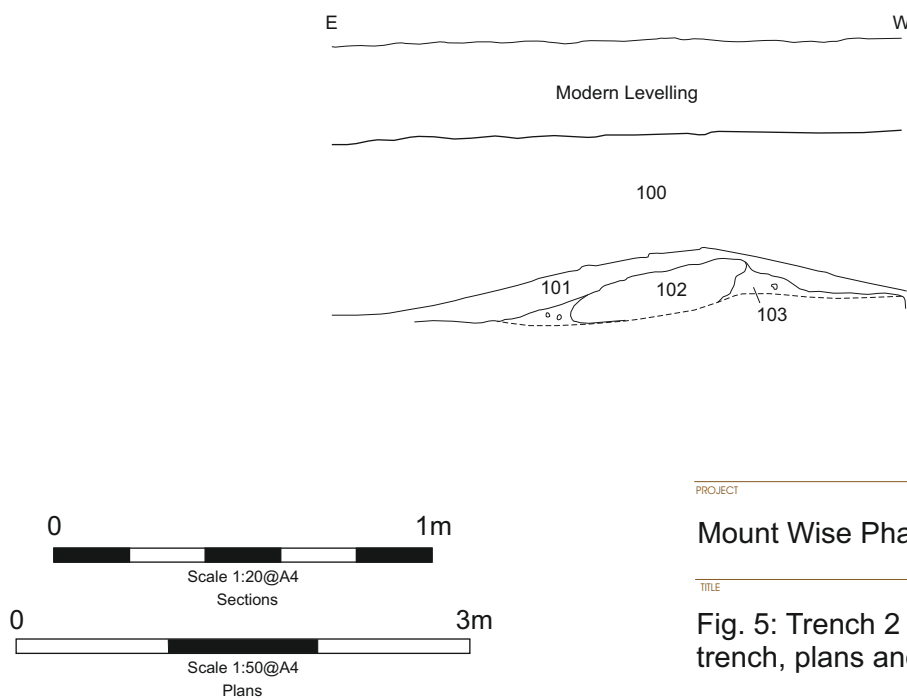
b) South-facing section of Trench 2



c) Plan of wall 102/103 in service trench



d) North-facing section of 102



PROJECT

Mount Wise Phase 3A, Plymouth

TITLE

Fig. 5: Trench 2 and service trench, plans and sections





Plate 1: General view of the site prior to groundworks, looking south.  
Photograph courtesy Henry W Pollard & Sons Ltd



Plate 2: General view of groundworks, looking southwest. Photograph courtesy Henry W Pollard & Sons Ltd



Plate 3: South end of the site showing shallow stratigraphy, looking northeast.  
Photograph courtesy Henry W Pollard & Sons Ltd



Plate 4: Southeast corner of the site with arrows showing the northeast to southwest parallel walls S601 and S602, looking southeast. Photograph courtesy Henry W Pollard & Sons Ltd



Plate 5: Southeast corner of the site with arrow showing the outer wall S605 of the early dock lines ditch, looking southeast. Photograph courtesy Henry W Pollard & Sons Ltd



Plate 6: Soakaway tank 1 during excavation, looking southwest. (1m scale)





Plate 7: Location view of soakaway tank 2, looking southwest.



Plate 8: Soakaway tank 2, north-facing section showing Dock Line ditch F2003. (1m scale)



Plate 9: Trench 2, north-facing section showing Dock Line ditch F406.



Plate 10: Service trench, location view showing wall 102/103 mid trench, looking southwest



Plate 11: Service trench showing wall 102/103, looking southeast. (1m scale)

### Devon Office

AC archaeology Ltd  
Unit 4, Halthaies Workshops  
Bradninch  
Nr Exeter  
Devon  
EX5 4LQ

Telephone/Fax: 01392 882410

### Wiltshire Office

AC archaeology Ltd  
Manor Farm Stables  
Chicklade  
Hindon  
Nr Salisbury  
Wiltshire  
SP3 5SU

Telephone: 01747 820581  
Fax: 01747 820440

[www.acarchaeology.co.uk](http://www.acarchaeology.co.uk)