

**An Interim Report on the Archaeological Evaluation at  
St Paul's Dockyard Church, Sheerness**

**Planning Ref: SW/06/0757 SW/07/1029**

**NGR 591542 175165.**

**Project No. 4770**

**Site Code: STP 11**

**ASE Report No. 2011045  
OASIS id: archaeol6-94986**

**Liane Peyre**

**March 2011**

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## **Abstract**

*Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, were commissioned by WDS Design Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of the proposed re-development of St Pauls Dockyard Church, Sheerness NGR 547242 120925).*

*The two evaluation trenches and one geotechnical test pit excavated confirm a consistent series of development and rebuilding on the land with the upper deposits representing the destructive fires in 1888 and 2001. The deeper stratigraphy encountered in Test Pit 01 consists of upper gleyed alluvial sands which contain post medieval ceramic building material at a depth of 3.0m. This deeper phase of disturbance could be attributed to earlier construction phases of the port or Garrison Fort.*

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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of The Centre for Applied Archaeology at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, were commissioned by WDS Design Ltd to undertake an archaeological evaluation in advance of the proposed re-development of St Pauls Dockyard Church, Sheerness (NGR 547242 120925). The proposed development involves the renovation of the existing Grade II listed church for apartments and the construction of housing in the immediate grounds.

### **1.2 Location**

- 1.2.1 The site is located on the south side of Sheerness Docks, approximately 0.2 km from the waterfront, with High Street to the south and Naval Terrace to the east. To the west of the site lies Archway Road and a series of industrial units associated to the port and to the north, Garrison Road, which is a busy access point to the port for heavy goods vehicles. The site measures around 0.3ha in area within a walled boundary contemporary with the church.

### **1.3 Geology**

- 1.3.1 According to the maps of the British Geological Survey (BGS: 272), the site lies on Alluvium sealing London Clay. The site is around 150m south of the modern shoreline and stands at around 5m OD.

### **1.4 Planning Background**

- 1.4.2 Kent County Council Planning Department applied the following condition (reference SW/06/0757 SW/07/1029) when permitting 'the restoration and conversion of the Grade II dockyard church to create 16 flats along with a new build block of five houses in its grounds.'

*'No development shall take place until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written specification and timetable which has been submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.'* KCC 2010 Manual of Specifications Part A.

- 1.4.3 A Specification for the work was prepared by the Heritage Conservation Group, KCC, (KCC 2010).

### **1.5 Aims and Objectives**

- 1.5.1 The aims and objectives of the archaeological evaluation, as detailed in the specification were:
- To assess the potential for graves and burial monuments at the site in association to the dockyard church.
  - Elucidate the geoarchaeological and early prehistoric potential and the extent of any alluvial deposits exposed within the trenching or test pit.

- Assess the impact of previous development, construction and reconstruction, on the archaeological record within the site parameters and the potential for disturbance during future works.
- Establish the degree of Iron Age, Romano-British, Medieval and Post Medieval activity on the site.
- Collate information that could contribute to the environmental and landscape history of the area.

## **1.6 Scope of Report**

- 1.6.1 This report details the findings of an archaeological evaluation undertaken by Liane Peyre and John Cook on 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011. The project was managed by Jon Sygrave (Project Manager) and Jim Stevenson (Project Manager, Post-excavation).

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** A Lower Palaeolithic handaxe (spot find) was located 2km to the south west at Queenborough on the alluvial deposit and a prehistoric Bronze Age axe was found in Sheerness.
- 2.2** Roman findspots include a single ring and separately, a coin hoard uncovered between Scrapsgate Road and Kent Avenue which consisted of 3235 radiates dating from 281 – 299AD.
- 2.3** Sheerness dock is an expansion of 16<sup>th</sup> century Garrison Point Fort. Post-medieval records include coastal fortifications dating from 1669, a running linear with bastions dating from 1780, phases of defence upgrades during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and continued development through WWI and WWII. Included in these records are associated buildings to the port and dockyard, both temporary and brick built.
- 2.4** St Paul's Church was constructed in the early nineteenth century adhering to plans laid out by Sir John Rennie. It serviced the dockyard community including those residing in Blue Town, no marriages or burials are on record of being conducted there. In 1888 the church was demolished in a fire, resulting in two deaths, and subsequently rebuilt. The dockyard ceased operation under The Navy in 1960 and became commercial premises. The church suffered a second fire in 2001 and has since remained derelict having been entered on the EH Risk Register in 2008.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

- 3.1** Two evaluation trenches were excavated, each measuring 10m by 2m (Fig. 2). The trenches were excavated using a flat bladed bucket.
- 3.2** Alluvial deposits were identified in Trench 1 and a geoarchaeological test pit was subsequently excavated, under the supervision of a specialist geoarchaeologist.
- 3.3** Specialist sampling and assessment of the alluvium or other deposits of geoarchaeological significance will be agreed with the County Archaeologist.
- 3.4** All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using the standard context record sheets used by UCLFAU, with colours recorded using visual inspection and Munsell Soil Colour Chart. Sections and plans were drawn at appropriate scales on plastic drafting film or recorded by an onsite surveyor.
- 3.5** Backfilling and compaction was undertaken by machine, due to the disturbed topsoil and modern debris it was not necessary to reinstate the topsoil.

Number of Contexts	5
No. of files	1
Plan and sections sheets	0
Bulk Samples	1
Photographs	39 Digital
Registered finds	0
Environmental flots/residue	0

Table 1: Quantification of site archive



## 4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION RESULTS

### 4.1 Summary

4.1.1 Both trenches were excavated to the full safe depth of 1.2m, with the natural strata not being reached in either one. Water related piping and a potential concrete soakaway were located in Trench 2 resulting in the readjustment of trench location to avoid modern services. Due to the contaminated and disturbed deposits encountered to depth, it was agreed beneficial to conduct a geoarchaeological test pit to ascertain the depths of natural alluvium. This was conducted in accordance with KCC specifications.

### 4.2 Evaluation Trench 1 (Fig 2)

Table 2: Trench 1 list of recorded contexts

Number	Type	Same As	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Thickness (m)	OD Height
1/001	Layer		Topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.2	4.114 m
1/002	Layer		Made Ground	Tr.	Tr.	1.5 max	-
1/003	Layer		Sandy silt with CBM	Tr.	Tr.	0.8 max	-
1/004	Layer		Redeposited Clay	3.3m	2.0m	0.1 seen	-
1/005	Layer		Contaminated Alluvium	2.0m	2.0m	0.5 seen	-

#### 4.2.1 Trench summary

The trench measured 10m by 2m and was mechanically excavated through the grassed topsoil [1/001] to expose a contaminated layer of modern debris associated to the more recent phase of burning at the church which included CBM, chalk and gravels. [1/002]. Underlying this deposit was a further series of disturbed strata which appeared more homogenous (a finer sandy silt) [1/003] and a darker compact clay [1/004] which contained fragments of CBM. Sand clay alluvium was reached in TP01(see below) at a depth of 2.5m which contained CBM of later medieval or early post-medieval date.

No archaeological features were seen to cut any of the deposits observed in this trench and it is likely that these deposits relate to phases of construction both for the port initially and the subsequent housing, church and roads within the local vicinity.

### 4.3 Trench 2 (Fig 2)

Table 3: Trench 2 list of recorded contexts

Number	Type	Same As	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Thickness (m)	OD Height
2/001	Layer	1/001	Topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.2	3.923m
2/002	Layer	1/002	Made Ground	Tr.	Tr.	1	-
2/003	Layer	1/003	Sandy Silt with	Tr.	Tr.	0.1	-

Number	Type	Same As	Description	Max. Length	Max. Width	Thickness (m)	OD Height
			CBM				

#### 4.3.1 Trench summary

The trench measured 10m by 2m and was mechanically excavated through the surface topsoil [2/001] to expose a similar made ground layer to that found in Trench 1, [2/002]. This deposit continued to a maximum depth of 1.0m before revealing context [2/003] a similar sandy silt disturbed soil also as found in Trench 1. The location of a concrete soakaway at the north end of the trench resulted in the relocation of Trench 2 southwards, with a further ceramic drain pipe causing the final 2.3m at the southern end being shifted eastwards to complete the full length of the trench.

No archaeological features were seen to cut any of the deposits observed in this trench.

#### 4.4 Geoarchaeological monitoring: Test Pit 1

Length: 2.0m      Width: 1.8m      Depth Max.: 3.0m

Table 4: Test Pit 1 Log

Depth (m)	Stratigraphy	Lithology	Colour	Coarse component/ Notes
0	Topsoil	Silty clay	2.5 YR 3/2 Dark grey – brown	Fine rooting, grassed, modern inclusions
0.2	Made Ground	Variable	Variable	Frequent CBM, chalk, charcoal, concrete and gravels associated to demolition/ construction of church
1.7	Disturbed Deposits	Silty sand	10 YR 5/4 Mid yellow – brown	Moderate CBM inclusions, disturbed re-deposited clay patches, potentially a levelled layer underlying site
2.5	Alluvial deposits	Sandy clay	GLE Y 2 5/1 Greenish grey	Odorous, grainy sands with moderate red CBM inclusions, infrequent shell (cockle and oyster) fragments.

#### 4.4.1 Test pit summary

Test Pit 1 was excavated in the western end of Trench 1 to investigate the depths of alluvium on site. The disturbed deposits were evident to a depth of 2.5m below ground level consisting of, [1/003] overlain by heavily disturbed made ground [1/002]. The alluvial sequence began at 2.5m with upper sandy gleyed odourous clays which contained a moderate amount CBM visually consistent with fragments found in the upper deposits alongside sparser cockle and oyster shell fragments. Due to the disturbance of the deposit to the depth of 3.0m the results will not render any useful environmental evidence and it will not be possible to attribute the shell remains to the river alluvium or later inclusions.

**5.0 THE FINDS**

**5.1 Summary**

- 5.1.1 A small quantity of ceramic building material was recovered from the alluvial deposit [1/005] in TP01. Retained for visual inspection it is classed as 'unfrogged, soft red brick which is not closely datable. It is possibly of a later medieval or early post medieval date – potentially 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>
- 5.1.2 Shell fragments of oyster and cockle were observed in the contaminated alluvial sample [1/005].

**6.0 DISCUSSION**

- 6.1** The evaluation revealed the extent of redevelopment in the area with depths of disturbed ground reaching a maximum of 3.0m in TP01. Although it is difficult to know the exact phase of work which was responsible for the disturbance at depth, it is likely to be attributed to the construction of the port in the early 1800's and subsequent Naval and housing developments with the upper deposits reflecting to the construction and reconstruction of the church.
- 6.2** Although 500mm of alluvial deposits were encountered at 2.5m depth, their disturbed nature renders the environmental samples inadequate for further analysis. The test pit, in turn, does not contribute any further information to the environmental and landscape studies of prehistoric Sheerness.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

- 7.1** The evaluation trenches adjacent to St Paul's Dockyard Church, Sheerness, confirm a consistent series of development and rebuilding on the land with the upper deposits representing the destructive fires in 1888 and 2001. The deeper stratigraphy encountered in Test Pit 01 consists of upper gleyed alluvial sands which contain post medieval ceramic building material at a depth of 3.0m. This deeper phase of disturbance could be attributed to earlier construction phases of the port or Garrison Fort.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

KCC 2010 Specification for Archaeological Evaluation at St Paul's Dockyard Church, Sheerness

KCC 2010 Manual of Specifications Part A.

[www.ads.adhds.ac.uk](http://www.ads.adhds.ac.uk)

BGS 272: Soil and Drift Edition

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thanks for the co-operation and assistance of the David Watson and Adam Single from KCC

### SMR Summary Form

Site Code	STP11					
Identification Name and Address	St Paul's Dockyard Church, Sheerness					
County, District &/or Borough	Isle of Sheppey					
OS Grid Refs.						
Geology	London Clay over Alluvium					
Arch. South-East Project Number	4770					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval. y	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban	Deep Urban	Other Brown field		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval. 1st March 2011	Excav.	WB.	Other		
Sponsor/Client						
Project Manager	Jon Sygrave					
Project Supervisor	Liane Peyre and John Cook					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM Y	Other Modern Y		
<p><i>The evaluation trenches adjacent to St Paul's Dockyard Church, Sheerness, confirm a consistent series of development and rebuilding on the land with the upper deposits representing the destructive fires in 1888 and 2001. The deeper stratigraphy encountered in Test Pit 01 consists of upper gleyed alluvial sands which contain post medieval ceramic building material at a depth of 3.0m. This deeper phase of disturbance could be attributed to earlier construction phases of the port or Garrison Fort.</i></p>						



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**OASIS ID: archaeol6-94986**

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**Project details**

Project name	An Archaeological Evaluation at St Paul's Dockyard Church, Sheerness
Short description of the project	The 2 evaluation trenches and 1 geotechnical test pit excavated adjacent to St Paul's Dockyard Church, Sheerness, confirm a consistent series of development and rebuilding on the land with the upper deposits representing the destructive fires in 1888 and 2001. The deeper stratigraphy encountered in Test Pit 01 consists of upper gleyed alluvial sands which contain post medieval ceramic building material at a depth of 3.0m. This deeper phase of disturbance could be attributed to earlier construction phases of the port or Garrison Fort.
Project dates	Start: 01-03-2011 End: 01-03-2011
Previous/future work	No / No
Type of project	Field evaluation
Current Land use	Other 4 - Churchyard
Significant Finds	CBM Post Medieval
Significant Finds	MARINE SHELL Uncertain
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches','Test Pits'
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Planning condition
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

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**Project location**

Country	England
Site location	KENT SWALE SHEERNESS St Paul's Dockyard Church, Sheerness
Study area	0.30 Hectares
Site coordinates	TQ 4724 2092 50.9682872193 0.097214827670 50 58 05 N 000 05 49 E Point

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**Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South East
Project brief originator	Kent County Council

Project design  
originator Archaeology South-East

Project  
director/manager Jon Sygrave

Project supervisor Liane Peyre

Type of  
sponsor/funding  
body Client

### Project archives

Physical Archive  
Exists? No

Physical Archive  
recipient n/a

Digital Archive  
recipient local museum

Digital Contents 'other'

Digital Media  
available 'Images raster / digital photography','Text'

Paper Archive  
recipient Local Museum

Paper Contents 'other'

Paper Media  
available 'Context sheet','Miscellaneous Material','Photograph','Plan','Report'

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title An Archaeological Evaluation at St Paul's Dockyard Church,  
Sheerness

Author(s)/Editor(s) Peyre, L; Stevenson, J (Ed)

Other bibliographic  
details ASE Report No. 2011045

Date 2011

Issuer or publisher Archaeology South East

Place of issue or  
publication Portslade, East Sussex

Entered by Jim Stevenson (jim.stevenson@ucl.ac.uk)

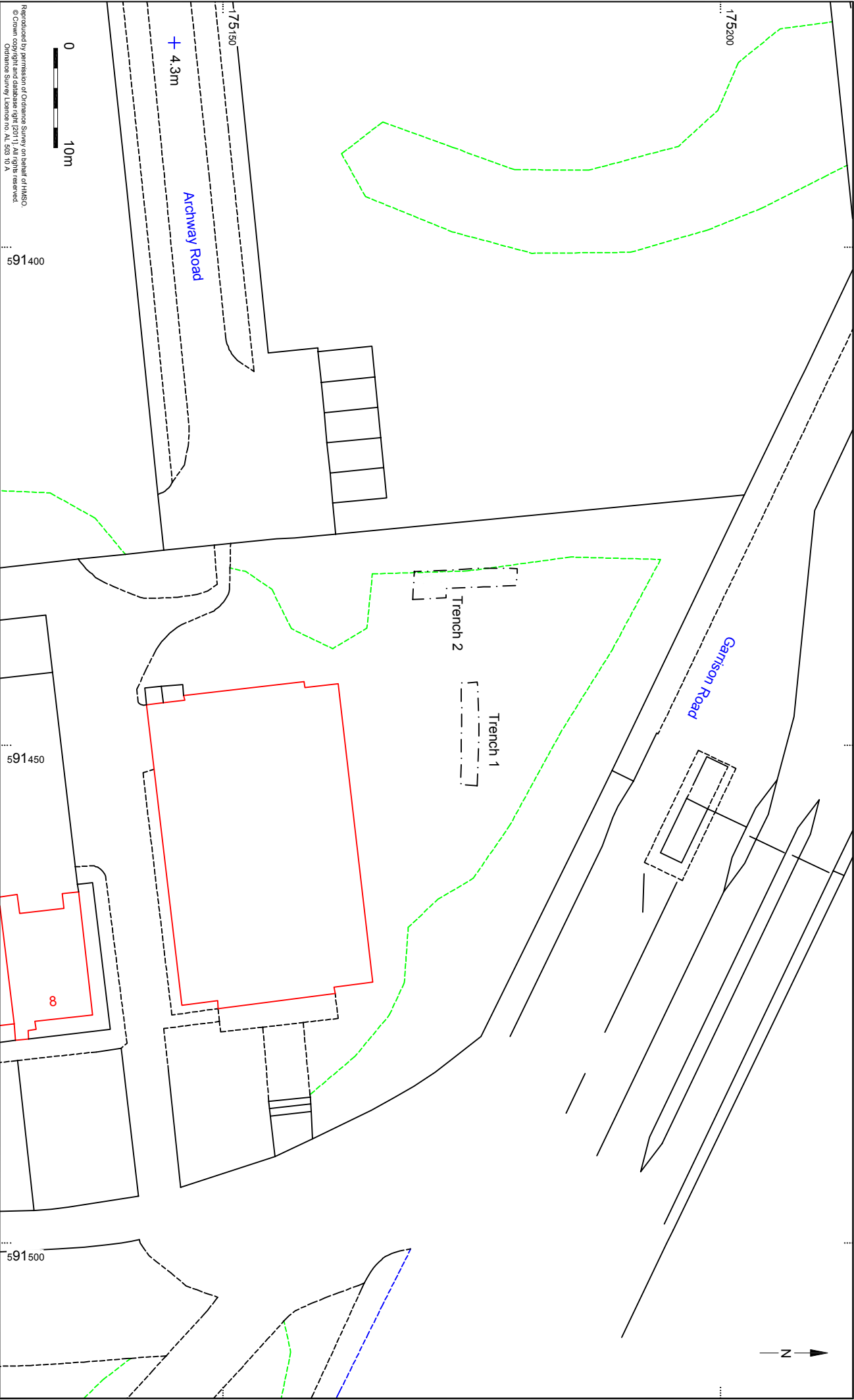
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© Archaeology South-East		St. Paul's Dockyard Church, Sheerness	Fig. 1
Project Ref: 4770	March 2011	Site location	
Report Ref:	Drawn by: JLR		



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© Archaeology South-East			St. Paul's Dockyard Church, Sheerness	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4700	March 2011			
Report Ref:	Drawn by: JLR			
Trench location				



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