

# MOUNT WISE AREA D (PHASE B), DEVONPORT, PLYMOUTH

(NGR SX 45863 54365)

Results of an archaeological watching brief

Plymouth City Council planning reference 17/00134/FUL,  
condition 4

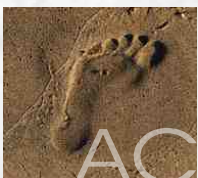
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On behalf of:  
Henry W Pollard & Sons

Document No: ACD1965/2/0

Date: February 2019



AC archaeology

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Checked by	Paul Rainbird
Approved by	Andrew Passmore

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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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## Contents

	<i>Summary</i>	
1.	Introduction	1
2.	Historical and archaeological background	1
3.	Aims and methodology	2
4.	Results	2
5.	Comments	4
6.	Archive and OASIS entry	4
7.	Sources consulted	5

## List of Figures

Fig. 1:	Site location
Fig. 2:	Extract from the 1879 25-inch Ordnance Survey map of the area showing the course of the 18th-century Dock Lines east of George's Square Barracks
Fig. 3:	Location of observations
Fig. 4:	Plan of bulk reduction
Fig. 5:	Sections

## List of Plates

Plate 1:	The footprint of the apartment block after initial removal of modern deposits, looking southwest. The ditch of the Dock Lines is the dark strip to the left of natural orange-red clay. The Dock Lines have previously been recorded under the apartment block in the centre of the photograph
Plate 2:	View following the initial bulk reduction showing the location of the test pit, looking northwest. The upper fills of the Dock Lines ditch can be seen in the section of the excavation beyond the test pit
Plate 3:	The test pit showing the western half of the Dock Lines ditch, looking southwest. The scarp wall S104 is visible to the right of the survey scale. (1m scale and survey scale in 1m coloured sections)
Plate 4:	Scarp wall S104, looking northwest. (1m scale)
Plate 5:	The Dock Lines ditch (part backfilled) during bulk reduction, looking northeast. (1m scale)
Plate 6:	The Dock Lines ditch (part backfilled) during bulk reduction, looking southwest

## Summary

*A watching brief was carried out between December 2018 and February 2019 by AC archaeology, on behalf of Henry W Pollard & Sons Ltd, during the construction of an apartment block at the Area D (phase 3B) development at Mount Wise, Devonport, Plymouth. The application area is located within the 1860s Dock Lines surrounding Devonport Dockyard, and contains the buried remains of the original (1750s-1760s) course of the defences.*

*The excavations exposed the ditch associated with the 1854 upgrading of the mid 18th-century Dock Lines, but no other structures or associated features survived. The scarp wall partially survived at the base of the ditch, and the infilling deposits contained material derived from the demolished scarp and counterscarp walls as well as the former above-ground earthworks (the scarp/rampart and counterscarp bank).*

### 1. INTRODUCTION (Fig. 1)

1.1 This report sets out the results of archaeological investigations carried out by AC archaeology between December 2018 and February 2019 during the Area D (phase 3B) development at Mount Wise, Devonport, Plymouth (NGR SX 45863 54365; Fig. 1). The report was commissioned by the principal contractor, Henry W Pollard & Sons Ltd, and was required under condition 4 of the grant of planning permission by Plymouth City Council (planning reference 17/01134/FUL) for 'residential development of 73 apartments including parking and associated works'. It supersedes an interim report on the initial stage of the watching brief (AC archaeology document no. ACD1965/1/0). The scope of the works was set out in a written scheme of investigation submitted with the planning application (Boyd 2017).

1.2 The site is located within the northeast part of the wider Mount Wise redevelopment, to the south of Devonport Hill, and to the west of the mid 19th-century Dock Lines defensive works which in this area form the eastern boundary of Mount Wise. It is situated on flat land at a height of approximately 20m above Ordnance Datum. The underlying geology consists of Devonian Limestone of the Plymouth Limestone Formation (British Geological Survey online viewer).

1.3 The scheme comprises the construction of a residential apartment block, along with associated car parking and landscaping.

### 2. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND (Fig. 2)

#### Historical background

2.1 The site is located within the Dock Lines, a 'bastioned enceinte' enclosing the late 17th-century naval dockyard and surrounding 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 date to this last phase of works, more specifically the period 1861-68 and replaced the original lines, which were located slightly to the west (*ibid.*, 154; Pye and Sage 1995, 2; Fig. 2 shows the position of the mid 18th-century Dock Lines in relation to Devonport Hill and George's Square Barracks).

2.2 Locally, by the early 20th-century the ground behind these mid 19th-century defences was relandscaped with the removal of George's Square Barracks and their

replacement with a new, smaller square of barrack buildings. To the east the Garrison Cricket Ground, with associated landscaping, was constructed, partially over the course of the earlier Dock Lines. By the mid-20th century a series of five buildings had been constructed around the northeast side of the cricket ground; three were demolished in the 1950s when the other was recorded on Ordnance Survey maps as a 'club'.

### **Archaeological background**

- 2.3** The mid 18th-century Dock Lines within Area D were targeted as part of an archaeological trench evaluation of the wider Mount Wise redevelopment Area (Exeter Archaeology 2006; see also Walls and Wapshott 2017). This identified part of the counterscarp of the ditch, but a full profile was not established, and no walls lining the counterscarp side of the ditch were present.
- 2.4** Archaeological investigations by AC archaeology to the south of the cricket ground during construction of the phase 3A development exposed further lengths of the mid 18th-century Dock Lines (Passmore and Rainbird 2017). Here, partial remains of retaining walls to both the scarp and counterscarp sides of the ditch survived. A wall defining one side of a path below the rampart, west of the ditch, was also exposed.

## **3. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1** The site had potential for surviving below-ground remains, specifically of the mid 18th-century Dock Lines, which would be impacted upon by groundworks associated with the construction of the new residential apartment block.
- 3.2** The aim of the investigation, as set out in the decision notice, was to observe groundworks, and to excavate and record any surviving below-ground archaeological remains. This was with particular reference to the mid 18th-century Dock Lines.
- 3.3** The investigations were carried out in accordance with the written scheme of investigation prepared by South West Archaeology (Boyd 2017), the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists' *Standard and Guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (revised 2014), as well as the AC archaeology *General Site Recording Manual, Version 2*.

## **4. RESULTS (Figs 3-5; Plates 1-6)**

- 4.1** Two excavations were monitored. Firstly, bulk reduction of the footprint of the new apartment block in the location of the mid 18th-century Dock Lines, and secondly a service diversion trench located to the east and north of the new apartment block.

### **Apartment block excavation**

- 4.2** Following removal of modern deposits an area measuring up to 21m long by 20m wide was bulk reduced within the footprint of the new apartment block (Plate 1). This was undertaken to remove a 'soft spot' consisting of natural clay overlying solid bedrock and the infilled Dock Lines ditch. Due to the deep excavations recording was limited, but detailed observations of the Dock Lines ditch were made.
- 4.3** The full profile of the upper section of the ditch (F100) was recorded in the north section of the excavation (Plate 2) where it had been dug through the natural yellow clay (108) and a buried firm dark-brown silty clay subsoil (111). The top of the ditch

measured 10.5m wide, and both sides of the ditch had steep profiles. A series of five fills were recorded; four had been dumped from either side of the ditch, representing material from the slighted inner rampart and outer counterscarp bank. These comprised deposits of firm mid-brown silty clay (110 and 114), and clay with abundant mortar rubble and occasional brick and slate inclusions (117 and 112). These were sealed by a final fill of compact mid-grey-brown clay with common limestone gravel (113). A small linear feature (F115) had been cut into the top of the ditch (into 113). This measured 2.1m wide by 0.50m deep with steep sides and a rounded base. It contained a single fill of mid-reddish-brown clay with abundant limestone gravel inclusion (116).

- 4.4** The lower deposits were partially exposed in a test pit below the level of the initial ground reduction (Plate 3). Here upper fills 105, 106 and 107 equated to contexts 110, 117 and 112, respectively. Fill 105 overlaid a compact deposit of rubble limestone and mortar (103). This abutted the remains of a mortar-bonded limestone wall S104 forming a revetment to the west side of the ditch (Plate 4). The wall had been partially historically dismantled, and on average it measured 0.90m wide with a maximum surviving height of 1.20m, and with a vertical or near vertical outer face. The wall was constructed onto a compact dark-grey silty clay (102) that probably represents a primary construction deposit, perhaps a clay 'puddling' lining.
- 4.5** Subsequent removal of the ditch fills (Plates 5 and 6) confirmed that the recorded sequence of deposits infilling the ditch was consistent across the footprint of the new building. Scarp wall S104 was present across most of the width of the excavation, although it had been fully removed in two places.

#### **Service diversion trench**

- 4.6** The excavation of a single trench was monitored. This measured 0.60m-0.70m wide by up to 1m deep.
- 4.7** The eastern arm of the trench was located on a bank adjacent to the site boundary. Here the deposit sequence comprised 0.30m of dark brownish-grey silty-loam overlying solid natural limestone bedrock.
- 4.8** To the west, beyond the bank, the deposit sequence consisted of modern landscaping and demolition deposits overlying the solid bedrock and rarely patches of light yellowish-brown clay. Further west, beyond deep concrete foundations of a 20th-century building, natural bedrock was exposed at depths of 0.58m-0.70m below the surface and was in part overlaid by a 0.38m layer of dark grey silt with common angular stone and mortar flecks. This was sealed by 0.32m of deposits associated with a modern temporary access road.
- 4.9** Further west again the bedrock was overlaid by layers of modern overburden. Here the ditch of the mid 18th-century Dock Lines (F5) was exposed below the overburden, cut into the solid bedrock (6). It measured 4.90m wide and was exposed to a depth of 0.80m below the top of bedrock. The inner, western edge was considerably steeper than the outer, eastern edge, consistent with the profile recorded in the adjacent excavation. As to the south, at this high level there was no evidence of stone lining to the sides. Four upper fills were exposed in the following sequence from earliest to latest: reddish-brown silty clay (3, partially exposed at the base of the trench), moderately compact light-yellowish-brown silty clay with abundant medium-large limestone fragments (2), moderately compact light-yellowish-brown silty clay with very rare inclusions (1), and thin band of mid-grey silty clay (4).

## **5. COMMENTS**

- 5.1** Historic mapping dating back to 1738 shows the area as fields prior to the establishment of the Dock Lines in the 1750s and 1760s. No features pre-dating the Lines were exposed, and no finds either associated with or pre-dating the Dock Lines were recovered.
- 5.2** The investigations have confirmed the results of the previous archaeological investigations on the course of the 1750s/1760s Dock Lines to the northeast of Admiralty House (both on the site, and to the south within the phase 3A development). They have shown that the ditch was cut through either natural bedrock or clay, as well as a buried agricultural soil. Previous investigations here south of Devonport Hill (e.g. Passmore and Rainbird 2017) have shown that survival of the scarp and counterscarp walls are fragmentary, and consistent with these previous observations no evidence of these survived in the upper part of the ditch. The scarp wall partially survived at a lower depth, rising from a clay puddling deposit at the base of the ditch. The face of the wall here was vertical or near vertical. The ditch had been deliberately infilled when the Dock Lines were moved further east in the 1860s, and this material included demolition deposits of rubble stone and mortar probably from the demolished scarp and counterscarp walls, as well as the rampart and counterscarp bank. The rampart here, between the ditch and George's Square Barracks was wider, and presumably taller, than elsewhere in this area (see Fig. 2), seemingly to provide protection to the adjacent barrack block, and as such provided a large quarry of material for the 1860s landscaping. The reason for the discrepancy between the widths of the ditches in the two observations has not been identified.
- 5.3** Research into the Dock Lines to the north of Devonport Hill (e.g. Pye and Sage 1995) has identified that the initial mid 18th-century defences were relatively slight, and were strengthened in the 1850s with the enlargement of the ditch, which was provided with masonry scarp and counterscarp walls, and with new ramparts and a higher counterscarp bank. Similar upgrading took place to the south of Devonport Hill, which is recorded on the military version of the Ordnance Survey 25-inch First Edition map (Fig. 2). It is almost certainly this 1854 phase of the Dock Lines that have been recorded within Area D. The vertical scarp wall has parallels with the documented and excavated walls of this period (*ibid.*, fig 12).
- 5.4** The area had been extensively relandscaped during the 20th-century, and more recently following demolition of modern buildings within the application area. With the exception of two soil deposits (one clearly pre-dating the mid 18th-century as it was cut through by the Dock Lines ditch), no other deposits or features were recorded across the monitored areas.

## **6. ARCHIVE AND OASIS ENTRY**

- 6.1** The digital archive will be deposited with the Archaeology Data Service within three months of the acceptance of this report by Plymouth City Council. An OASIS entry, including a digital copy of this report, has been created using the unique identifier 343621.

## 7. SOURCES CONSULTED

Boyd, N., 2017, *Project Design for Archaeological Monitoring & Recording for Area D, Land off Devonport Hill, Plymouth, Devon*, South West Archaeology reference **SWARCHPMWX17**.

Exeter Archaeology, 2006, *Former MoD Site, Mount Wise, Devonport, Archaeology Summary Report* (Exeter Archaeology no-number report).

Ordnance Survey military First Edition 25-inch Devonshire map sheet 123.11, published 1879.

Passmore, A., and Rainbird, P., 2017, *Mount Wise Phase 3A, Devonport, Plymouth, (NGR SX 45839 54199), Results of archaeological investigations, Plymouth City Council planning reference 14/1572/FUL, condition 21*, AC archaeology document no. **ACD1316/2/0**.

Pye, A., and Sage, A., 1995, *Phase II Field Evaluation: Damerel House and Excavation and Excavation and Recording: Cumberland House Devonport*, Exeter Archaeology Report No. **95.19**.

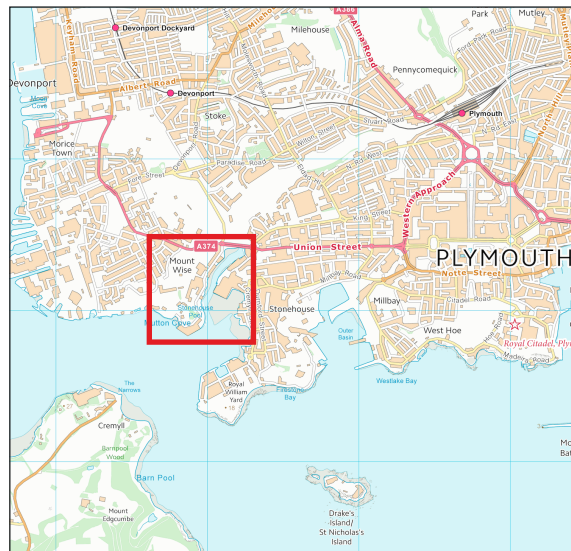
Pye, A., and Woodward, F., 1996, *The Historic Defences of Plymouth*, Cornwall County Council.

Walls, S., and Wapshott, E., 2017, *Area D, Mount Wise, Plymouth, Devon, Results of a Historical Visual Impact Assessment*, South West Archaeology report no. **170320**.

### Website

British Geological Survey on-line viewer  
[www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)





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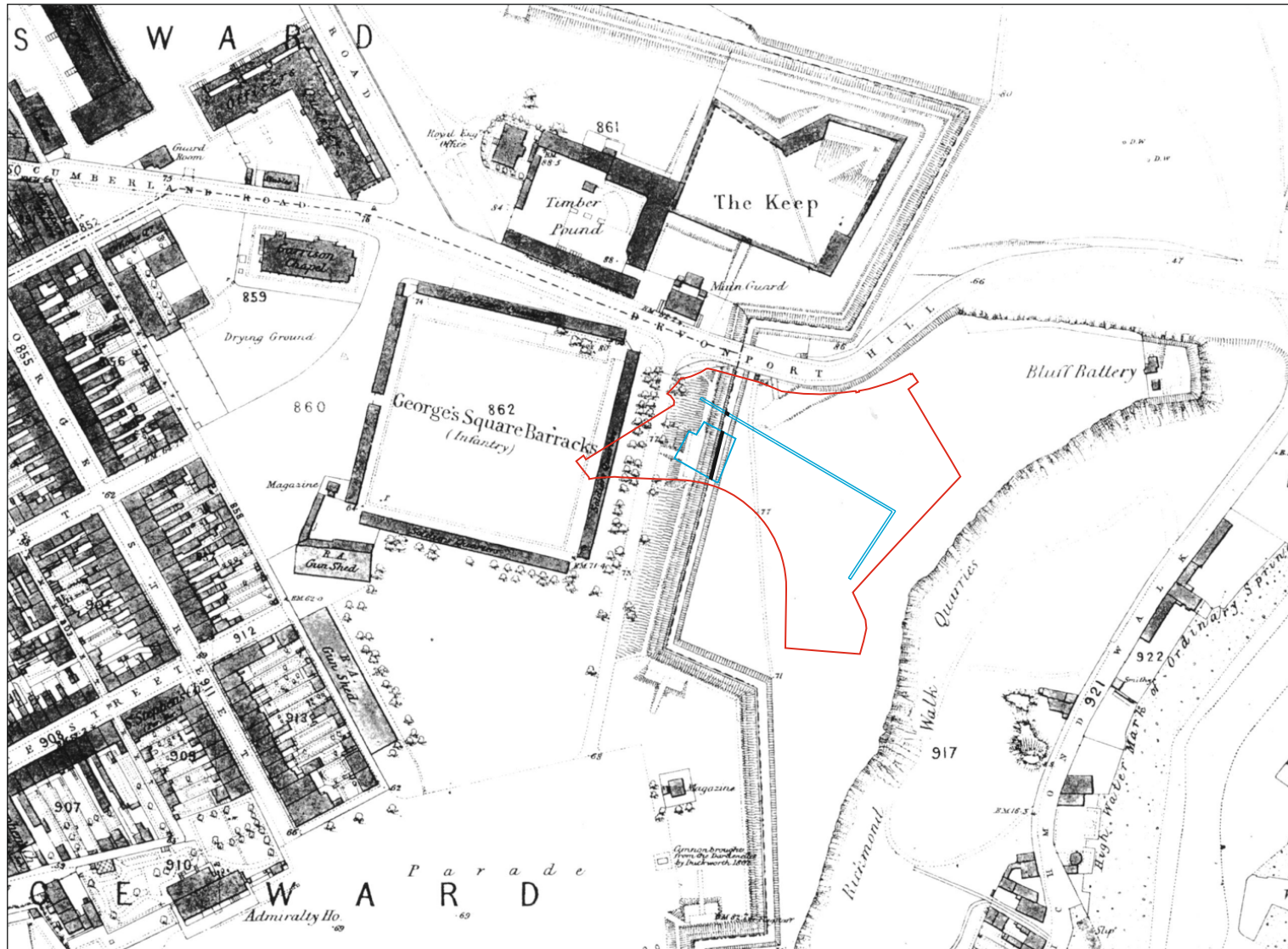


PROJECT  
**Mount Wise Area D, (Phase 3B),  
 Devonport, Plymouth**

TITLE

Fig. 1: Site location



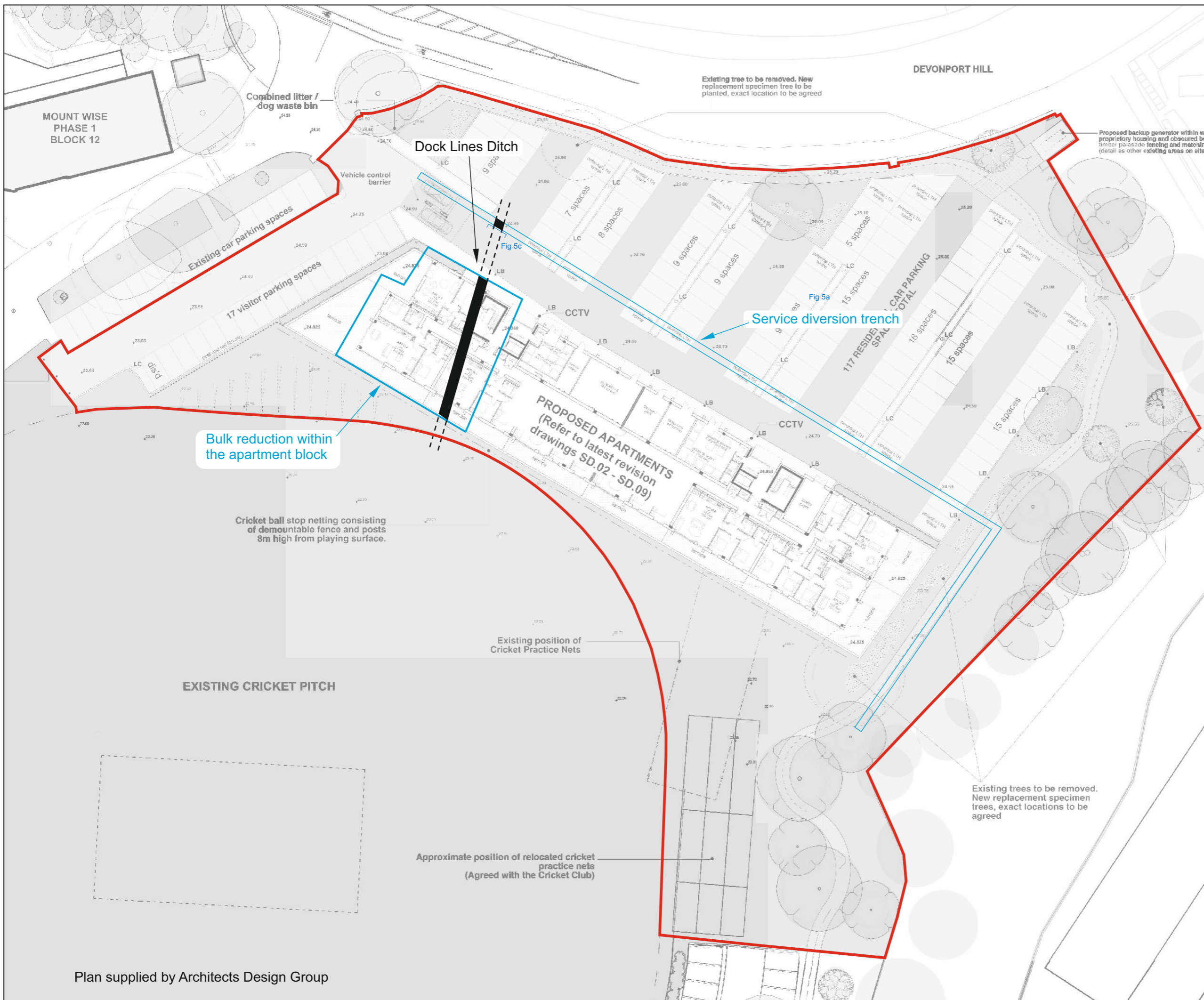


Legend

- Site Boundary
- Monitored Areas

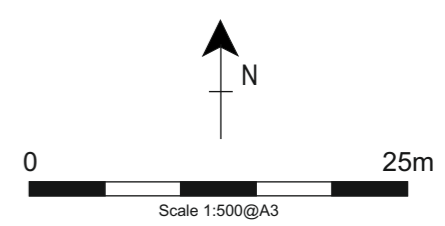
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 Mount Wise Area D, (Phase 3B),  
 Devonport, Plymouth

TITLE  
 Fig. 2: Extract from the 1879  
 25-inch Ordnance Survey map  
 of the area showing the course  
 of the 18th-century Dock Lines  
 east of George's Square  
 Barracks



**Legend**

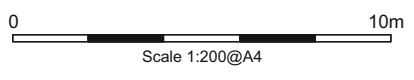
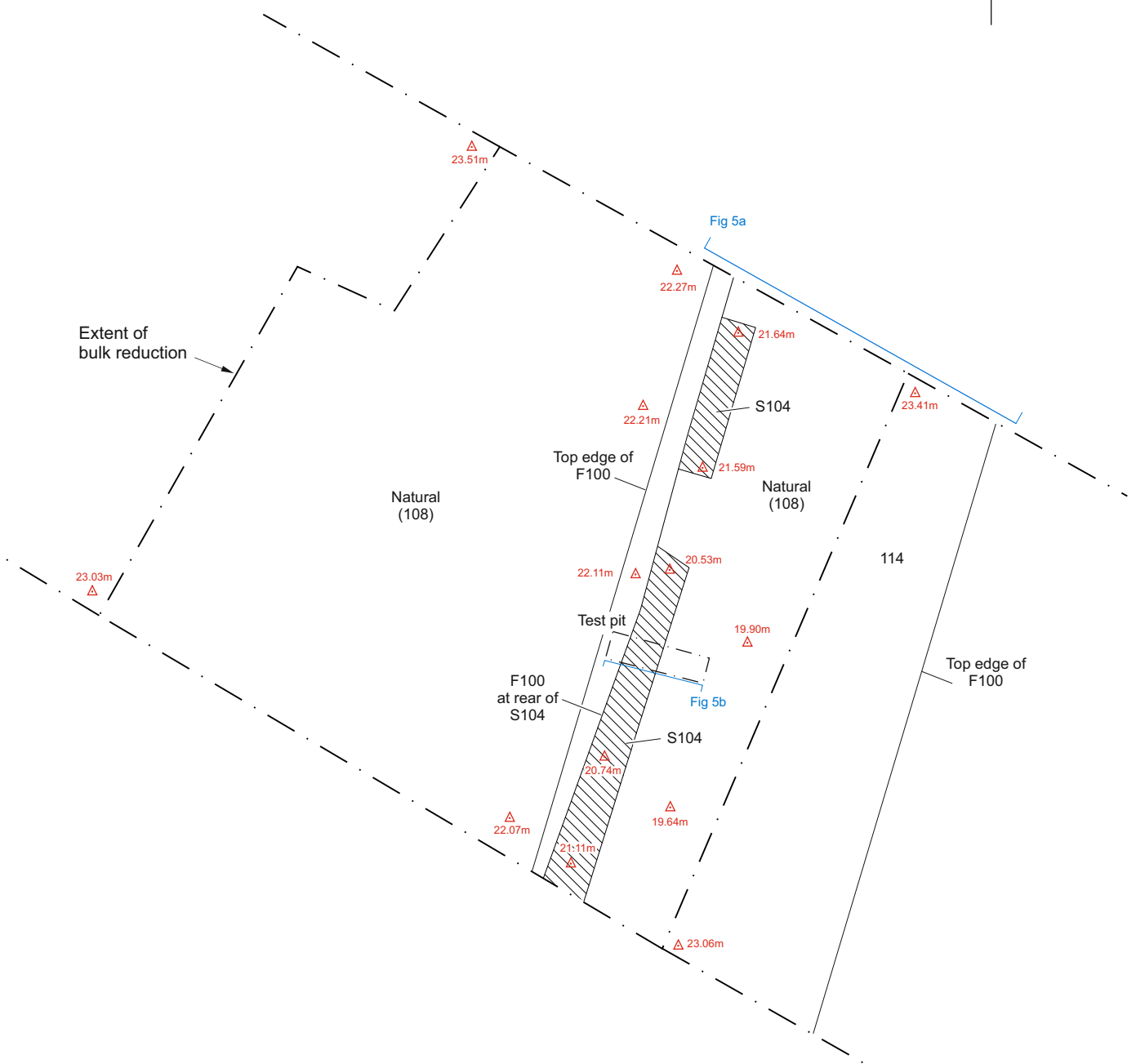
- Site Boundary
- Monitored Areas



PROJECT  
**Mount Wise Area D, (Phase 3B),  
 Devonport, Plymouth**

TITLE  
**Fig. 3: Location of observations**



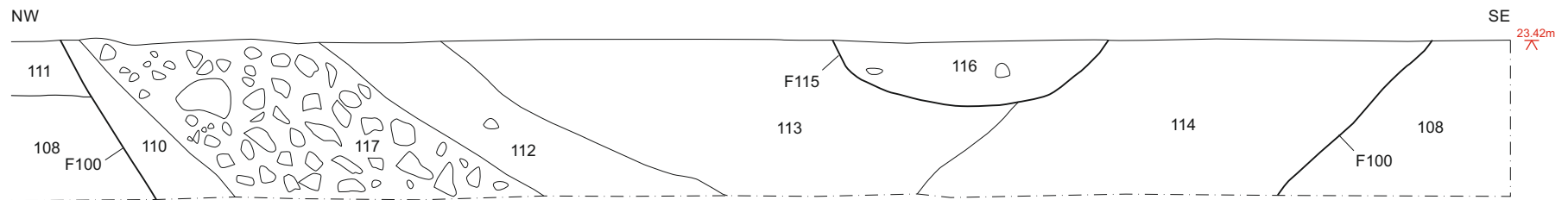


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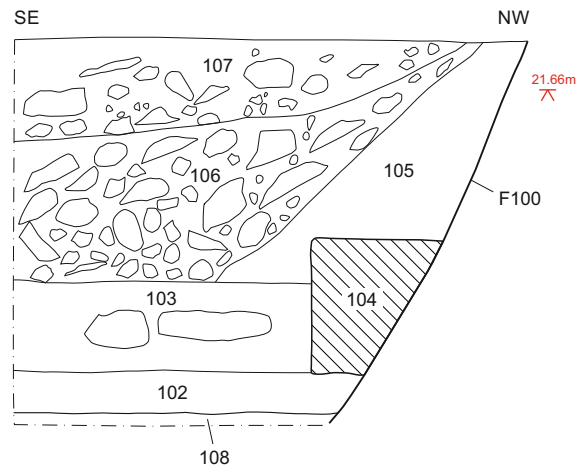
**Fig. 4: Plan of bulk reduction**



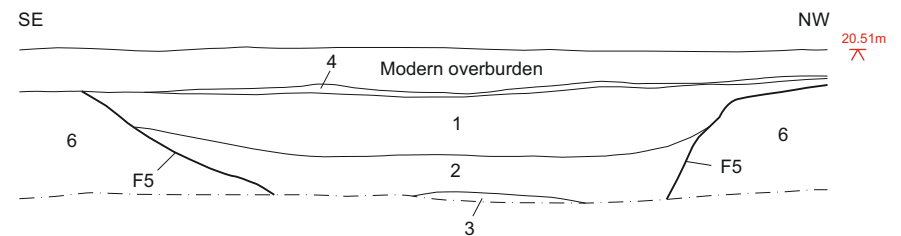
a) Southwest-facing section of bulk reduction trench



b) Northeast-facing section of test pit



c) Northeast-facing section of service diversion trench



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Devonport, Plymouth

TITLE  
Fig. 5: Sections



Plate 1: The footprint of the apartment block after initial removal of modern deposits, looking southwest. The ditch of the Dock Lines is the dark strip to the left of natural orange-red clay. The Dock Lines have previously been recorded under the apartment block in the centre of the photograph



Plate 2: View following the initial bulk reduction showing the location of the test pit, looking northwest. The upper fills of the Dock Lines ditch can be seen in the section of the excavation beyond the test pit



Plate 3: The test pit showing the western half of the Dock Lines ditch, looking southwest. The scarp wall S104 is visible to the right of the survey scale. (1m scale and survey scale in 1m coloured sections)



Plate 4: Scarp wall S104, looking northwest. (1m scale)



Plate 5: The Dock Lines ditch (part backfilled) during bulk reduction, looking northeast. (1m scale)



Plate 6: The Dock Lines ditch (part backfilled) during bulk reduction, looking southwest



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