

# **The Former Officers' Residence, Priddy's Hard, Gosport, Hampshire**

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
for Crest Nicholson (South) Ltd**

by Helen Moore

Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd

Site Code PHG04/20

**May 2004**

## Summary

**Site name:** Priddy's Hard, Gosport, Hampshire

**Grid reference:** SU6165 0110

**Site activity:** Archaeological evaluation

**Date and duration of project:** 28th and 29th April 2004

**Project manager:** Helen Moore

**Site supervisor:** Helen Moore

**Site code:** PHG04/20

**Area of site:** c. 1.9 ha

**Summary of results:** The footings of the old officers' residences at Priddy's Hard were located below the present ground surface. The building was in a very fragmentary state with very little intact masonry surviving. Two of the window openings at the front eastern side of the building were located and the corner of the building extrapolated from these, as only a robber trench survived to indicate the corner. All the corners of the main rectangular building had been demolished and robbed away and only short stretches of wall survived in places.

**Monuments identified:** Post-Medieval house footings.

**Location and reference of archive:** The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, 47–49 De Beauvoir Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 5NR, and will be deposited with Hampshire Museum Services in due course.

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	Steve Preston✓ 10.05.04

# **The Former Officers' Residence, Priddy's Hard, Gosport, Hampshire An Archaeological Evaluation**

by Helen Moore

**Report 04/20b**

## **Introduction**

This report documents the results of an archaeological field evaluation carried out at Priddy's Hard, Gosport, Hampshire (NGR SU 6165 0110) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Mr Malcolm Kirk, of Crest Nicholson (South) Ltd, Nicholson House, 4 Thames Street, Weybridge, Surrey, KT1 8JG.

Planning permission is being sought from Gosport Borough Council for the construction of residential properties on the site with associated car parking facilities. A desktop study undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services (Lowe 2004) highlighted the former existence of an early 19th-century officers' residence on the site. A plan of the basement level of the building was found in the Priddy's Hard archive at Hampshire Record Office probably dating from the early 20th century. The building is shown on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1914 and 1920, but no other maps showing the structure and its setting are known. The 1914 map also shows a circular path in front of the house.

The Conservation Officer of Gosport Borough Council requested that one component of the development would comprise a reconstruction of 'The Officers' House' which was demolished in 1952. The new building is to be constructed in a similar style to the original building and to be located within the footprint of the demolished structure. A circular path within a formal garden once existed in front of the original Officers' House and this is also to be re-instated.

An archaeological investigation was requested to locate accurately the principal components of the former Officers' House.

The fieldwork was undertaken by Helen Moore and Pam Jenkins on the 28th- 30th April 2004 and the site code is PHG04/20. The archive is presently held at Thames Valley Archaeological Services, Reading and will be deposited with Hampshire Museum Service in due course.

## **Location, topography and geology**

The site is located within a roughly triangular-shaped parcel of land at Priddy's Hard near Gosport. Portsmouth Harbour lies immediately to the west and the inlet of Forton Lake is located to the south of the site. The Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower is located in the older buildings to the west of the development site

associated with the Priddy's Hard fortification. Mature trees surround the edge of the evaluation area and the area is covered in rough grass. A flagpole still in its original position (judging by the 1914 map), stands at the front of the site in the area of the original gardens of the officers' residence. Car parks and flower beds lie to the north and east of the evaluation area. The site lies at approximately 4m above Ordnance Datum and the underlying geology is plateau gravel (BGS 1976).

## **Archaeological background**

The desktop assessment highlighted the fact that an early 19th-century officers' residence with gardens was located on the site, and was demolished in 1952. No other earlier structures or archaeological features were noted for the site itself on the Hampshire Sites and Monuments Record. The site of Priddy's Hard was used from the late 18th century onwards as an ordnance depot for Portsmouth Naval Dockyard and was enclosed by earthworks by 1757 (Lowe 2004).

## **Objectives and methodology**

The purpose of the evaluation was to determine the location and condition of the footings of the 19th-century officers' residence within the area of development. It was not intended to recover artefacts or to carry out archaeological excavation, recording and interpretation, other than that required to locate the remains of the building. A photographic record was to be made of the principal features discovered. The client's surveyor was to tie in the location of the building once this had been established.

A series of eight to ten trial trenches were to be excavated using a JCB-type machine fitted with a ditching bucket. The trenches were to be of sufficient depth to expose surviving footings or to interpolate the lines of footings if robbing was extensive. Machining was to be supervised by an archaeologist at all times.

## **Results**

Eight trenches were excavated in total, with five dug to locate and define the condition of the footings (Fig. 2), and three to see if traces of the path still existed in front of the former house (Fig. 3). The main body of the house was rectangular in plan with wings that extended from the rear of this main building to the north. The trenches were dug to define the corners of the rectangular plan rather than to chase the wings at the rear.

#### Trench 1 (Plate 1)

This trench was dug to locate the western corner of the front of the demolished building. One of the brick window openings was exposed in the bottom of the trench, still intact, however the corner of the building only survived as a robber trench filled with demolition rubble. The top of the surviving footings was reached at approximately 2.85m AOD, with 0.42m depth of footing surviving before natural gravel was reached. The bottom of the footing was at approximately 2.45m AOD.

#### Trench 2

Trench 2 was dug to locate the corner of the building on the rear west side. It became very quickly apparent that this area had been thoroughly demolished, and only robber trenches filled with rubble defined where the walls and corner had once stood. No surviving masonry existed here.

#### Trench 3

This trench was aligned north-south across the central portion of the building. It was approximately 5m long and 1.5m wide. No intact masonry survived in this area. Approximately 1.5m of demolition rubble lay above natural gravel deposits.

#### Trench 4 (Plate 2)

This trench was dug in an L-shape to determine where the edge of the rear eastern corner of the building had stood. A stretch of the footing of the eastern wall of the building survived for approximately 2m in length and it was possible to determine where the corner of the building had been. Immediately adjacent to the surviving footing had been a cellar and staircase which were infilled with rubble. A robber trench was located indicating a demolished wall forming the other side of the eastern rear wing of the rectangular plan.

#### Trench 5 (Plate 3)

This trench located the two front brick window openings on the eastern side of the house. They survived intact, however any connecting walls were completely destroyed, including the corner of the building which was extrapolated from the robber trench.

#### Trenches 6, 7 and 8

These trenches were dug to locate the former circular path which ran in front of the building, with one straight path leading to the flagpole from the front of the house. Trench 8 was located to see if the path to the flagpole survived, but unfortunately only modern made ground was observed below the present ground level. The circular path also seems to have been removed, as only made ground was observed in Trenches 6 and 7, with no surfaces apparent.

## **Finds**

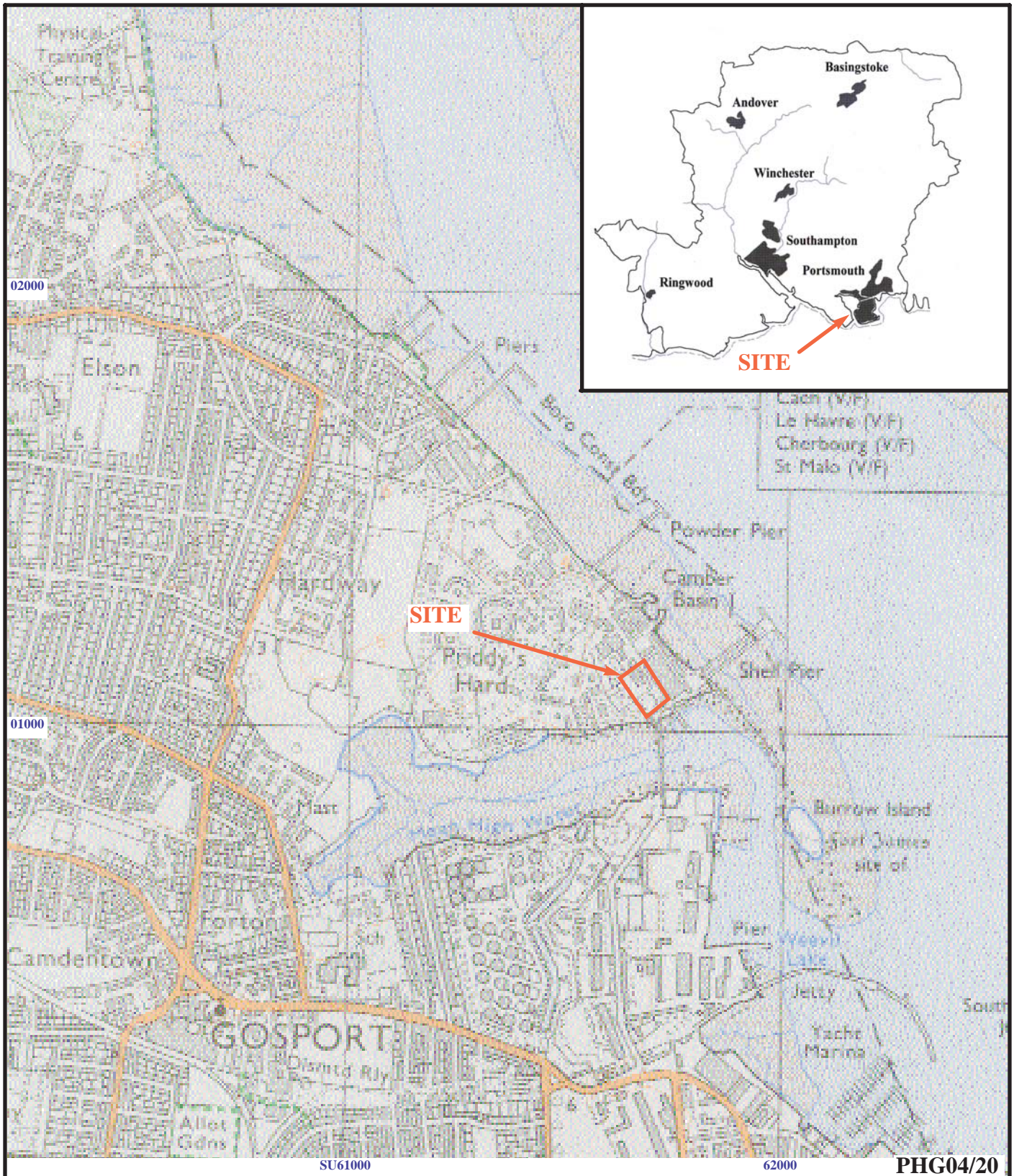
No finds were recovered from the field investigation.

## **Conclusion**

The location of the rectangular plan of the former officers' residence was firmly established. The client's surveyors have tied the corners of the building in and have the results of this survey. When the building was demolished in 1952 it seems that the majority of the building and its footings were ripped out, leaving only short stretches of intact masonry. It was possible to locate the front window openings which survived, and extrapolate where the corners of the building had been from these. The front of the house was approximately 23m wide. No evidence of the paths survived and it seems that they have been removed in relatively recent times as the made ground contained very modern material.

## **References**

- BGS, 1976, *British Geological Survey*, Isle of Wight special sheet (parts of 344, 345, 330, 331) 1:50,000, Solid and Drift Edition, Keyworth
- Lowe, J, 2004 *Priddy's Hard, Gosport, Hampshire, An archaeological Desk-based Assessment* Thames Valley Archaeological Services report 04/20



**Priddy's Hard, Gosport, Hampshire, 2004  
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Figure 1. Location of site within Gosport and Hampshire.

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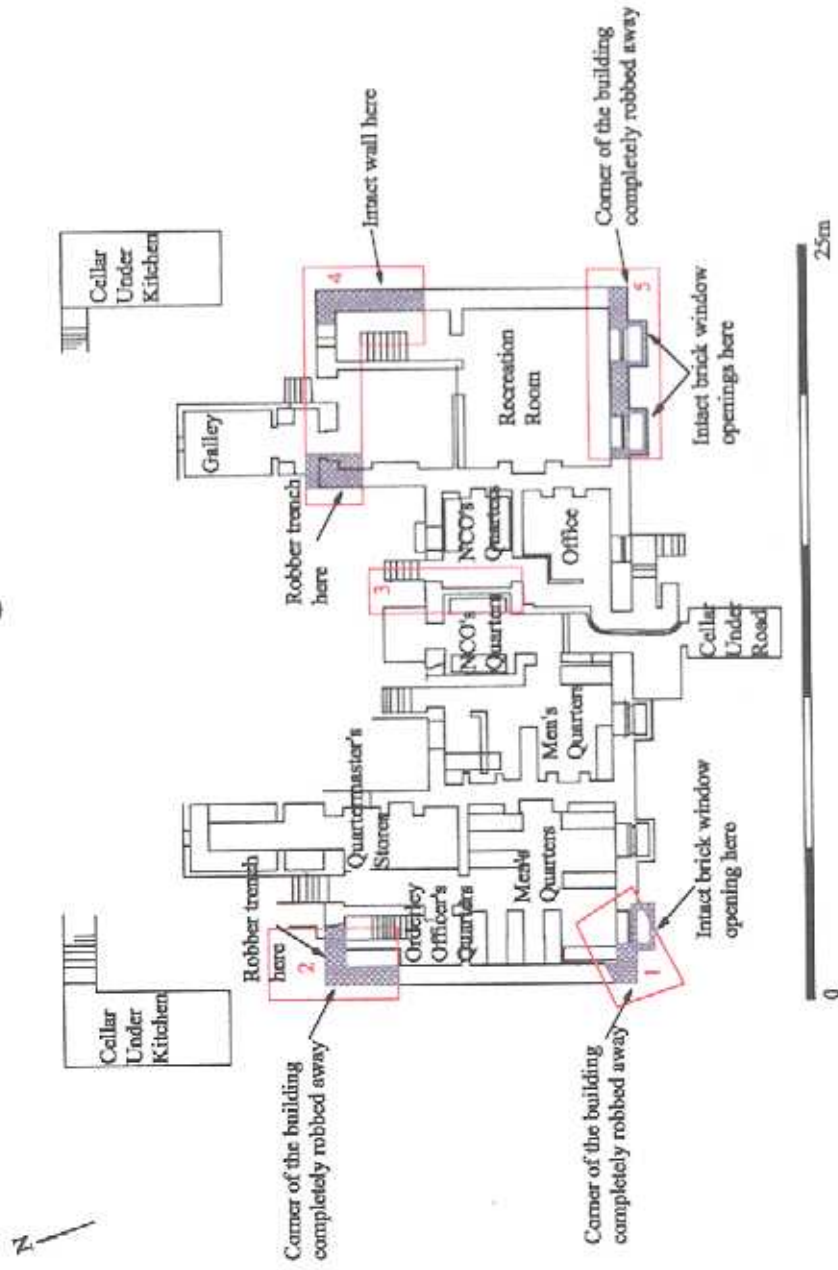


Figure 2. Plan of the basement of the building taken from an original drawing, showing approximate locations of the trenches and located robber trenches and surviving stretches of wall. PHG04/20



Priddy's Hard, Gosport, Hampshire, 2004  
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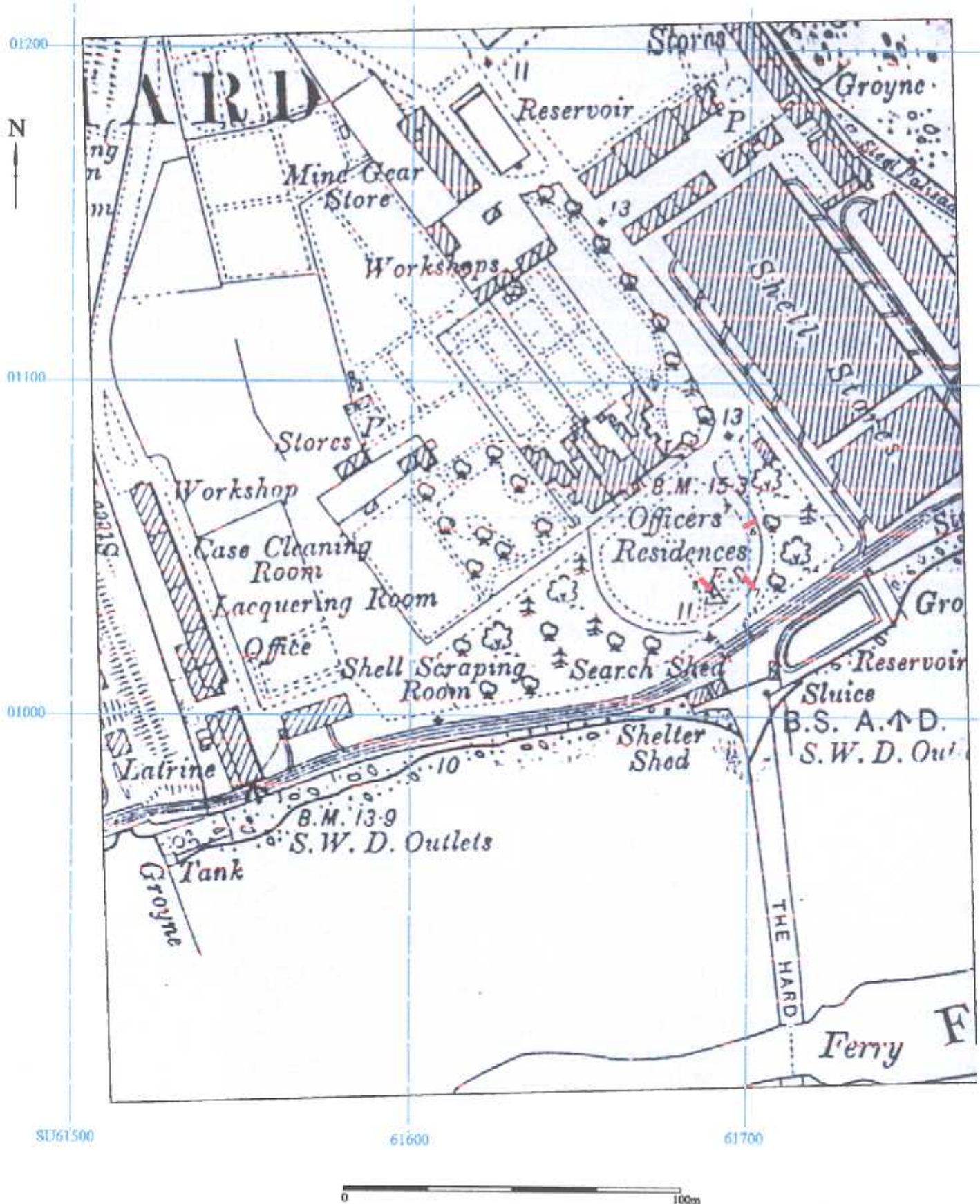


Figure 3. 1914 Ordnance Survey map showing the Officers' house, and the approximate location of the evaluation trenches PHG04, dug to see if the path in front of the house still survived.





Plate 1. Trench 1 looking south, showing the front west window opening. The trowel marks the western corner of the building, 1m scale.



Plate 2. Trench 4 looking north, showing the rear eastern corner of the building and surviving wall, 1m scale.





**Plate 3. Trench 5 looking east, showing the surviving front eastern window openings. The shovel marks the front eastern corner of the building, 1m scale.**



**Plate 4. 19th century painting of the Officers' Residence, artist unknown. Courtesy of the Explosion! Museum of Naval Firepower at Priddy's Hard, Gosport, Hampshire.**