



# Fort Widley Watching Brief Report Portsmouth, Hampshire

Archaeological Watching Brief



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February 2022



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## Document Information

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Document subtitle Archaeological Watching Brief Report  
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Client name Openreach Ltd (Portsmouth)  
Address 81 Newgate Street,  
London,  
EC1A 7AJ

Site location Fort Widley  
Portsdown Hill Road  
Portsmouth

County Hampshire

National grid reference (NGR) 465677, 106511 (SU 65677 06511)

Statutory designations Scheduled Monument No: SM PO 333, HA 1001862  
Grade II\* listed building 1387128 & 1387129

Planning authority Portsmouth City Council

Museum name Portsmouth City Museum

Museum accession code 2022/103

OASIS Id wessexar1-504579

WA project code 252121

Date of fieldwork 7 February 2022

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## Quality Assurance

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## **Summary**

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Openreach Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the digging of a trench to enable the installation of a fibreoptic cable. The monitored works were centred on NGR 465677 106511, at Fort Widley, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO6 3LS.

The archaeological monitoring and recording comprised of one trench, 0.6 m x 0.28 m x 0.3 m. Three layers of building material and foundations, dated to the 19th–20th century, were exposed. No archaeological features were exposed, and no finds were collected. The watching brief was undertaken on the 7 February 2022.

## **Acknowledgements**

Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Paul Turner of Openreach Ltd, for commissioning the archaeological watching brief. Wessex Archaeology is also grateful to Alex Bellisario of Historic England, who monitored the project.



# Fort Widley, Portsmouth Hampshire

## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Project and planning background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Openreach ('the client'), to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the digging of a trench to enable the installation of a fibreoptic cable. The monitored works centred on NGR 465677 106511, at Fort Widley, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO6 3LS (**Fig. 1**).

1.1.2 A single trench measuring 0.6 m x 0.28 m x 0.30 m was excavated to facilitate the installation of the cable on the eastern side of the barracks, at the front of the fort.

1.1.3 Scheduled monument consent submitted to Historic England, was granted 15 February 2021, subject to conditions. The following conditions relate to archaeology:

Condition (b)

*No works shall take place until the applicant has confirmed in writing the commissioning of a programme of archaeological work to take place during the development in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which will be submitted to and approved by the Secretary of State advised by Historic England.*

Condition (e)

*A report on the archaeological recording shall be sent to the Portsmouth Historic Environment Record and to Alex Bellisario at Historic England within 3 months of the completion of the works (or such other period as may be mutually agreed).*

1.1.4 The watching brief was undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) which detailed the aims, methodologies and standards to be employed (Wessex Archaeology 2021). Alex Bellisario approved the WSI, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority (LPA) and Historic England, prior to fieldwork commencing. The watching brief was undertaken 7 February 2022.

#### 1.2 Scope of the report

1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the results of the watching brief, to interpret the results within their local or regional context (or otherwise), and to assess their potential to address the aims outlined in the WSI, thereby making available information about the archaeological resource (a preservation by record).

#### 1.3 Location, topography and geology

1.3.1 The watching brief was located within Fort Widley, a 19th century gun emplacement, approximately 3 km north-east of Portsmouth Harbour.

1.3.2 Existing ground levels have been recorded as 100 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).



- 1.3.3 The underlying geology is mapped as White Chalk Subgroup – Chalk. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 66 to 100 million years ago in the Cretaceous Period (British Geological Survey 2021).

## **2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Introduction**

- 2.1.1 The archaeological and historical background was assessed prior to undertaking the watching brief, which considered the recorded historic environment resource for Fort Widley. A summary of the results is presented below, with relevant entry numbers from the National Heritage List for England (NHLE) included.

### **2.2 Archaeological and historical context**

- 2.2.1 Fort Widley, designed by Captain William Crossman of the Royal Engineers (Scheduled Monument 1387128) was built as a Royal Commission Fort in 1860. It was intended to protect Portsmouth from a land-based attack from the rear as part of Palmerston's defences. These defences were initiated in anticipation of a war with France.
- 2.2.2 The Fort is constructed of red brick in English bond, with flint and stone dressings. The roofs are concealed by earth. The footprint of the structure forms a polygonal trace plan surrounded on three sides by wide dry moat with scarp and counterscarp walls in flint, set between bays of brick piers with round relieving arches. The defensive structure comprises extensive earthworks to ramparts with gun emplacements and expense magazines set within earthworks. Projecting into the rear facing moat (north) is a brick caponier with embrasures at centre and to the west and east corners.
- 2.2.3 An underground gallery is cut through chalk and runs from the centre of the barrack block leading to an underground magazine and thence to a spiral staircase with ammunition hoist rising up to parade level. From the spiral staircase, three underground galleries lead to the centre caponier and west and east mortar batteries.
- 2.2.4 Internally, most of the items such as fireplaces, joinery, and stable partitions, are intact.
- 2.2.5 A 68-pounder carronade gun originating from the Point Battery Portsmouth is mounted on a wood block in front of the Fort (Scheduled Monument 1387129).

## **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **3.1 Aims**

- 3.1.1 The aims of the watching brief, as stated in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2021) and as defined in the ClfA *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a), were to:
- allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of the development or other works;
  - provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard; and



- guide, not replace, any requirement for contingent excavation or preservation of possible deposits.

### **3.2 Objectives**

3.2.1 In order to achieve the above aims, the objectives of the watching brief, also defined in the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 2021), were to:

- determine the presence or absence of archaeological features, deposits, structures, artefacts or ecofacts within the specified works area;
- record and establish, within the constraints of the works, the extent, character, date, condition and quality of any surviving archaeological remains (a preservation by record);
- place any identified archaeological remains within a wider historical and archaeological context in order to assess their significance; and
- make available information about the archaeological resource on the site by preparing a report on the results of the watching brief.

## **4 METHODS**

### **4.1 Introduction**

4.1.1 All works were undertaken in accordance with the detailed methodology set out within the WSI (Wessex Archaeology 252121.01) and in general compliance with the standards outlined in ClfA guidance (ClfA 2014a). The methods employed are summarised below.

### **4.2 Fieldwork methods**

#### *General*

4.2.1 The watching archaeologist monitored the excavation of a single trench measuring 0.6 m x 0.28 m x 0.3 m. The trench was hand excavated within the specified area with mechanical hand tools utilised for the initial breaking of ground. No archaeological features or deposits were present within the trench, and spoil was also scanned for the purposes of finds retrieval. No artefacts were found.

#### *Recording*

4.2.2 All exposed deposits were recorded using Wessex Archaeology's pro forma recording system. A complete record was made, including one hand plan and one section drawn to appropriate scales (1:20 for the plan and 1:10 for the section). Due to the foreseen signal issues, survey equipment was not used during the works. Instead, the trench was hand planned, using the basic principles of triangulation. The fort walls were used as reference points.

4.2.3 A full photographic record was made using digital cameras equipped with an image sensor of not less than 10 megapixels. Digital images have been subject to managed quality control and curation processes, which has embedded appropriate metadata within the image and will ensure long term accessibility of the image set.





## **5 STRATIGRAPHIC EVIDENCE**

### **5.1 Introduction**

5.1.1 No archaeological features or deposits were observed during the watching brief. Deposits relating to the construction of the fort were located. A full description of the contexts recorded is included in the trench summary (Appendix 1).

### **5.2 Soil sequence and natural deposits**

5.2.1 Within the trench, three deposits were found, all modern remains from the 19th and 20th centuries, associated with the construction of Fort Widley (**Plate 1**). The trench was excavated through a concrete surface (1001) measuring 0.05 m thick. This a light grey stone foundation (1002) present to a depth of 0.17 m below ground level. This sealed rubble of a pale red and white brick foundation (1003), present to at least a depth of 0.30m.

## **6 FINDS**

6.1.1 No finds were observed during the watching brief.

## **7 ENVIRONMENTAL EVIDENCE**

7.1.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

## **8 CONCLUSIONS**

### **8.1 Summary**

8.1.1 During the watching brief no archaeological remains were observed. Instead, deposits relating to the construction of Fort Widley dating to the 19th and 20th centuries were identified. Despite a lack of finds from the excavated trench, the composition of the deposits, the lowermost of which comprised red brick rubble, confirmed the modern date.

### **8.2 Discussion**

8.2.1 The archaeological watching brief was successful in assessing the archaeological potential of the site and mitigating against any destruction of archaeology without the recording of it.. The contexts uncovered during the investigation correlate with the current historical knowledge of the area and do not provide further understanding.

8.2.2 It is noted that the natural geology was not reached during the groundworks. As such it is possible that should any archaeological signature have survived the construction of the fort, there remains a potential for it to be present below the recorded deposits.

## **9 ARCHIVE STORAGE AND CURATION**

### **9.1 Museum**

9.1.1 The physical archive resulting from the watching brief is currently held at the offices of Wessex Archaeology in Salisbury. Portsmouth City Museum has agreed in principle to accept the archive on completion of the project. Deposition of any finds with the museum will only be carried out with the full written agreement of the landowner to transfer title of all finds to the museum.



## 9.2 Preparation of the archive

### *Physical archive*

- 9.2.1 The physical archive, which includes paper records and graphics, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by Portsmouth City Museum, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; ClfA 2014c; Brown 2011).
- 9.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the **site code (252121)**, and a full index will be prepared. The physical archive currently comprises the following:

- 01 file of paper records

### *Digital archive*

- 9.2.3 The digital archive generated by the project, which comprises born-digital data (eg site records, survey data, databases and spreadsheets, photographs and reports), will be deposited with a Trusted Digital Repository, in this instance the Archaeology Data Service (ADS), to ensure its long-term curation. Digital data will be prepared following ADS guidelines (ADS 2013 and online guidance) and accompanied by metadata.

## 9.3 Selection strategy

- 9.3.1 Given the very limited results of the fieldwork, it is recommended that only selected digital data are deposited with ADS, an approach commensurate with the scale and significance of the project. Deposition will involve the uploading of the site report via OASIS only.

## 9.4 Security copy

- 9.4.1 In line with current best practice (eg, Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

## 9.5 OASIS

- 9.5.1 An OASIS (online access to the index of archaeological investigations) record (<http://oasis.ac.uk>) has been initiated, with key fields completed (Appendix 1). A pdf version of the final report will be submitted following approval by Alex Bellisario on behalf of Historic England. Subject to any contractual requirements on confidentiality, copies of the OASIS record will be integrated into the relevant local and national records and published through the Archaeology Data Service (ADS) ArchSearch catalogue.

## 10 COPYRIGHT

### 10.1 Archive and report copyright

- 10.1.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative/digital archive relating to the project will be retained by Wessex Archaeology under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The client will be licenced to use each report for the purposes that it was produced in relation to the project as described in the specification. The museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*.



10.1.2 Information relating to the project will be deposited with the Historic Environment Record (HER) where it can be freely copied without reference to Wessex Archaeology for the purposes of archaeological research or development control within the planning process.

## **10.2 Third party data copyright**

10.2.1 This document and the project archive may contain material that is non-Wessex Archaeology copyright (eg, Ordnance Survey, British Geological Survey, Crown Copyright), or the intellectual property of third parties, which Wessex Archaeology are able to provide for limited reproduction under the terms of our own copyright licences, but for which copyright itself is non-transferable by Wessex Archaeology. Users remain bound by the conditions of the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with regard to multiple copying and electronic dissemination of such material.



## REFERENCES

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## Appendix 1 Trench summary

Trench No 1		Length 0.60 m	Width 0.28 m	Depth 0.30 m
Context Number	Fill Of/Filled With	Interpretative Category	Description	Depth BGL
1001		Surface	Concrete surface	0-0.05
1002		Light Grey stone foundation like layer with stones of up to 20cm	Easily fell out of place due to tools used by Openreach.	0.03-0.17
1003		Uncategorised context	Light red and white rubble of brick foundation, varying in size from small sand sized grain to 5cm stone.	0.17-0.30+
<p>Small 0.6x0.28 trench put through 3 layers of concrete/foundation/rubble for a new cable.</p> <p>No archaeology present.</p> <p>No survey equipment due to known signal issues - trench hand planned using fort walls as reference points.</p>				

## Appendix 2 OASIS record

### Summary for wessexar1-504579

OASIS ID (UID) wessexar1-504579

Project Name Fort Widley Watching Brief Report, Portsmouth, Hampshire

Activity type Watching Brief

Project Identifier(s) Fort Widley Watching Brief Report, Portsmouth, Hampshire

Reason For Investigation Planning: Listed Building Consent

Organisation

Responsible for work Wessex Archaeology

Project Dates 07-Feb-2022 - 07-Feb-2022

Location Fort Widley, Portsmouth, Hampshire

NGR : SU 65677 06511

LL : 50.8543942951155, -1.06833025154113

12 Fig : 465677,106511

Administrative Areas Country : England

County : Hampshire

District : Portsmouth

Parish : Portsmouth, unparished area

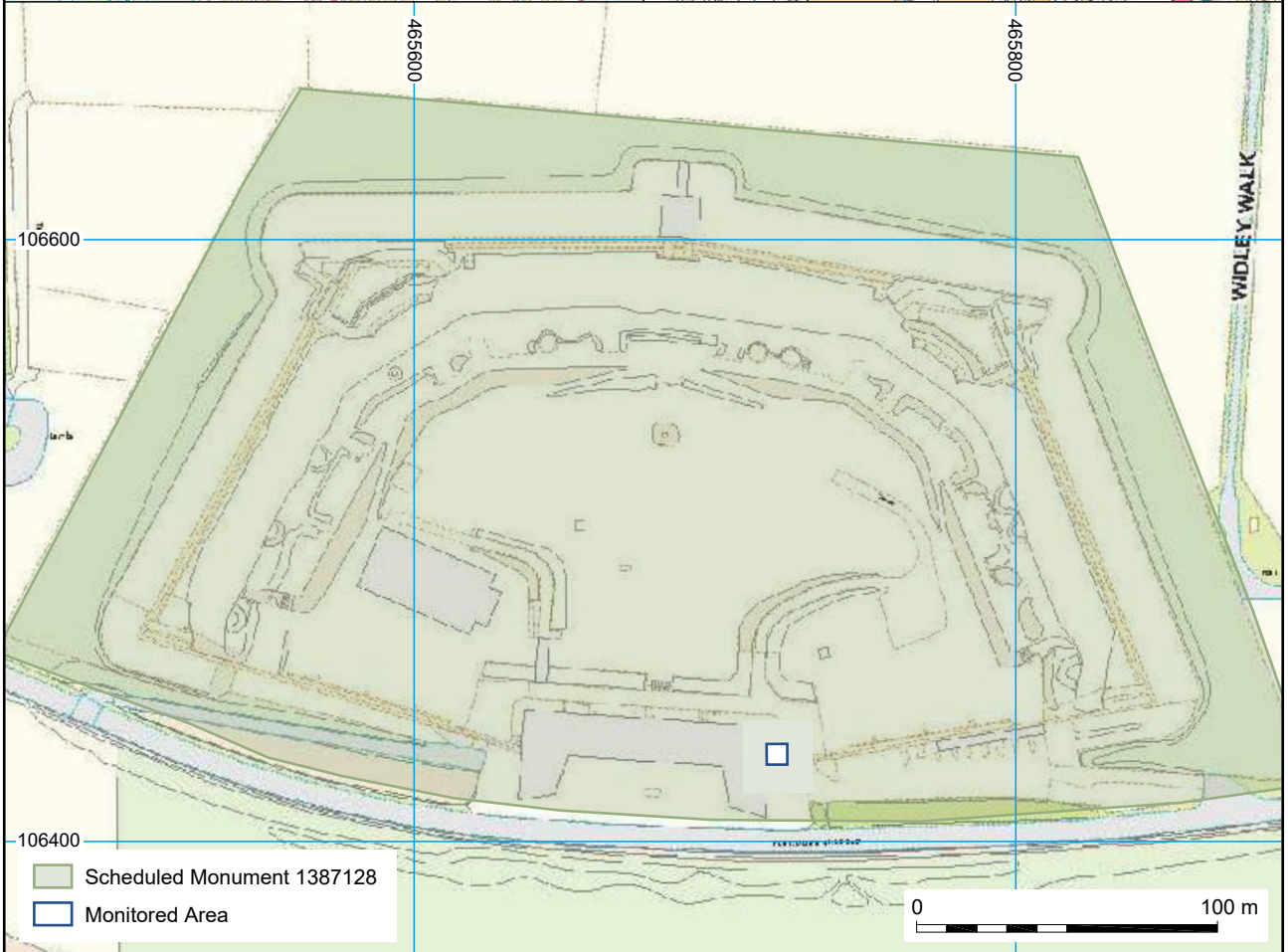
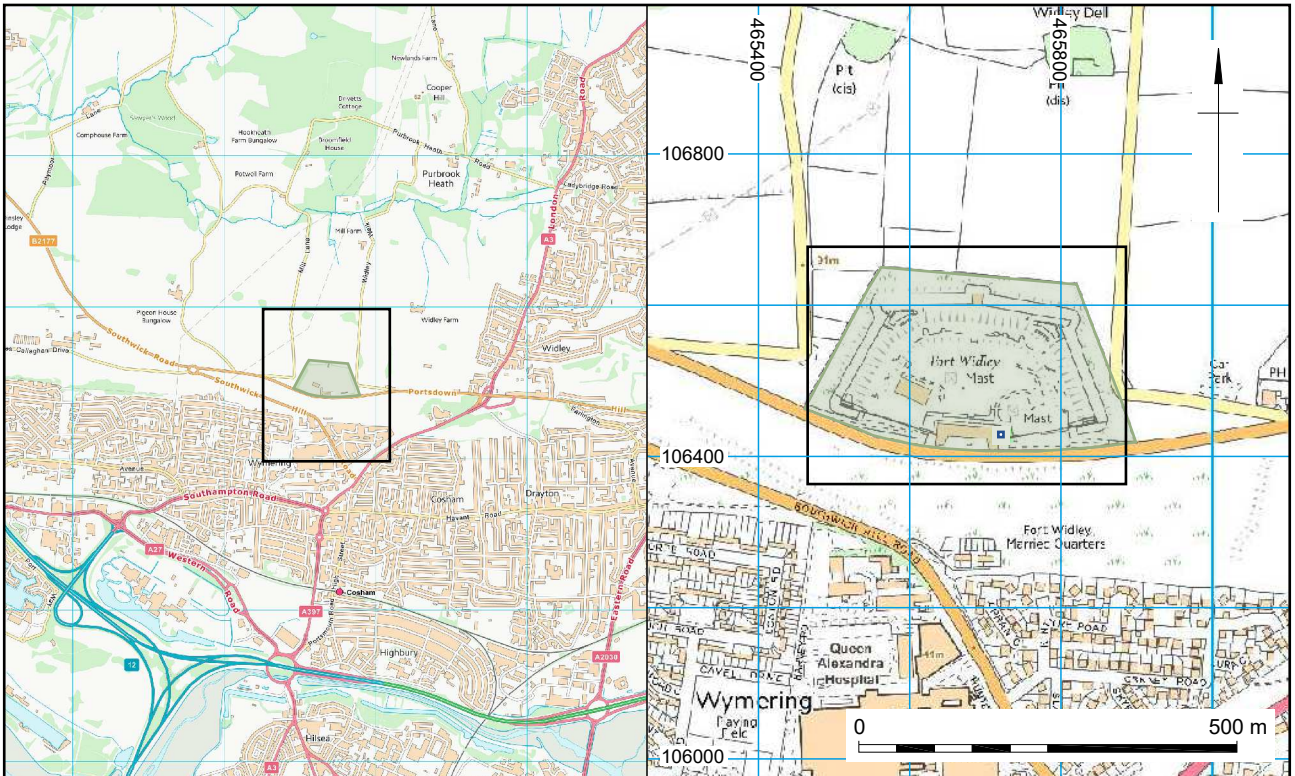
Project Methodology Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Openreach Ltd to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the digging of a trench to enable the installation of a fibreoptic cable. The monitored works centred on NGR 465677 106511, at Fort Widley, Portsmouth, Hampshire PO6 3LS.


Project Results No archaeological features were exposed, and no finds were collected.



HER Historic England review - unRev - STANDARD  
Portsmouth City HER - unRev - STANDARD

Archives Documentary Archive, Digital Archive - to be deposited with  
Portsmouth City Museum and Records Service




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Site Location Plan

Figure 1



Figure 2: Overview photo of open trench. Scale 0.5 m.

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