

James Whatman Way Maidstone Kent



Archaeological Evaluation



Oxford Archaeology

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James Whatman Way, Maidstone*ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION*

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SUMMARY

Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at James Whatman Way, Maidstone, Kent, on behalf of Kent County Council (KCC) between 23rd and 27th January 2002. The evaluation revealed building and structural remains forming part of the 18th century cavalry barracks, and for the later use of the site by the MoD. No earlier remains were identified. The site has been extensively built up and levelled following the demolition of the barracks buildings prior to the construction of the A229 and is currently covered by several metres of made ground. Post-medieval ground deposits survive under the overburden in the eastern part of the site.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 Between January 23rd-27th 2002, OA carried out an archaeological evaluation at James Whatman Way, Maidstone, Kent, on behalf of Kent County Council (KCC) prior to redevelopment of the site by Kent Estate Management, and in accordance with specifications set by the KCC Heritage Conservation Unit. The development site is situated towards the northern outskirts of Maidstone, bounded by James Whatman Way to the south and west, Mill Lane to the north, and Royal Engineers Way to the west (Figure 1). The site is c.0.64 hectares in area.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The site slopes from c. 19.8m above OD at its north-western corner to c. 13.7m above OD at its north-eastern corner. To the south, the ground falls off more gently and lies at an approximate height of 17m above OD. The underlying geology is alluvium and Hythe Beds.

1.2.2 The river Medway runs c. 100m to the east of the site.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The villa complex (SMR NO: TQ 75 NE 28) was recorded to the north of the site during excavations in the 1970's and again prior to the construction of the A229 Spine Road in the 1990's (Houlston 1999). The evaluation site was considered sufficiently near the villa to have potential for the discovery of Roman ancillary buildings or other activity.

1.3.2 A Roman road is thought to follow the alignment of Sandling Road and Week Street (now Royal Engineers Way), and to have been a major link between the iron working areas of the Weald and the south coast, Rochester and Watling Street. The site borders onto the former alignment of the road, to the east.

1.3.3 The White House (now the White Rabbit public house) is one of the main upstanding surviving buildings of an 18th century cavalry barrack complex and is situated c. 60m to the south-east of the site. Cartographic data indicates that buildings associated with the barrack complex were located on the site itself.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1.1 The aims of the investigation were defined as follows:

- To clarify the presence or absence of any remains associated with the Mount Roman Villa
- To confirm the location, extent of survival, quality, and - if possible - function of the post-medieval barrack buildings
- To determine the presence or absence of original ground deposits and any other archaeological remains within the site

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The investigation was to be undertaken as a series of trial trenches, located in a pattern agreed with the County Archaeologist. An indicative trench layout was provided, which took into consideration cartographic data and a survey of the area for the Spine Road Construction (Drawing No. 5118/137 Kent County Council Highways and Transportation).
- 3.1.2 Trench locations were adjusted to accommodate services, modern building disturbance and clear signs of ground levelling. Such adjustments were made in agreement with the County Archaeologist during the evaluation. Figure 1 illustrates the layout of the trial trenches as investigated.
- 3.1.3 Six trenches of 20m length and 1.8m width were originally proposed.
- 3.1.4 Of these, two (Trench 1 and Trench 2) were reduced to two test pits each (labelled A and B) of *c.* 2.5m x 1.8m, located at the trench ends, due to the depth of made ground encountered.
- 3.1.5 Trench 1 was moved from its proposed location due to the presence of a fence line.
- 3.1.6 Trench 6 was shortened to 10m to avoid live services. Nevertheless a live electric cable, undetected during initial scanning, was exposed during the excavation and further work at that location was abandoned (Trench 6A). An additional test pit (Trench 6B) was excavated nearby instead, but encountered an unrecorded service pipe.
- 3.1.7 Trenches 3, 4 and 5 were excavated in their originally proposed locations and to their full 20m length.
- 3.1.8 The site was divided into two plots by a chain link fence, and were recorded as Investigation Areas A and B. Trenches 1A & B, 2 A & B and 3 were situated in Area A, Trenches 4, 5 and 6 A & B in Area B.

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 Most recently, the site had been used as a car park, with large areas covered by modern hard standing. A row of mature trees cuts across the centre of the site. Where possible, trench locations were adjusted to avoid the surfaces and any disturbance of

the tree roots. Trench 5, however, necessitated the removal 0.2m of steel-reinforced concrete hard standing prior to excavation.

- 3.2.2 All trenches were covered by recent made ground, which was removed by a 360° "rubber duck" excavator equipped with a flat bucket. Where building remains were encountered, excavations were taken to this horizon only. However, all trenches were subject to trial depth excavation to the natural geology at a convenient location.
- 3.2.3 Where necessary, hand cleaning was undertaken to establish the extent and date of the building remains and associated deposits where encountered. As no significant archaeological features were identified (other than 19th/ 20th building foundations) no hand excavation was undertaken. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D. Wilkinson, 1992). Trench plans were drawn at a scale of 1:100, a site plan at a 1:200 scale, and sample sections at 1:20. Trench logs and a full photographic record using 35mm transparency film in black and white and colour (slide) were completed.

3.3 Finds

- 3.3.1 No finds were retained during the evaluation. The dating of the building remains was undertaken with regard to the materials and construction method used, and by reference to cartographic evidence.
- 3.3.2 Modern finds from deep made ground deposits were discarded.

3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

- 3.4.1 No environmental samples were recovered.

4 RESULTS: GENERAL

4.1 Soils and ground conditions

- 4.1.1 The site is located on the eastern bank of the river Medway, with an underlying geology comprising alluvial clays and Hythe Beds.
- 4.1.2 The investigation showed the site to have been subjected to extensive landscaping with modern made ground. Although the sloping ground of the current topography suggested a preservation of the original valley slope on the western side of the site, trial excavations proved the slope to be made ground of a recent (mid- to late 20th century) date, in-filling the MoD lorry park noted on the Spine Road survey, which must have been terraced into the slope.
- 4.1.3 A clean orange alluvial clay (context 107) was encountered at the base of Trench 1A to the north-east beneath the made ground at a depth of 2m (c. 12m above OD).
- 4.1.4 In the test trenches to the south-west, Trenches 2A and 2B, excavations were also taken through the made ground to 2m below ground level, but no geological deposits were encountered. The ground level at these locations was between 1.5-2m higher than that of Trench 1A, and it was therefore assumed that any natural deposits could not be

exposed with the given method. The recent date of the made ground was confirmed by tree remains at the base of Trench 2B, and inclusions of materials such as barbed wire.

- 4.1.5 The centre of the site features a plateau which rises by a further c. 2m to the north. Trench 3 was excavated alongside the western edge of this plateau, and revealed the remains of a NW-SE aligned retaining wall and concrete platform of a slightly earlier (early to mid 20th century) date than the made ground to the west. The latter butted against the platform, indicating that the buildings were situated on a terrace c. 2m above the MoD lorry park.
- 4.1.6 Both Trench 3 and Trench 4 revealed a buried cultivated soil of 0.3-0.5m thickness (contexts 327 and 403), which overlay a clean orange alluvial clay of 0.4-0.8m thickness (contexts 328 and 404) surviving beneath 1.6-1.8m of modern made ground. In Trench 3, the natural beneath was a yellow sandy clay (329), and in Trench 4, an outcrop of ragstone was noted (405).
- 4.1.7 The building foundations remains in Trench 3 were built directly on the cultivated soil. In Trench 4, this deposit showed frequent flecks and inclusions of charcoal of up to 0.03m size. It also produced one abraded 19th/ 20th century stoneware sherd (not retained) but no more recent finds. The cultivated soil is likely to be associated with the main use phase of the barrack buildings, in the late 18th/ 19th century. The preserved land surface lies at around 15m above OD.
- 4.1.8 The excavations through Trenches 3 and 4 suggest that the southern part of the site was levelled with demolition rubble over standing foundations of the demolished barrack buildings, to around 17m above OD.
- 4.1.9 In the north-east part of the site the ground level of the site rises by a further 2m, and is covered by an extensive concrete platform and ramp. The excavation of Trench 5 revealed the footings of a substantial ragstone building, which the 1st edition OS map shows to be part of the original 18th century barrack complex. The remains were covered by a thin rubble deposit only, suggesting that the platform may have been constructed over the infilled remains of the building foundations.
- 4.1.10 Trial excavation were undertaken alongside the southern side of this building, revealing a deposit (context 507) similar to the buried cultivated soils of Trenches 3 and 4 under 1.6m of made ground. This deposit was comparatively thicker, c. 0.8m, and directly overlay the yellow sandy clay natural also noted in Trench 3. It may represent a build-up of cultivated soil against the building during its use, but excavation conditions did not allow this, or its relationship with the building remains, to be confirmed.

4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

- 4.2.1 No features earlier than the 18th century were observed during the investigation and no earlier residual finds were recovered.
- 4.2.2 The single stoneware sherd from context 404 was not retained due to its likely residual nature.

- 4.2.3 Structural remains ranging from the 18th to the late 20th century were all situated on the level ground to the west. The original embankment contour is likely to have been terraced prior to the construction of the cavalry barracks.
- 4.2.4 The slope east of the terrace appears to consist of extensive mid to late 20th century made ground. No archaeological horizons were reached during the excavations.

5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Description of archaeological deposits

- 5.1.1 Details of an early post-medieval buried land surface, natural geology, and modern level deposits have been described above, 4.1.
- 5.1.2 The description of all structural remains encountered is in the following grouped by their approximate date and summarized in Figure 2.
- 5.1.3 *18th/19th century*
- 5.1.4 Ragstone building foundations were observed in Trench 5 only (structure 504). These are clearly part of a building range on an ENE-WSW alignment recorded on the 1st edition OS map, forming part of the 18th/19th century cavalry barrack complex.
- 5.1.5 *19th/20th century*
- 5.1.6 Trench 4 revealed a red brick floor surface with associated drains and manhole to the south. Materials and construction method suggested a date around the late 19th/early 20th century. Comparison with the survey data from the Spine Road construction suggested this to be the remains of an external surface - possibly a patio - alongside the western side of the 'India Block' of the 20th century MoD barrack complex. All structural remains in Trench 4 showed evidence of repeated episodes of repair and later heavy truncation, probably from the demolition of the building.
- 5.1.7 Trial excavation through the northern end of Trench 4 revealed made ground consisting of coarse demolition debris from the building overlying the buried land surface described above, 4.1.7.
- 5.1.8 Building remains encountered in Trenches 3 and 1B were similar in materials and construction method to those of Trench 4, and were dated to this period. Wall 305 could be identified as the terrace retaining wall, on a NW-SE alignment, shown on the Spine Road survey.
- 5.1.9 The area east of the wall was later covered with a concrete surface showing several episodes of repair, but a series of narrow brick walls were observed to have been originally placed perpendicular to 305 at its eastern side, apparently forming 'bays' of around 2m width. Machine excavation between walls 305 and 311 showed a lower internal deposit of clean orangey clay, possibly a floor make-up re-using the natural alluvial clay in the area. No finds were recovered from this deposit.
- 5.1.10 A suggestion of similar narrow red brick 'bays' was observed in Trench 6B alongside the standing brick wall between the northern edge of the site and Mill Lane, although

the limited excavation in this trench allows only a tentative interpretation of the structures present.

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 Despite the fact that the nature and extent of the made ground and the presence of active services made excavation of the trenches difficult, sufficient reliable evidence was recovered to address most the fieldwork aims, and to gauge the impact of a redevelopment on the site on its historic and archaeological remains.

6.2 Overall interpretation

Summary of results

- 6.2.1 Overall, the evaluation can be regarded to have achieved the fieldwork objectives as laid out in 2.1.1.
- 6.2.2 Due to constraints on the excavation of trenches, only limited exposures of the natural subsoil were possible during the evaluation. However, given the absence of even residual finds pre-dating the 18th century and the extent of terracing and building activity apparent on the site, the potential for surviving pre-barracks archaeology is considered to be low.
- 6.2.3 The survival of extensive foundations of at least one of the earlier (possible 18th century) barrack buildings (504), indicated on early cartographic evidence to the north-east of the site can be confirmed. Excavations suggested that the foundations remains were in-filled and levelled, then sealed by a concrete platform in recent times. This would suggest that foundation elements of the 18th century barracks survive in the eastern part of the site.
- 6.2.4 Structures such as walls, services and surfaces relating to the later (late 19th/early 20th century) barrack building phase were recorded to the south of the site. The Spine Road survey data suggests that these remains are part of the demolished 'India Block'. Sufficient cartographic information is available for these buildings to render further investigation unnecessary. More detailed documentary information on the barracks buildings could no doubt be obtained from MoD archives if required.
- 6.2.5 A buried post-medieval land surface was recorded at around 1.6-1.8m below present ground level on the eastern plateau of the site. The later structures described in 6.2.3, appear to have been constructed directly onto this.
- 6.2.6 Alluvial clays and sandy clay and ragstone natural were observed to occur c. 2.5m-3m depth below ground level. The western extent to the site may have been formerly terraced, possibly prior to the construction of the barracks. This is likely to have removed any archaeological evidence in the western side of the site.

Significance

- 6.2.7 The evaluation confirmed the presence of post-medieval barrack remains which would be of local interest with regard to the political and socio-economic development of the town of Maidstone.

7 IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT

- 7.1.1 Any future development is likely to involve the removal of parts of the unstable overburden which could impact on the post-medieval remains and any surviving earlier evidence beneath. However, no evidence for activity preceding the 18th century barracks was identified.

8 ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL IN RELATION TO OUTLINE RESEARCH DESIGN

- 8.1.1 The site offers some potential to address research objectives with regard to the 18th-19th century barracks. However, details of the construction and function of the barracks buildings would be more efficiently investigated by a desktop study of historical and cartographic data than by excavation.
- 8.1.2 The results of the evaluation are insufficient to confirm a total absence of remains from the Roman period, but extensive truncation/ removal of such horizons is likely to have occurred as a result of the post-medieval and modern use of the site. Some material may remain preserved under the post-medieval and early modern building remains.

9 REVIEW OF RESEARCH ISSUES FOR THIS STAGE

- 9.1.1 No additional research issues are identified from the fieldwork results.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
1A								
	107	Layer			alluvial clay			undated
	108	Deposit		1.7	levelling deposit			late 20th
1B								
	100	Deposit		0.05	terram and stone surface			late 20th
	101	Deposit		0.05	terram and stone surface			late 20th
	102	Deposit			levelling deposit			late 20th
	103	Structure			brick wall/border			19th/20th
	104	Mortar			bond for 103			19th/20th
	105	Deposit		0.05	concrete surface			20th c
	106	Deposit			concrete surface			20th c
2A								
	200	Deposit		0.10	topsoil			late 20th century
	201	Deposit		1.90	made ground (not bottomed)			late 20th century
2B								
	202	Deposit		0.10	topsoil			late 20th century
	203	Deposit		1.90	made ground (not bottomed)			late 20th century
3								
	300	Deposit		0.05	terram and stone surface			late 20th
	301	Deposit		0.05	terram and stone surface			late 20th
	302	Deposit		0.08	tarmac surface			late 20th
	303	Deposit		0.5	levelling deposit			late 20th
	304	Deposit			internal floor make-up			19th/20th
	305	Structure			brick wall			19th/20th
	306	Mortar			bond for 305			19th/20th
	307	Structure			brick wall			19th/20th

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
	308	Mortar			bond for 307			19th/20th
	309	Structure			brick wall			19th/20th
	310	Mortar			bond for 309			19th/20th
	311	Structure			brick wall			19th/20th
	312	Mortar			bond for 311			19th/20th
	313	Deposit		0.15	levelling deposit			late 20th
	314	Layer		0.05	concrete surface			20th
	315	Cut			cut for drain 317			20th
	316	Deposit			fill of drain cut 315			20th
	317	Structure			brick drain & manhole			20th
	318	Mortar			bond for drain 317			20th
	319	Deposit		0.25	levelling deposit			late 20th
	320	Deposit			concrete surface			20th
	321	Cut			cut for concrete platform			20th
	322	Structure			brick wall/drain			19th/20th
	323	Mortar			bond for 322			19th/20th
	324	Deposit			levelling deposit			late 20th
	325	Deposit		0.2	levelling deposit			late 20th
	326	Deposit		0.45	internal floor make-up			19th/20th
	327	Layer		0.2	buried soil			undated
	328	Layer		0.5	alluvial clay			undated
	329	Layer			clay natural			
4								
	400	Deposit		0.1	loose rubble surface			late 20th
	401	Deposit		0.15	concrete surface			late 20th
	402	Deposit		1.2	levelling deposit			late 20th
	403	Layer		0.5	buried soil			18th/19th ?
	404	Layer		0.4	alluvial clay			undated
	405	Layer			ragstone natural			
	406	Deposit		0.08	tarmac surface			late 20th
	407	Structure			brick surface			19th/20th
	408	Structure			brick drain			19th/20th

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>No./wt</i>	<i>Date</i>
	409	Cut			drain			20th
	410	Fill			fill of drain			20th
	411	Structure			concrete surface			20th
	412	Structure			concrete surface			20th
5								
	500	Structure		0.25	concrete hardstanding			20th
	501	Deposit		0.9	levelling deposit			20th
	502	Deposit			made ground?			?20th
	503	Structure			brick drain			19th/20th
	504	Structure			ragstone building			18th/19th
	505	Deposit			levelling deposit			20th
	506	Deposit			levelling deposit			20th
	507	Layer?		0.9	buried soil?/made ground			undated
	508	Layer			clay natural			
6A								
	600	Deposit		0.10	topsoil			late 20th century
	601	Deposit		0.50	made ground			late 20th century
6B								
	602	Deposit		0.10	topsoil			late 20th century
	603	Deposit		0.50	made ground			late 20th century

APPENDIX 2 SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD FORM

Site Name: Land off James Whatman Way, Maidstone, Kent (Site code: MNEMG:2002.1)	
Summary: Excavation of six trial trenches revealed building and structural remains related to historically attested 18th century cavalry barracks and the later use of the site by the MoD. No earlier, including Roman, remains were identified.	
District: Maidstone	Parish: Maidstone
Period(s): 1. Post-medieval	
NGR Easting: TQ 7560	NGR Northing: 5635
Type of Recording: Evaluation	
Date of Recording: (From) 23 January 2002 (To) 27 January 2002	
Unit Undertaking Recording: Oxford Archaeology	
Summary of Fieldwork Results: Excavation of six trial trenches within a 0.64ha development site, off James Whatman Way, Maidstone, revealed building and structural remains related to historically attested 18th century cavalry barracks and the later use of the site by the MoD. No earlier remains were identified. The site had been subjected to extensive in-filling of terraces and raising of the ground level, following the demolition of the barracks buildings, prior to the construction of the A229.	
Location of Archive / Finds: Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Maidstone Museum in due course, under the following accession code: MNEMG:2002.1 Bibliography: OA 2002, 'James Whatman Way', archaeological evaluation report prepared by Oxford Archaeology for Kent County Council, March 2002	
Summary Compiler: Stuart Foreman	Date: 15th March 2002

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY FOR PUBLICATION IN *ARCHAEOLOGIA CANTIANA*

Excavation of six trial trenches within a 0.64ha development site, off James Whatman Way, Maidstone, revealed building and structural remains related to historically attested 18th century cavalry barracks and the later use of the site by the MoD. No earlier remains were identified. The site had been subjected to extensive in-filling of terraces and raising of the ground level, following the demolition of the barracks buildings, prior to the construction of the A229.

APPENDIX 3 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site Location

Server:4(W):\camps\1\All drawings\MAJ\JWWEV\Maidstone_Whatman way*PL*11.02.02.

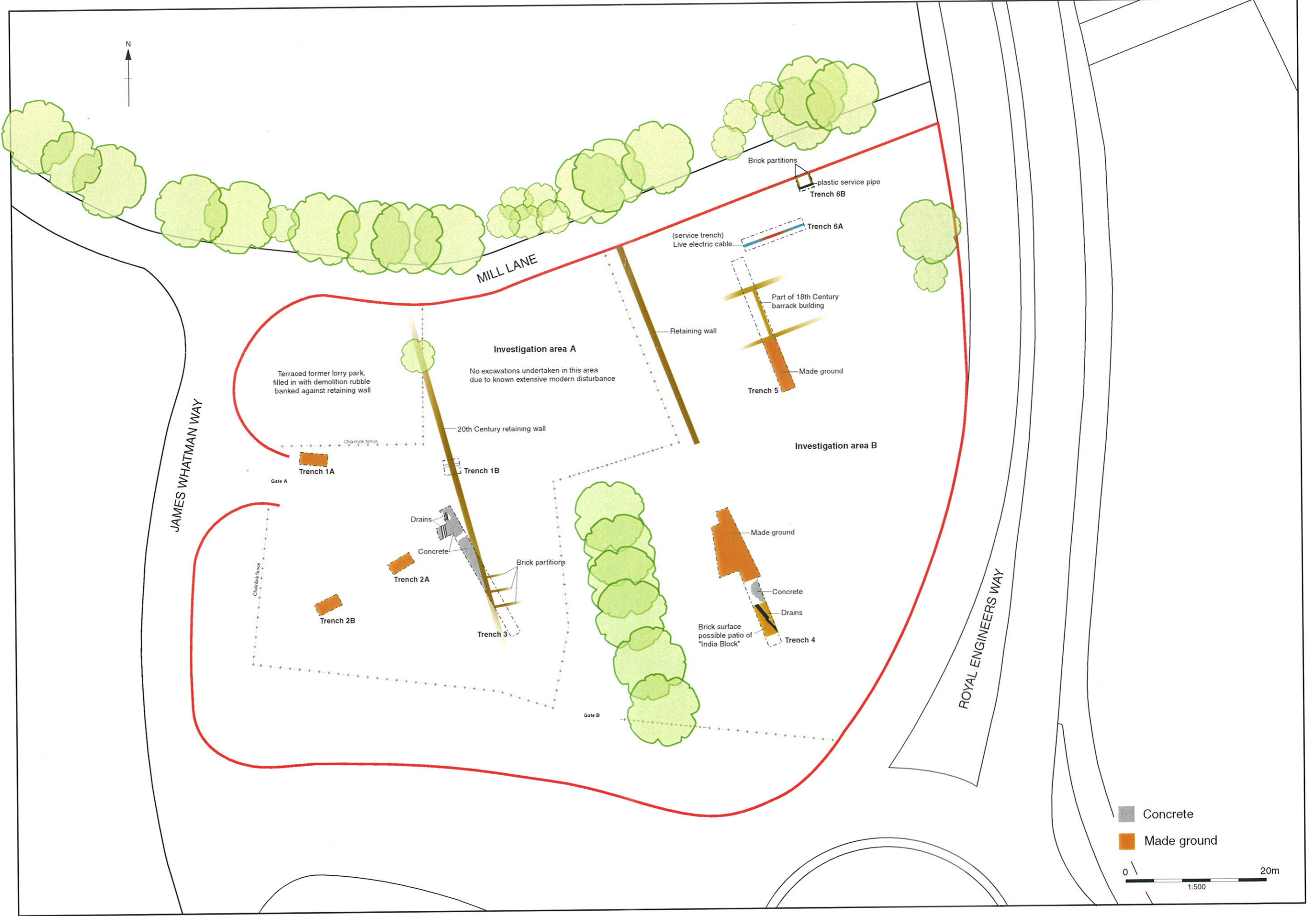


Figure 2: Trench location plan



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