

Archaeological Excavation

Cliffe Park

Roker

Sunderland



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July 2022

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Summary

This report describes the methodology and results of an archaeological excavation undertaken by Tees Archaeology at Cliffe Park, Roker, Sunderland. The site is centred on National Grid Reference NZ 406 592. The fieldwork was undertaken in June 2022 as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded, Seascapes Project.

The site is an area of maintained open space on the clifftop at Roker, with public footpaths to the east and west and public seating areas adjacent to trench 1. The location has been used for the siting of artillery batteries over a long period, up to and including the Second World War.

The excavation followed on from a geophysical survey of the area and was carried out in order to better understand the archaeological remains in the area as well as to engage local people and raise awareness of the heritage of the area.

The archaeological excavation comprised the investigation of three trenches, with a fourth being used by school children.

The excavations demonstrated that much of the area had been comprehensively cleared and material had been put through a grading process. Despite the clearance work evidence of timber and concrete buildings was recovered as was 19th century pottery and evidence of military activity in the form of dress items, and spent ammunition. In addition part of a First World War gun pit was identified in trench 1.

Acknowledgements

Tees Archaeology would like to thank all of the thirty seven volunteers who took part the project and made it such a success. In particular I'd like to thank Jonathan Moore and Tony Hall for sharing their knowledge of military artefacts which has helped greatly in understanding the site and its finds, Peter Turton was a great help in talking to members of the public about the site, while Michael Johnston and Philip Russell gladly shared the results of research with us and this has also helped greatly in understanding the site and its history in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The project could not have taken place without the permission and support of Sunderland City Council and we would particularly like to thank Mark Taylor, Principal Conservation Officer and David MacGregor, Valuation Technician. We would like to thank Mike Wilson for allowing us to use Roker Lodge as a tool store and base.

The project was part of the Seascape, Tyne to Tees Shores to Seas project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund and we would like to thank Karen DGLISH, Seascape Project Manager and Vicky Ward, Seascape Volunteer Co-ordinator for their help and support.

1. Introduction

An archaeological excavation of land at Cliffe Park, Roker, Sunderland (Figure 1) was undertaken between 20th June 2022 and 1st July 2022 as part of the Heritage Lottery Funded, Seascapes project. The fieldwork was led by Janice Adams and Robin Daniels of Tees Archaeology and supported by Seascope staff and OASES who are the education provider to the Seascope Project and was carried out with the help of local volunteers.

A geophysical survey had taken place previously and this was used to help determine the position of the trenches. The project was carried out in order to assess the archaeological remains in the area, involve local people and to raise awareness of the heritage of the area.

The excavation was designed to look for evidence of the use of the area by gun batteries from at least the mid-18th century onwards. The Napoleonic and Victorian gun batteries were sited on what is now the cliff edge in the area of the Lifeguard Base, the location of a First World War Examination gun battery was unknown, while the use of the site in the Second World War was dominated by two 6" guns, the positions of which are now seating areas.

The excavation involved 37 volunteers, most of whom were from Sunderland and the surrounding area and the majority had not been involved in an archaeological project before. Between them they were on site for 157.5 days and this included an Open Day on the middle Saturday which was well attended by volunteers (16) and local people, who were shown around the site.

In addition a number of schools visited the site and were given the opportunity take part in their own excavation as well as being guided around the trenches. Throughout the project volunteers and staff engaged with the general public, from whom there was a high level of interest.

There was strong media coverage of the project with BBC Radio Newcastle, Tyne Tees TV and the Sunderland Echo running pieces.

2. Location and Geology

The site is located on a clifftop with views out to sea to the east and housing some distance away to the west, NZ 406 592 (Figure 1). It is bounded by the cliff edge to the east and by the A183, Coast Road to the west. There a monumental cross commemorating Bede on the western edge of the area and two seating areas on the site of the Second World War gun batteries adjacent to trench 1 (Figure 21).

The site lies at 20m above sea level and is at the top of limestone cliffs.

3. Historical and Archaeological Background

The only use of the area that we are aware of is for military purposes. The location, on a clifftop overlooking the mouth of the Wear was an ideal location to protect the harbour and entrance to the river.

There is however no indication of any defences here until the development of artillery and

it should be remembered that this was not one of the major medieval ports of the area and there is no suggestion of medieval defences.

Sunderland was a Parliamentary stronghold in the English Civil Wars of the 17th century, as opposed to the Royalist supporting Newcastle. It was occupied by Scottish forces and the area saw a number of engagements. There are records of artillery being put in place at this but these seem to have been further inland and closer to the river itself and the coast does not seem to have been defended. Certainly the greatest threat came from Royalist land forces and while Royalist privateers based out of Scarborough were active along the coast these were relatively few and while ports like Hartlepool felt the need to mount artillery against them there is no clear evidence of this happening on the Wear (Meikle 2017).

The 17th century was one of massive development in the coal trade from the Wear and as a result Sunderland became strategically important. At the end of the 17th century England went to war with France and in 1702 cannon from Tynemouth were placed to guard the harbour entrance which seems to have been the first time the harbour was properly defended (VCH 2015, 70)

The first documentary evidence of artillery being mounted on Roker cliffs is from 1759 during the Seven Years War (1756 – 63). This war against the French resulted in the creation of extensive fortifications to defend Sunderland and these included a battery of six guns on Roker cliff (VCH 2016, 260: Tyne & Wear HER No 86). From this date there were permanent fortifications on Roker cliff until after the Second World War.

Gun batteries were sited in two locations at Roker, one at the southern end of the cliff overlooking the harbour mouth and a second further north, the latter known as 'Abb's Battery' (Tyne and Wear HER No 2706). There has been considerable confusion and interchangeability with these names. The only time that both batteries are shown on a map is the Ordnance Survey map of 1855, published in 1862 (Durham six inch to the mile Sheet VIII). This carries the labels, 'Roker Battery' and to the north 'Site of Battery'. There is no evidence that this battery to the north was ever re-used although the First and Second World War gun position moved towards this area.

The Roker Battery continued in use (but was called Abbs Point battery by the military and in some Newspaper reports) and had new guns installed in 1905 (Foster 2004, 26). It was however described as a 'silent battery' in 1910 and the local authority tried to buy the site from the War Dept. in 1911 (see Appendix 1).

At the start of the First World War Sunderland had no defences and in fact guns were not put in place until 1916. While these two guns and their Second World War successors were known as Roker Battery, they were in a completely different location to the earlier battery which sat right on the point, where the Lifeguard station is now. In fact the remains of the original Roker Battery can be seen in the cliff face beneath the Lifeguard station (Figures 25 & 26).

The First World War Roker position comprised two 4.7" quick fire Mk IV guns on naval mountings and were accompanied by two searchlights (Whaley, Morrison & Heslop 2008, 12). This comprised two linked pits cut into the ground, the guns were dismantled and the site levelled in 1920 (see Appendix 1: Figure 27). This was an examination battery, the primary function of which was to help control the shipping approaching the harbour and to guard against attack by smaller fast moving craft (Foster 2004, 18).

At the beginning of the Second World War Sunderland had few defences, but the strategic importance of the north-east coast meant that moves to defend it were swiftly put in place. In September 1939 Royal Marines installed two 6inch guns and 2 searchlights in completely new positions, only re-using the magazine and observation post from First World War emplacement (Whaley, Morrison & Heslop 2008, 22). This installation had a dual anti-aircraft and coast defence function and there were probably machine gun and light anti-aircraft positions on the clifftop as well (Figures 28 & 31).

The gun position was supported by various command and control structures on the clifftop, while to the west of the road houses were commandeered for accommodation and further command and control functions and a military camp was sited in an empty field between what is now Peareth and Rock Lodge Roads. This area retains War Dept fencing to the Coast Road (Figure 31).

The site was put into in care and maintenance in 1944 and was comprehensively cleared by the military in 1948 (Whaley, Morrison & Heslop 2008, 22). The two gun positions have however survived as seating areas and various original features can still be seen (Figures 29 & 30).

4. Aims and Objectives

There were three primary aims of the project:-

- To better understand the changing use of the site from the Napoleonic period onwards
- To determine if there were significant archaeological remains on the site
- To engage local people and volunteers with the project

The results of the project will form part of a permanent archive of the site. The archive will be deposited with Tyne and Wear Museum Service under the site code RGB 22.

5. Methodology

Four trenches were excavated using a 180-degree mechanical excavator fitted with a 1.8m wide 'toothless' ditching bucket (Figure 2). The position of the trenches had to be adjusted due to the proximity of public footpaths, land topography and services. The excavation of the trenches was carried out under the direct guidance of the supervising archaeologist.

Subsequent excavation and recording was undertaken following the methodology set out in Tees Archaeology Fieldwork recording manual. Following machine excavation, the sections and the base of each trench were cleaned using the appropriate hand tools. Sections within each trench were drawn at a scale of 1:10 and plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20. The location of each trench was surveyed using GPS.

Deposits were recorded using pro forma context recording sheets. A photographic record of the investigations was compiled using digital cameras. All photographs include a graduated metric scale. The photographic record forms part of the project archive. A temporary benchmark was established on the site using established survey information.

6. Results

Excavation Descriptions

Trench 1 (Figures 2, 3, 4, 10, 11 and 20)

Trench 1 measured 11.2m x 2m and was positioned to investigate a large anomaly detected by the geophysical survey. It was sited between two former Second World War gun positions and the ground sloped to the east, towards the clifftop footpath.

Turf and topsoil (100) 0.12m deep was removed by machine, this overlay a yellow/ brown very sandy soil (101), 0.12m deep, across the whole trench.

The northern and southern ends of the trench were quite different. At the northern edge a large pit (110), of at least 6.4m diameter, had tipped layers of fill, the topmost was (104) a yellow brown sandy clay 1.22m deep which overlay a loose beige/white beach sand (103) which in turn overlay a mixed yellow brown clay (109). 103 contained a motorcycle wheel, a folded and riveted metal plate from the top of a canvas door as used on military vehicles as well as a .22 cartridge.

The front wheel of a motorcycle had been thrown into the pit while it was being backfilled. The hub and rim were still 'in situ' but the spokes had corroded away although their positions were clearly visible on the hub and rim. The hub had an internal diameter of 30mm and an external diameter of 60mm and was 50mm long. There was a distance of 300mm from the hub to the rim and the rim had a depth of 50mm. This was identified as coming from a First World War period motorcycle due to the relatively thin rim and this is reinforced by the date of 1920 for backfilling the pit (K Edmondson pers. Comm; Appendix 1).

The cut (110) comprised a central pit with a broad lip also cut below ground level. The lip comprised a light beige sandy soil (106), at the very edge of the pit was a sub-surface of loose pebbles, brick and sand (113) about 1m wide. This underlay a tarmac surface (102) 1.4m wide. The tarmac surface was edged with a rough stone kerbing (105) 0.26m wide and 0.22m high. Beyond this had been a line of sandbags (107) which had left the impression of their hessian weave in the underlying sand (106).

The impression of at least eleven sandbags was visible running from north-west to south-east along the lip of the cut. The impressions indicated that the sandbags had a length of 0.6m and a width of 0.19m with a maximum visible depth of 0.1m.

At the southern end of the site a range of features underlay 101 and were cut into the natural. Context 108 comprised a tumble of stones with a matrix of a light brown sand (115). This lay in a shallow gully (114), 0.66m wide and 0.12m deep.

A rectangular feature (111), 0.43m long and 0.26m wide and 0.05m deep, contained a ginger brown very sandy clay (112).

Context 116 was a rectangular feature and possible post-hole 0.2m x 0.15m and 0.4m deep which had a fill (117) of a ginger brown sandy clay with two possible packing stones defining a possible post diameter of 44mm.

Context 119 was a rectangular post-hole 0.15m x 0.22m and 0.09m deep and contained an orange/ brown sandy clay (118).

Stake hole 120 had a diameter of 0.05m with a depth of 0.04m and a 'V' shaped profile. It contained an orange/brown clay (121).

Trench 2 (Figures 2, 5 – 7, 12 – 14 and 18 - 19)

Natural compact red-brown clay (243) was found at a depth of 0.37m below ground level. In the south-west corner of the trench this layer was cut by four sub-rectangular post-holes (209, 211, 221 & 223). These ranged in size from 0.19m to 0.34m in width and from 0.27m to 0.4m in length. They were filled with friable grey sandy-silt loam (208, 210, 220 & 222). Coal fragments were found in fill (222).

Cutting the subsoil (243) to the east of the post-holes was a short linear feature (231: filled by dark-brown moderately compact silt-clay up to 0.1m thick (230). Directly to the south of this was a small oval post hole (233) filled by (232) a dark brown moderately compacted clayey-silt. Small fragments of coal were noted in both fills.

Further to the north two east-west orientated linear features cut layer (243). These are both potentially contemporary to the latter. The first linear (213) measured 0.87m in length and 0.2m wide. It was filled by a grey-brown fine sandy-silt (212) containing charcoal and small stones, C19th pottery sherds and a C19th broken square section nail. The second was linear (226: 3.04m long by 0.4m wide by up to 0.36m deep. This was filled by dark grey-brown friable silt-clay (227) that contained coal flecks, a clay tobacco pipe stem fragment, brick fragments and a heavily corroded square section iron nails. Two very shallow sub-rectangular post-holes cut the base of this linear feature. Post-hole (235 & 237) both filled by dark grey silt (236 & 238) up to a depth of 0.05m. These features combined may represent the position of a former fence line. No finds were recovered from the fills.

Cutting the three linear features was a north-south narrow gully (215: measuring 4.9m+ long by up to 0.4m wide). This linear had a primary fill (219) of mottled orange-brown silty-sand up to 0.09m thick. A sherd of C19th red earthenware pottery and a single corroded square section nail was recovered from this fill. A grey gritty and compact silty-clay (214): up to 0.12m thick overly the latter. This feature continued to the south out of the area of excavation.

Towards the north end linear (215) was cut by another east-west gully (207). The base of the gully was cut by a small sub rectangular post/stake hole (225: 0.28m by 0.16m) filled with dark grey silt (224) 30mm thick. The fill was overlain by the main gully fill grey-brown friable sandy-silt (206) up to 65mm thick. Sherds of C19th/C20th pottery were found in both (214 & 206). Overall the gully (207) measured 2.1m long by up to 0.39m wide.

In the north part of site two parallel narrow linear features were recorded (217 and 229). These were orientated east-west and were filled by (216 & 228) grey clay-silt. Linear (217) measured 2.4m by 0.28m by 60mm deep. Linear (229) was visible for 3.1m long and measured 0.3m wide. C19th & C20th pottery sherds and a 19th century square nail fragment were collected from the fills.

In the west part of site cutting the natural deposit (243) was the remains of a rectangular concrete structure (241 & 242) were recorded. The small structure comprised two wall foundations with a break in the south possibly defining a small entrance way. These features were not fully excavated due to time constraints of the excavation however the outline was determined and recorded. This structure was overlain by a deposit of dark-brown grey clay-silt (218) up to 0.25m thick with inclusions of coal fragments, small to medium limestone and concrete fragments and finds dating to the C19th to C20th including pottery sherds, a lead sheet fragment, glazed terracotta drain fragment, a clay tobacco pipe bowl, heavily corroded nail fragments and a spent 1941 .303 cartridge. This

Above this was a layer of light-brown grey clay-silt (201) that measured up to 0.18m thick. This deposit overlay all linear and post-hole features across the site and layer (218). The trench for a sewer (204, filled by 205) was located in the south-east part of site orientated north northeast south southwest cutting layer (201). Two modern service pipe trenches cut the sewer trench fill. Both service trenches were orientated northwest-southeast leading from the adjacent road towards the Lifeguard station. Pipe trench (202, was filled by (203) and pipe trench (240, was filled by 239), both service trenches were also recorded in Trench 3. These features were cleaned to identify edges but were not excavated. The fills were directly below the brown silty-clay topsoil (200: up to 01.8m thick). Finds from these deposits dated to the C19th & C20th.

Trench 3 (Figures 2, 8, 9 & 10)

A mottled red-brown sandy-clay (318) was reached at a depth of up to 0.4m. This was cut at the north end of the trench by a slightly curving narrow linear feature (309). This feature had a very gradual gently sloping profile with a concave base. It was quite difficult to define the feature on the west edge due to the similarity of the fill with the overlying layer. It was filled by a grey-brown sandy-clay up to 0.18m thick (308). Finds recovered from the fill included a small flint fragment, possibly gun flint, fragments of brick, iron nail, clay tobacco bowl and C19th and C20th pottery sherds.

To the south two contemporary features were found cutting the subsoil. A narrow linear terminal (313) was visible. The base of this feature was cut by (315) and was filled with a light grey-brown sandy-silt (314). No finds were recovered from this fill. Overlying this was the fill of (313: filled by (312: 0.5m by 0.53m by 0.16m thick) firm grey silt-clay that contained small fragments of white stone, coal redeposited orange sandy-clay and rare pea gravel. Finds included brick fragments, brass screw, iron nails, an iron shoe plate, clay tobacco pipe stem fragment and 16 C19th and C20th pottery sherds.

West of this was an irregular feature (311) cutting the subsoil but forming a shallow mound in section. The fill of this feature (310) was yellowish-brown sandy-clay. Pottery sherds recovered from this feature included seven sherds of a medieval fabric possibly C14th, the remainder of sherds recovered from this dated from the C19th/C20th. Other C19th finds included a clay tobacco pipe stem fragment, brick and tile fragments, roofing slate and iron nail fragment. It is possible that this material had maybe filled a hollow in this part of site prior to it been overlain by (301) see below.

Excavation was attempted at the east end of feature (311) where it had appeared in plan was the linear terminal however it proved to be difficult to see the division of this and the previous feature, therefore a relationship was unresolved. The cut at the east end ?pit (317) cut the natural subsoil. The ?pit was filled with a mottled orange-brown sandy-silt that contained three C19th/C20th pottery fragments, clay tobacco pipe stem fragment and one tile fragment.

Covering all of site was layer (301) dark-brown silt-sand. The finds from this layer included, 17 brick and tile fragments, 2 slate fragments, copper wire, iron lumps and fragments, horseshoe fragments, clay tobacco pipe fragments, coal fragments, 35 C19th-C20th pottery sherds and shell fragments. This made ground layer is thought to be a levelling deposit which may be a remnant from landscaping post the vacation of the site from the military after WWII.

A series of modern service trenches (303, 305 & 307) cut this layer and all crossed the trench orientated northwest to the southeast.

All service trenches were filled with mottled yellow-brown silt-clay (322, 304 & 308). These services were cleaned but not excavated. They were also noted in Trench 2.

The service trench fills were overlain by the dark-brown sandy-silt topsoil deposit (300: up to 0.15m thick).

Phasing

Trench 1

The absence of relationships between features makes it difficult to phase the site. However it seems probable that the features in the southern part of the site pre-date the construction of the large pit with its tarmac and sandbag edging.

It is not clear what the miscellaneous features represent, perhaps a light timber fence along the clifftop, equally the date of these is not certain

The subsequent discovery of further information has revealed that the pit is in fact a gun pit dating from the First World War, which had a tarmac edging and a sandbag revetting around its southern edge (Figure 19). According to the Sunderland Echo this was backfilled in 1920 (see Appendix 1).

Trench 2

The dateable material recovered from the deposits and fills of the features in this trench provides a date range from the C19th to the modern period.

The finds from the linear features stake and post-holes together with the rectangular building dated the sites occupation between the C19th and C20th. It is known that the site was used during WWII when a number of temporary structures were built together with small concrete store buildings (Figure 20).

The later service trenches all related to the modern period and the installation of the Lifeguard Station and modern sewer.

Trench 3

The linear features and the pit contained material dating to the C19/C20th with the exception of a number of medieval pottery sherds from one fill. This material was intrusive and obviously not in date sequence within the feature. As with Trench 2 the deposits and features are likely to relate to occupation of the site during and after WWII.

Modern services relate to the installation of the Lifeguard station

Survey

Former Gun Position and Trenches (Figures 2, 21 & 22)

The project not only provided the volunteers with training into archaeological practice,

methods, theory, and use of standard archaeological tools and equipment but also enabled them to familiarise themselves in the use of the surveying equipment.

Part of this work was surveying the former gun battery using a Leica Viva GNSS GS12 GPS Rover, commonly termed a GPS. Today the site is used as a seating area facing the sea. Previously the guns would have looked out to sea, manoeuvred on a central pivot.

Elements of the former gun position still survive today. These include the concrete circular base with the central hole from where the gun would have been sited and part of the upper level of concrete. This now forms the base for the bench seating.

7. Finds

Introduction

Four trenches are represented in the excavation record, however trench 4 was just stripped of topsoil and used for school parties. On this basis the quantities of finds seen in trenches 2 and 3 should not be expected from this trench. Nevertheless the finds are of interest and include most of the types of material found in trenches 2 and 3.

Pottery

Introduction

The pottery from the four trenches reflects the known period of use of the site being primarily 19th and 20th century in date it also clearly reflects the major clearance of the site carried out by the military in 1948. The pottery shows clear signs of recent breaks and it would seem that as well as removing larger items, material was put through a grading machine resulting in numerous sharp edged small pieces and then re-deposited across the whole site.

The pottery was assigned a fabric number as it was encountered and the fabrics are set out below.

Fabrics

Fabric 1: A hard red/brown fabric with mica and small dark grey grit inclusions. It has an internal cream slip with clear glaze which is usually confined to the rim and upper body externally. 19th century earthenware.

Fabric 2: A hard white/off white fabric with a clear glaze inside and out. This comprises undecorated and transfer printed creamwares, mostly plates and dishes. 19th – 20th century creamwares.

Fabric 3: A hard cream fabric with small grey grits and a clear glaze inside and out. Undecorated creamwares, usually dishes and plates of 19th and 20th century date.

Fabric 4: A hard red fabric with both clear and brown glazes inside and out. Redwares of 19th and 20th century date.

Fabric 5: A hard light grey fabric with small grey grits. Some of the fabric is slipped and some glazed. Stonewares of 19th and 20th century date.

Fabric 6: A hard pink fabric with small grey grits. This fabric has an Internal clear glaze and an external brown and white lustre effect. Sunderland lusterware of the 19th century (Figure 13a).

Fabric 7: A buff fabric with small speck of grog and grey grit. This is partially glazed inside and out with a green glaze. Medieval pottery of possible 14th century date.

Frequency of fabrics

Fabric	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Totals
Number	163	880	21	26	13	2	3	1108
Weight	1833	2020	85	161	82	8	9	4198
Vessels	33	175	6	12	6	1	2	235

Table 1: Fabrics by sherd numbers, weight and minimum number of vessels

It was clear from the size of sherds that these had gone through a deliberate grading process and for this reason the minimum number of vessels may be the most realistic way of comparing the frequency of the fabrics.

Fabric 2, the cream wares are clearly the most prevalent across the site. These would have provided the everyday crockery and their numbers may well reflect a relatively large number of people as may be expected at a military site such as this. This fabric does include transfer printed wares but is typical of a 19th century domestic assemblage.

Fabric 1 is the next most frequent and again this is not unexpected as it constitutes the earthenwares commonly used for food storage and preparation and is again typical of a 19th century assemblage.

While fabrics 1 and 2 far outnumber the rest it is worth noting the number of redwares (fabric 4) typically teapots and associated vessels. While Sunderland lusterware was present there were a small number of pieces but this might be expected of a pottery that was intended for display.

Fabrics by Trench and Context

Trench 1: The majority of the pottery was recovered from unstratified contexts which was primarily examination of the spoil after excavation. Only fabrics 1 and 2 were encountered.

Fabric / Context	U/S	103	115
1	2	2	0
2	13	2	1
3	0	0	0
4	1	0	0
5	1	0	0
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0

Table 2: Trench 1, minimum number of vessels by context

Trench 2: The clear dominance of fabrics 1 and 2 is again clear, while fabrics 3, 4, 5 and 7 were present they never outnumbered the two main 19th century fabrics.

Fabric / Context	U/S	201	206	212	214	216	218	219	228
1	3	4	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
2	20	34	1	2	3	2	7	0	4
3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	2	3	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
5	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Table 3: Trench 2, minimum number of vessels by context

Trench 3: This has much the same pattern of fabrics as trench 2 and there is nothing to indicate a significant difference between these two parts of the site.

Fabric / Context	U/S	301	308	310	312	316
1	6	4	3	2	1	0
2	24	20	7	8	8	3
3	1	2	1	0	0	0
4	2	1	0	1	0	0
5	1	2	0	0	1	0
6	0	1	0	0	0	0
7	0	0	0	1	0	0

Table 4: Trench 3, minimum number of vessels by context

Trench 4: This was opened as a trench for schoolchildren to work in and context 400 is topsoil. Nevertheless much the same pattern of pottery recovery as seen in trenches 2 and 3 is evident. Only fabrics 1, 2 and 4 were recovered

Fabric / Context	400
1	2
2	16
4	1

Table 5: Trench 4, minimum number of vessels by context

Discussion

The pottery had clearly been through a sorting and grading process as part of the clearance of the site and this resulted in many small pieces. There is a clear pre-dominance of 19th century material and this ties in with the gun batteries which were in the vicinity of the present Lifeguard station. The amount of pottery found in trenches 2 and 3 is far greater than in trench 1 and does suggest that accommodation for those serving the battery was in the immediate area and the suggestion of timber buildings found during the excavation in trench 2.

While Sunderland Lustware is present it is in very small quantities suggesting either that there was not much present at the site or that it highly prized and well looked after reducing its presence in the archaeological record.

There is as much medieval pottery on the site as lusterware, but the former is probably a product of earlier cultivation in the area and there is no suggestion of medieval settlement at the site.

Clay Pipes

Clay Pipes were recovered from trenches 1, 2 and 3. Trenches 2 and 3 produced very similar amounts with a minimum number of thirteen pipes in trench 2 and twelve in trench 3. All of the pipes were of 19th century date with only ten pieces of decorated bowl. No Makers stamps were seen on any stems.

The decorated bowls comprised mainly leaf and rib decoration although one from trench 2 had an anchor and one from trench 4 had a bull or bison.

CBM

The CBM comprised mainly brick and tile with some pieces of glazed drain pipes. This all dated from the 19th century or later and the majority came from trenches 2 and 3. There is a catalogue in the archive.

Glass

The glass falls into three categories, used for windows, bottles and miscellaneous objects. The material is summarised below and there is a full catalogue in the archive.

Window Glass

All of the window glass was plain clear glass, although some was thickened. Only one piece was found in trench 1, fifty six pieces were recovered from trench 2, and thirty one from trench 3, with eight pieces coming from trench 4. This is the type of material expected from basic military structures.

Glass bottles

The bottles were dominated by those with a dark green glass of 19th century date and probably containing alcohol of some description. There were a few clear glass bottles 20th century date but only one that had any identifying marks. Found in trench 2, context 218 were ten pieces of a clear glass bottle with 'CAMERON' moulded on the base and 'ITE' on a body sherd apparently of the same bottle.

Minimum vessel numbers were nine in trench 1, thirty nine in trench 2, twenty three in trench 3 and six in trench 4. The relatively large numbers in trenches 2 and 3 and potentially trench 4 suggest domestic activity in this area.

Other

There was a range of other glass objects, mainly comprising glass bottle stoppers, glass toy marbles and glass marbles to stop bottles (trenches 2 and 3). There were also white glass light fittings (trench 3) and a single element of jewellery (see below).

Facetted glass 'jewel' with copper alloy setting and silver backing to reflect light, surface scratched and worn. Trench 1, unstratified context, small find 31. 19th century?

Stone

There was a small quantity of stone items but no structural stonework

Slate

Roofing slates became widespread in the 19th century and pieces of roofing slate were found in trench 3.

Slate was also used for pencils to write on slate boards and a piece of slate pencil was found in trench 1 and two in trench 3.

Flint

Worked flint has two main uses, as various tools made and used in prehistory and to create sparks to light fires or fire guns, this latter use mainly dates from the 16th century onwards.

Unworked but struck flint, trench 2, unstratified context, prehistoric

Possible broken end of thumbnail scraper, trench 2, unstratified context, prehistoric

Broken piece, but there is a clear bulb of percussion and two edges coming to shallow point, possible borer? Trench 4, unstratified context, small find 10, prehistoric.

Flint with chalk cortex on one half, straight edge to the flint and bulb of percussion. Possible gunflint, trench 3, context 308, 19th century?

Jet

Jet, mainly found in the Whitby area of North Yorkshire, was used to make personal ornaments from at least the Bronze Age, but became particularly popular in the 19th century when Queen Victoria started to wear it as part of her mourning for Prince Albert.

Kite shaped multi-faceted probable jet ear ring pendant. Trench 4, context 400, small find 27, 19th century?

Coal and Cinder

Coal was of course used extensively a fuel for domestic and industrial fires, while it was mined from at least the medieval period its major exploitation was from the 16th century onwards. The cinder produced from burning coal was encountered in trenches 2 and 3

Two small pieces of coal, Trench 2, context 218

Mudstone

A piece of mudstone with a fossil was found in trench 3, context 310, this may have been found on the beach and retained for interest.

Metalwork

Iron

A number of different types of Iron object were recovered, these included heavy iron plating that might have been part of defensive shields for guns, numerous iron nails and miscellaneous iron and cast iron fittings.

Iron Plate

Two pieces of 7mm thick iron plate, both broken, one 67mm wide and 87mm long the other 67mm wide and 80mm long. Trench 1, unstratified context.

Curved piece of plate 25mm internal diameter, 7mm thick. Trench 2 unstratified context.

Piece of iron plating 8mm thick, 60mm x 64mm. Trench 2 unstratified context.

One piece of flat iron sheet 7mm thick with hole in centre, measuring 65mm by 60mm. Trench 2, context 201.

Iron nails

The majority of iron nails recovered were square section and hand-made and were probably made in the 19th century. In the 20th century round wire nails were produced and some of these were recovered.

Trench 1 produced four piece of square section iron nail. Trench 2 produced 149 pieces of nail, the vast majority square section. Trench 3 produced 38 pieces of nail. The large number from trench 2 suggests the nearby presence of buildings containing a lot of timber.

Miscellaneous Iron Pieces

Iron Strap, one end bent into rectangular shape to fit around something, there are two holes for fastenings, 24mm wide and 450mm long overall. Trench 1, context 101.

Iron strap, with central twist and forked ends, 225mm long, 22mm wide, 3mm thick. Trench 2, unstratified context.

Three pieces of curved cast iron, possible drain pipe. Trench 2, unstratified context.

Six pieces of cast iron including one curved that could be from drain pipe. Trench 3, unstratified context.

Piece of cast iron, shrapnel? Trench 1, context 101.

Section of iron tube 32mm long, external 22mm diameter, 17mm internal diameter. Trench 2, unstratified context.

Three lengths of iron wire, 3mm diameter, longest is 290mm. Trench 1, context 103

Ten lengths iron wire, 2mm diameter, longest piece is 265mm. Trench 2, unstratified context.

Iron ball 60mm diameter with large corroded extension to one side 30mm long. Possible bar shot, this would have been used to disable the rigging of sailing ships. Trench 2, unstratified context. 19th century?

Three pieces of horseshoe shaped iron plate 15mm wide. Trench 3, context 301.

'Shoe plate' heavily corroded. Trench 3, context 312.

Copper Alloy

Copper Alloy items comprised mainly buttons, cartridge cases and coins, although there was also copper wire with its insulation still surviving and a number of brass screws. The latter two types are not listed here but are covered in the archive. In addition a fragment may have been from an artillery shell (see below).

Ridged fragment, possible driving band from artillery shell. Trench 2, unstratified context, small find 19.

Dress Items

This comprises mainly buttons probably from military uniforms. One from the Princess of Wales Own Regiment is noteworthy as the regiment is not known to have been active in the Sunderland area (Figure 14).

Enamelled brooch or similar. 40mm in length tapering from 15mm at one end to 6mm at the other. Both ends are forked and there is a small attachment hole at the narrow end. Decorated with enamelled rose with pink flowers and green leaves. Trench 3, unstratified, small find 18. 20th century?

Stamped brass button, indistinct lettering on back, from military uniform. Trench 2, unstratified, small find 1. 20th century.

Stamped brass button as used on British army battledress in WWII, 17mm diameter. Trench 2, unstratified, small find 20. 20th century.

Plain flat brass button with attachment loop to rear. Front quite corroded, any decoration uncertain. Trench 4, unstratified, small find 21. 20th century.

Convex disc with central hole, 16mm diameter, backing for different style of button? Trench 2, unstratified, small find 20. 20th century.

Brass button, loop on back broken off. Centre has cross with capital 'A' and crown over. Banner around bottom reading 'The Princess of Wales Own'. This design was only in use between 1875 and 81 by the Princess of Wales Own Regt. (later the Green Howards). Trench 3, unstratified, small find 2. Late 19th century.

Cartridge Cases (Figure 15)

A number of brass cartridge cases were recovered, all spent and covering three sizes of bullet, .22, .303 and .45. The .22 calibre tended to be used for training purposes but did have other functions. The .303 comprised the main British army small arms ammunition being used in rifles and machine guns from the end of the 19th century until 1970 when it was replaced as the principle calibre of bullet. The .45 calibre bullet is associated with hand guns and pistols and was introduced at the beginning of the 20th century

Finds of .22 cartridges

Trench 1, contexts 103, small find 13.

Mark II rimfire cartridge with ICI stamped on the base. Trench 2, unstratified, small find 25. Post Second World War.

Trench 3, unstratified, small find 4.

Trench 3, unstratified, small find 24.

Finds of .303 cartridges

Base stamped VII and GB 1940. Manufactured by Greenwood and Batley of Leeds.

Trench 2, unstratified, small find 23. Dates to 1940.

Base stamped VII and GB 1940. Manufactured by Greenwood and Batley of Leeds.

Trench 2, unstratified, small find 15. Dates to 1940.

Base stamped R ↑ L, VII and 26. Manufactured by Royal Laboratories, Woolwich Arsenal.

Trench 2, unstratified, small find 26. Dates to 1926.

Base stamped GB 1941 VII. Manufactured by Greenwood and Batley of Leeds. Trench 2, context 218, small find 17. Dates to 1941.

Finds of .45 cartridges

Cartridge case stamped REM UMC 45 ACP on base. REM UMC is Remington Union Metallic Cartridge Company of Connecticut, which was in production from 1911 -1960. Three million rounds of .45 cartridges were ordered in 1940 for Thompson Sub machine guns, ACP stands for automatic colt pistol and these were manufactured from 1904 onwards. Trench 2, unstratified context, small find 22.

Cartridge case stamped WESTERN 45 AUTO. Western denotes is Winchester Western Company from whom 219 million rounds were ordered in May/June 1940. Trench 2, unstratified context, small find 22.

Coins

Half penny of Victoria with bun, reverse very worn, 1866. Trench 3, unstratified context, small find 11.

Half penny of Victoria, very worn, date illegible, 19th century. Trench 3, unstratified context, small find 12.

Half penny of George V, 1917. Trench 3, unstratified context, small find 5.

Half penny of George V, 1919. Trench 2, unstratified context, small find 29.

Half penny of George V, 1921. Trench 2, unstratified context, small find 14.

Pound coin of Elizabeth II, 2015. Trench 2, unstratified context, small find 30.

Lead

There were a small number of strips of lead and lead sheet and these are documented in the archive.

Broken hollow cast farm animal, lying down, decoration suggests a sheep. Britains launched the 1/32 farm animal range in 1921 and this is probably from their range. Trench 2, unstratified context, small find 28.

Pistol ball, 12mm diameter, with clear mould line. Trench 3, unstratified context, small find 6.

Aluminium / Zinc

Four pieces of metal sheeting 1mm thick, largest piece is 290mm long x 85mm wide, one side is folded over by 36mm and has holes in edge of folded over piece to attach material such as canvas. Possible edging for military canvas door. Trench 1, context 103. 20th century.

Animal Bone & Shells

Seashells, cockles, whelks, mussels and oysters were present in small numbers in each trench. There was insufficient to suggest that they were a significant part of the diet as opposed to occasional foods or a product of accidental deposition brought in with sand, they are catalogued in the archive.

There was also very little animal bone, suggesting that preparation of food took place elsewhere. Trench 2 had ten fragments of sheep bone of which one piece showed evidence of butchery. Trench 3 had five pieces of sheep bone, one pig bone and three chicken bones. Two of the pieces of sheep bone showed evidence of butchery while the single pig bone had been gnawed at the end. They are catalogued in the archive

There is one object made from animal bone:-

One side of handle fitting with curved upper surface and pin holes for attachment. Trench 1, context 103, 19th century date.

Miscellaneous

Items of carbon, bakelite, vulcanite, wood, plastic, leather, clay, cloth and multiple materials were recovered. These are all catalogued in the archive and the most significant set out below.

Carbon (Figure 13b)

Carbon rod used in Carbon Arc lamps was recovered in trenches 2, 3 and 4. In the 20th century carbon arc lamps were used in search lights and this is their probable origin here. Carbon rod with copper fitting over the end, trench 2, unstratified context. Short piece of carbon rod, trench 3, unstratified context. Six pieces of carbon terminals for carbon arc lamps, trench 4, context 400.

Bakelite

Piece of cap of No 69 bakelite hand grenade. Manufactured between 1942 and 1946 and developed to have a smaller destructive radius than the traditional metal hand grenade. Trench 2, unstratified context, small find 8 (Figure 16).

Broken pieces of bakelite box. Bakelite was used for electrical fittings in the middle of the 20th century. Trench 2, unstratified context.

Broken bakelite fitting. Trench 4, context 400.

Vulcanite

Bottle stopper with letters 'POWLE.' and 'SUNDERLAND'. Powley and Sons produced lemonade in Sunderland. Vulcanite is a rubber based product used for bottle stoppers from the late 19th century until the late 20th century. Trench 2, context 201.

Multi – Material

Spark plug, NGK BPR6ES. Trench 3, unstratified context. Post Second World War.

Concrete applied over expanded metal frame. Expanded metal was developed at the end of the 19th century in Hartlepool and commonly used as a reinforcing in pre-fabricated

structures as well as numerous other applications. In this instance the material is walling for a structure. Trench 2, context 201.

General Discussion of Finds

The size and spread of the finds suggests that material had been put through a grading process and re-distributed on the site and it is known that an extensive clearance operation was carried out by the army in 1948. To a large extent the distribution and survival of material is a product of that process. The major unknown is whether material has been introduced to the site to help level it or whether we are just witnessing the re-deposition of material.

The extent of military material among the finds suggests that it is probable that material was not introduced as the only other source of such material was the nearby military camp but that site was not abandoned and re-developed until after 1948.

8. Discussion

The excavations have shed new light on the military use and occupation of Cliffe Park at Roker.

Early Activity

One of the intentions of the project was to determine if there was any evidence of significant pre-military use of the area. The only finds that would relate to this are some possible prehistoric flints and a few pieces of medieval pottery. There is insufficient of either to suggest significant activity and no features that could have related to early activity were detected. It does therefore seem clear that the military use of the area from the mid-18th century was the first time it saw intensive activity.

18th and 19th century activity

There is clear documentary evidence for the establishment of gun batteries in the mid-18th century and it is also clear that these were on the point overlooking the harbour. The location now occupied by the Lifeguard Station.

This is confirmed by the excavations, those in trenches 2 and 3 recovered a relatively large amount of 19th century pottery and trench 2 had clear evidence of timber buildings both in terms of the remains encountered and the amount of square section nails recovered. There was equally no sign of this kind of activity in trench 1.

Trench 2 certainly indicates the possibility of accommodation of some type which related to the gun batteries. This may have been guard houses or other support structures, however we do not know where the gunners were housed. It should however be noted that the batteries were not permanently occupied and were manned by volunteers/militia and they may have been housed in accommodation locally or in tented camps in the immediate area when called to duty.

First World War

This is the area where the archaeological work has been most productive, thanks also to the researches of Philip Russell. It is clear now that the geophysical survey identified the location of the two guns established in 1916 and trench 1 investigated the southern edge of the northern gun pit, revealing the remains of the sandbag revetment marked on the

plan as well as recovering parts of a motorcycle thrown in when the site was made good in 1920 (see Appendix 1).

Second World War

The excavations threw a little light on the activity at this time, a building that was part of the Second World War complex was partially excavated in trench 2. This structure had all the appearance of being built quickly and cheaply, possibly from pre-fabricated elements comprising expanded metal and concrete.

Work on the site also drew local attention to the former function of the two seating areas as the two gun pits from major element of the Second World battery. A new discovery was the War Dept. pre-cast fencing between Rock Lodge Road and Peareth Road and which formerly fronted the military camp that served the battery (Figure 31).

The recovery of spent small arms ammunition, parts of a hand grenade and items of uniform, particularly in trenches 2 and 3 emphasised that Second World War activity on the site was far more extensive than just being based around the two major gun positions.

Post Second World War

The gun battery was stood down in 1944 and the site was cleared in 1948. The archaeology bore witness to the efficiency of this process both in terms of the relative scarcity of evidence of structures and the thoroughly graded and sorted finds.

Conclusion

The project has been successful in engaging local people and volunteers with archaeology and with the history of military activity at Cliffe Park it has also identified the location of the First World War Examination Battery, indicated that there was extensive, previously unsuspected 19th century activity to the rear of the Abbs Point gun batteries and demonstrated that there are a wide variety of military and other artefacts still present on the site.

9. Bibliography and Sources

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Whaley, R, Morrison J, Heslop, D H 2008 *A Guide to the Archaeology of the Twentieth Century Defence Sites of Tyne and Wear*

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Ordnance Survey First Edition map of 1862, 6 inches to 1 mile = 1:10560, Durham Sheet VIII

Appendix 1: Newspaper Reference to activity at Roker Park (information provided by M Johnston)

Date	Newspaper	Comments
10 September 1805	Sun (London)	St Abb's Battery Sunderland. Soldier in Lancashire Militia fell over a very high rock on the beach.
14 February 1846	Newcastle Journal	Ordnance Contracts – Board of Ordnance, incl. Abbs Battery for three years (no dates stated for duration of contracts)
22 June 1849	Newcastle Courant	Ordnance Contracts. Board of Ordnance inviting tenders for contracts from 1 July 1849 to 31 March 1852. Services may be required at Newcastle, Tynemouth, North and South Shields, Sunderland, Abbs Battery and Carlisle.
29 June 1849	Newcastle Courant	Board of Governance seeking contractors 1 July 1849 to 31 March 1852 includes Abb's Battery. Trades needed - Masons, paviours, bricklayers, plasterers, carpenters, slaters, smith and iron founders, plumbers, painters, glaziers and painters and paper hangers.
27 May 1854	Gateshead Observer	Reference to the Battery Field and attempt to imprison someone in the battery
12 October 1855	Newcastle Chronicle	Inquest held on body of James Solley son of Mr Solley boatman of the coastguard, resides at Roker Battery.
23 February 1856	Newcastle Guardian	Seeking tenders as article in 1 Nov 1856 Newcastle Guardian but includes Newcastle, Tynemouth with North and South Shields, Sunderland and Abbs Battery and Carlisle. To commence 1 April 1856 for 3 years.
28 February 1856		Invitation to tender including for Abb's Battery. Contracts from 1 April 1856 for 3 years.
1 November 1856	Newcastle Guardian	War Department Contracts. One contractor sought at Sunderland and Abbs Battery 1 December 1856 to 31 March 1859 Masons, paviours, bricklayers and plasterers' work Carpenters' work Slaters' work Smith and Iron Founders' work Plumbers' work Painters and Glaziers' and paper hangers' work Gas fittings and appurtenances Tenders to be sent to War Dept, Pall Mall, London by 22 November 1856.
12 March 1858	The Globe	Coast Defences. Royal Engineers visited Sunderland and recommended sites for guns. No mention of Abb's Point or Roker Battery but other sites are named.
12 March 1858	Evening Mail	Coast Defences. Royal Engineers visit to Sunderland. Recommend 4 guns on the large bank to the South of Roker Terrace and other sites
13 March 1858	London Evening Standard	Coast Defences – Royal Engineers visit Sunderland with recommendations for location of gun batteries.
2 February 1859	Shields Daily Gazette	Naval Coast Guard Volunteers from the fishermen at Whitburn at Roker Battery to take 28 days drill.
6 August 1859	Newcastle Journal	Several men of the Coastguard under the direction of Commander Herd, R. N., undergoing gun drill daily at the Roker

Date	Newspaper	Comments
		Battery, Sunderland. Commenced on Monday and will remain for three weeks.
13 August 1859	North Wales Chronicle	Several men of the Coastguard under the direction of Commander Herd R.N., are at present undergoing drill daily at Roker Battery, Sunderland. They will remain for three weeks.
10 December 1859	Gateshead Observer	Sheaf from the Sunderland Herald. On Monday the workmen of Mr Scott builder, commenced with the remodelling and reconstruction of the fort known as Abbe's Battery at Roker as ordered by the war authorities. Mr Scott is under a bond to have his contract completed in 13 weeks, by which time our volunteer artillerymen should be ready for duty
31 March 1860	Gateshead Observer	The Naval Volunteers – 300 first-class semen who having joined the Naval Reserve are undergoing daily drill at Roker Battery. They receive £6 per annum and £1 1s per week when on drill.
29 September 1860	Supplement to the Volunteer Service Gazette	The naval reserve practice at the battery at Roker. Also being drilled on board the Castor frigate on the Tyne.
2 January 1861	Newcastle Daily Chronicle	Abb's Head Battery Roker 3 guns arrived on the Kalodyne plus other guns and ammunition. Refers to 68 and 98 pounders. Same report in the Newcastle Guardian and Tyne Mercury 5 Jan 1861
3 January 1861	Newcastle Journal	A number of heavy ordnance with all necessary accompaniments has been forwarded by order of Government to Sunderland for the protection of the port. 3 rifled guns will be placed at Abb's Head Battery at Roker and the remainder upon the Wear Battery, at the South Pier.
5 January 1861	Newcastle Guardian	Account of arrival of the ship Kalodyne with guns and ammunition. (typed out – attached to e-mail)
28 January 1861	Sunderland Daily Echo & Shipping Gazette	Yesterday's Parliament. Col. Gourley asked Secretary of State for War if he was negotiating for land at Roker and if so would he issue instructions for the speedy removal of obsolete gun battery near Roker Park, when used it is a nuisance.
27 November 1861	Swansea & Glamorgan Herald	3 x 68 pounders Abb's Battery
1 August 1862	Newcastle Daily Chronicle	Sunderland Artillery Corps inspected by Colonel Price marched to the new battery at Roker for practice at the great guns. Then on to Whitburn Hall.
2 August 1862	Newcastle Chronicle	Refers to the 'new battery at Roker'
18 February 1864	Newcastle Journal	2 gun battery, Roker.
6 January 1866	Monmouth Beacon	Inquiry into flashlights seen at Whitburn. Individuals named include Mr Cooper Abbs of Rock Lodge and Rev G C Abbs, Cleadon.
25 May 1869	Shields Daily Gazette	£1,800 spent on Roker Battery. Refers to The Staunch a small floating battery designed by Mr Rendel, partner of Sir G W Armstrong, Newcastle
9 May 1874	Newcastle Journal	War Dept contracts 1 July 1874 to 31 March 1877
22 May 1874	The	Invitation to tender for works and repairs and supply of building

Date	Newspaper	Comments
	Durham County Advertiser	materials to War Dept Buildings and Property from 1 July 1874 to 31 March 1877 includes Abb's Point Battery.
31 July 1874	Sunderland Daily Echo	Inspection of Sunderland Volunteer Artillery last evening. Gunners at Abb's Point Battery.
30 July 1875	Sunderland Daily Echo	Ref to Abb's Battery and Wave Basin Battery
23 June 1876	Sunderland Daily Echo	Abbs Battery Monkwearmouth £15 Local rates for Govt property in the Sunderland Union
21 February 1880	Sunderland Daily Echo	Reference to public bridleway across the Battery Field and to the ware road on the west side. Southwest corner of the Battery Field used for banking sea-weed used for manure.
20 March 1880	Sunderland Daily Echo	Refers to footpath on west side of Battery Field and wall. Field has a road on each of its 4 sides. States that the foot road along the north side immediately in front of Rock Lodge is not a road of right. Refers to the road on the east side of the Battery Field along the top of the cliffs.
29 March 1883	Sunderland Daily Echo	17s 6d received from the government for the Abb's Battery
14 June 1884	Sunderland Daily Echo	Sunderland Artillery Volunteers. Drills for w/e 21 June 1884
28 April 1886	Sunderland Daily Echo	Advert for War Department Contracts. 7 contracts offered: Carlisle, Newcastle, Tynemouth, Berwick, Alnwick, Barnard Castle. Abbs Point Battery is included as part of the tender for Sunderland, including Wave Battery, South Dock Battery, Seaham and Hartlepool.
11 October 1886	Sunderland Daily Echo	Mrs Gardiner wife of the sergeant at Abb's Point Battery fell from Holey Rock.
14 May 1887	Sunderland Daily Echo	Royal Artillery had practice in traversing the guns at Abbs' Point Battery.
28 June 1887	Sunderland Daily Echo	Letters to editor – footpath along cliff past the Abbs Battery to the Sea-Side Lane is in a dangerous condition.
23 August 1887	Sunderland Daily Echo	Annual gun competition at Abbs Point Battery Roker
26 August 1887	Newcastle Courant	Sunderland Artillery Volunteers Annual big gun competition at Abb's Point Battery, Roker, took place on Saturday.
3 October 1887	Sunderland Daily Echo	Complaint about gun noise at Roker
21 April 1888	Newcastle Chronicle	An account of walking in Roker, 'we walk around Abb's Battery, and are disagreeably impressed by the narrow footpath which is right on the verge of a steep declivity.'
9 June 1888	Sunderland Daily Echo	1 st Durham (Sunderland) Artillery Volunteers. Drills for w/e 16 June 1888. Gun practice at Abb's Point Battery, Roker.
23 June 1888	Sunderland Daily Echo	Regimental Orders for w/e June 30 th First Durham Artillery gun practice at Abb's Point Battery, Gun practice of the brigade will be carried out this year at Abb's Point Battery
27 June 1888	Sunderland Daily Echo	1 st Durham Artillery Volunteer, gun practice at Abb's Poit Battery last night, 125 men of all ranks.
2 July 1888	Sunderland Daily Echo	Sunderland Artillery Volunteer Gun Competition on Saturday postponed for a week due to heavy sea.
14 July 1888	Sunderland Daily Echo	Artillery volunteers annual gun competition at Abb's Point Battery today
27 August	Sunderland	1 st Durham Artillery paraded at Abbs Point Battery for 64pr. Shell

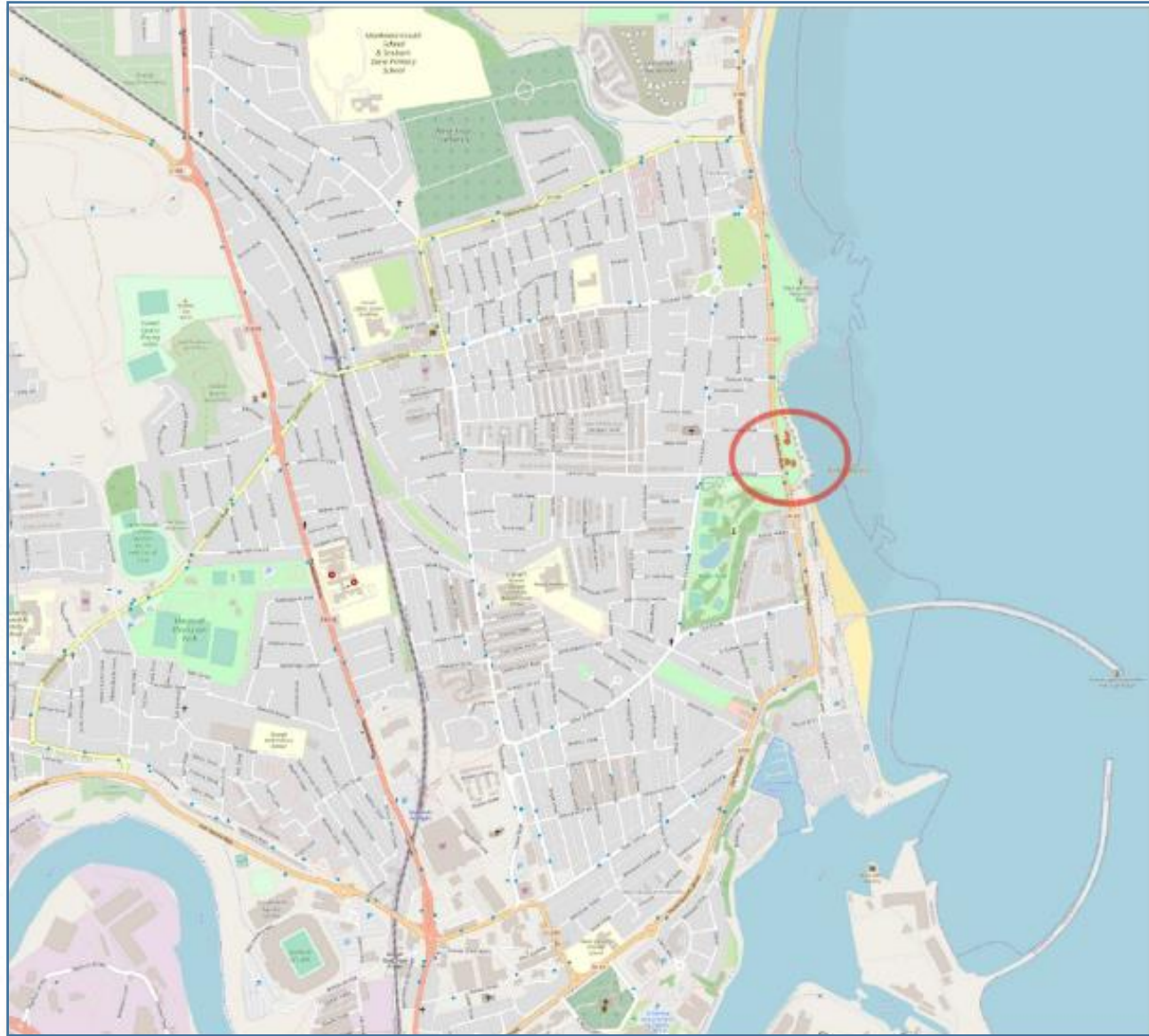
Date	Newspaper	Comments
1888	Daily Echo	practice
20 February 1889	Newcastle Daily Chronicle	War Dept Contracts. Works, repairs, building materials. Invitation to tender includes Abb's Point Battery.
28 August 1889	Sunderland Daily Echo	Sunderland Bombardment. An Early Attack. The Enemy Beaten Off. States that there are four eighty-pound guns at Abb's Point Battery
29 August 1889	Newcastle Journal	The Naval Manoeuvres. Bombardment of Sunderland. This is part of a larger article on naval manoeuvres, including response at Tynemouth, North and South Shields and Seaham Harbour.
2 September 1899	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drill for w/e Sept 9 1899
29 December 1890	Sunderland Daily Echo	Potential for a new barrack between Seaside Lane and Mere Knolls Cemetery. Holey Rock Battery 'comparatively useless' and firing of guns is a nuisance. The land could be added to Roker Park.
14 January 1891	Sunderland Daily Echo & Shipping Gazette	War office negotiating purchase of large quantity of land beyond Roker for a battery and earthworks.
29 Jan 1891	Sunderland Daily Echo	Parks Committee re Roker Battery site to be conveyed to the Council- lease to Ware Dept expires in May next. The nuisance would be dispensed with (i.e. guns on the Battery)
16 September 1893	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills w/e 23 Sept 1893 gun practice at Abbs Point Battery
23 September 1893	Newcastle Courant	Concerns about annoying residents and causing rock falls. Site to be transferred from Ecclesiastical Commissioners to Sunderland Town Council
14 October 1893	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drill for w/e 21 October 1893 Gun practice at Abb's Point Battery – last gun practice this year
18 October 1893	Sunderland Daily Echo	Artillery Practice at Roker. Parks Committee discussed firing of big guns at Abb's Point Battery – concerns re damage to cliffs and whether to approach the War Office – left undecided.
3 November 1893	Newcastle Daily Chronicle	Prince Louis of Battenburg visits – Coast Defences Scheme – Expect a proposal to be made to put modern machine guns at Abb's Point Battery
21 April 1894	Sunderland Daily Echo	Invitation to tender for excavating, bottoming and surfacing footpaths with tar asphalt in Roker Cliff Park.
2 May 1894	Sunderland Daily Echo	Tender accepted for excavating and levelling Roker Cliff Park and for asphaltting the roads.
3 May 1894	Sunderland Daily Echo	Parks Committee report 10.5 feet wide asphalt footpath beginning at the Battery and going a little distance from the edge of the cliff as and Sea Lane and 3 or 4 roads and railing round cliff. States that ground would slope off to the cliff.
5 May 1894	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills for w/e 12 May 1894
30 May 1894	Sunderland Daily Echo	At Parks Committee reported that the chairman (Col. Reed) and Town Clerk had been in London and had seen the War Office authorities with reference to the transfer of Abb's Point Battery to the Corporation. The War Office had promised to consider the matter, but as yet no reply had been received.
10 January 1895	Sunderland Daily Echo	Parks Committee asked if firing of guns could be stopped at Holey Rock – thought to be causing landslips

Date	Newspaper	Comments
13 August 1895	Shields Daily Gazette	It is reported that Abb's Point Battery is to be dismantled and another battery is to be erected further to the north of the Holey Rock. Same report in Daily Gazette for Middlesbrough 13 August 1895 Page 2 and Newcastle Daily Chronicle 13 August 1895
6 May 1899	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills for w/e 13 May 1899
27 May 1899	Sunderland Daily Echo	1 st Durham Volunteer Artillery WDRA Drill for w/e June 3 rd 1899 at Abb's Point
19 July 1899	Sunderland Daily Echo	Gun practice at Abb's Point Battery this evening and tomorrow evening.
18 May 1901	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills for w/e 25 May 1901
25 May 1901	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills for w/e 1 June 1901
8 June 1901	Sunderland Daily Echo	1 st Durham Volunteer Artillery WDRA Corp orders by Colonel E Vaux Commanding. Drills for w/e 15 June 1901 at Abb's Point Battery.
3 July 1901	Sunderland Daily Echo	Durham Artillery Militia gun practice at Abbs Point Battery
20 September 1900	Sunderland Daily Echo	First Durham Royal Artillery gun practice at Abb's Point Battery on Saturday next, at 2.30pm. Residents in the neighbourhood are requested to open their windows – By order signed G.F., Slator, Capt. And Adjt., 1 st D.V.A,
14 September 1901		Drills for w/e 21 September 1901
20 September 1901	Sunderland Daily Echo	Gun practice at Abb's Point Battery on Saturday – request to residents to open their windows.
12 April 1902	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills w/e 19 April 1902 Abbs Point Battery
19 April 1902		Drills w/e 26 April 1902 Abbs Point Battery
17 May 1902	Sunderland Daily Echo	1 st Durham Royal Garrison Artillery Volunteers. Drill for w/e 24 May 1902 and Abbs Point Battery
24 May 1902	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills for w/e 31 May 1902
31 May 1902	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills for w/e 7 June 1902
10 July 1902	Sunderland Daily Echo	Gun practice at Abb's Point Battery Saturday next 2pm.
6 September 1902	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills w/e 13 September 1902
16 April 1903	Sunderland Daily Echo	New Coastguard Station – site St Andrew's Terrace Roker
16 April 1903	Newcastle Daily Chronicle	Armament at new Coastguard station – silent type of battery
25 April 1903	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills w/e May 2 1903
16 May 1903	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills for w/e 23 May 1903
23 May 1903	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills for w/e May 30 1903

Date	Newspaper	Comments
16 June 1903	Newcastle Daily Chronicle	Refers to 5-inch guns at Abb's Point
21 May 1904	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills for w/e 28 May 1904
28 May 1904	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills for w/e 4 June 1904
25 June 1904		Drills for w/e July 2 1904
11 August 1904	Sunderland Daily Echo	Drills for w/e 13 August 1904
15 August 1904	Sunderland Daily Echo	Annual corps gunnery competition – fog caused postponement. 7,000 yards of clear range on the sea front needed before the heavy 5-inch breech loading guns could be fired
27 August 1904	Sunderland Daily Echo	1 st Durham Royal Garrison Artillery Volunteers. Drills w/e September 3, 1904, at Abbs Point.
14 September 1904	Sunderland Daily Echo	Roker Coastguard Station – description of the buildings
1 March 1906	The Evening Chronicle	Local Artillery Training includes dates at Abb's Point Battery
25 July 1906	Radnorshire Standard	Noise and earth tremors caused by big gun firing at Abb's Point Battery – residents are protesting.
9 November 1909	Newcastle Daily Chronicle	Plans to lay down 15 feet asphalted path and to construct a military fence - At Cliff Park. Asphalt pathway to go along top of Roker Cliff extension and the wall promenade. Works to extend from the borough boundary at Sea Lane to up to half-way round the Holey Rock. Includes photograph of new sea wall at Roker but image is very indistinct.
25 June 1910	Sunderland Daily Echo	Refers to the silent battery at Roker
9 September 1911	Sunderland Daily Echo	Council Agenda – Report of Parks Committee. Corporation purchasing Abs Point Battery from the War Dept – land and foreshore.
5 February 1915	Sunderland Daily Echo	Rifle accidentally discharged at guard room Roker. Gunner G W Roberts, Royal Artillery 16 th Battery (Territorials) killed and one other injured
13 August 1919	Sunderland Daily Echo	Sale of Army curtains and furniture. 170 bundles of large army black curtains. Also, furniture removed from Roker Battery. Itemises gramophone, tables, 50 chairs, dressers, rosewood piano, cottage piano and organ.
19 November 1913	Newcastle Journal	Approval has been received from the Army Council as to the proposal for the Silent Battery, Roker, to be taken over from the Admiralty, providing accommodation for the Northern Cyclist Battalion at Sunderland, and quarters will be available for a sergeant-instructor. Also, information about Whitburn Rifle Range.
18 July 1918	Sunderland Daily Echo	Firing by Roker Battery tomorrow 2-3pm
9 August 1918	Sunderland Daily Echo	Announcement of gunfire tomorrow at Roker Battery 11am-12
23 August 1919	Sunderland Daily Echo	Cliff Park as a whole is an unkempt waste
8 July 1920	Sunderland Daily Echo	Guns at Cliff Park being dismantled by military authorities, 'may soon be restored to the public and its pre-war beauty.'

Date	Newspaper	Comments
25 August 1920	Sunderland Daily Echo	Barbed wire still in place at Cliff Park
13 September 1920	Sunderland Daily Echo	Cliff Park now accessible to the public ' a general levelling up having taken place.'
7 October 1919	Sunderland Daily Echo	Cliff Park has not been entirely given up by the military and it is also partially occupied by a crop of potatoes
28 April 1922	Sunderland Daily Echo	Cliff Park - The dug-outs and gun pits made by the military are no longer visible.
22 March 1933	Sunderland Daily Echo	Exhibition of works by Miss A M Yeatman in Sunderland Subscription Library. Views of Holey Rock and Roker before modern 'improvements' Includes Hodgson's Farm at Roker
11 April 1933	Sunderland Daily Echo	Letter in response to question re Cat & Dog Stairs. The real cat and dog stairs were cut away when the bridge was built over Roker Gill. They were very precarious being dug out of the clay and rock and dangerous to come down. At the top there were 2 cottages occupied by a corporal and gunner attached to Abbs Point Battery.
19 February 1934	Sunderland Daily Echo	Criticism of improvement at Roker. Photograph showing work on removal of section of Holey Rock. Old coastguard station is visible. 'the crane was erected as a rival to the Bede memorial the ground on the cliff top is quickly being churned up by lorries until parts of it will soon resemble a ploughed field.'
11 April 1934	Sunderland Daily Echo	Photograph of Holey Rock showing 2 workmen standing on the tip. Sea and lighthouse visible but no other buildings.
23 July 1935	Sunderland Daily Echo	Fate of the Holey Rock. Decision by Seaside Development and Entertainments Committee for cutting away unsafe portion of the headland. To be approved by Town Council.
31 October 1935	Sunderland Daily Echo	Article on the oldest family. States John Abbes granted lands to the north of the Wear at Monkwearmouth on condition that he supplied six fully equipped men for the defence of the coasts thereabouts. He built a small fort at Abbs Point (Holey Rock). Info about the Abbs family.
1 February 1936	Sunderland Daily Echo	Rev Cyril Lomax, Rectory Washington, has given a watercolour of the Holey Rock before demolition to Sunderland Public Libraries, Museum and Art Gallery
8 June 1936	Sunderland Daily Echo	Photo - This picture of Roker taken from an unusual angle shows workmen engaged in removing material from the Holey Rock, around which a retaining wall is to be built
14 July 1936	Sunderland Daily Echo	2 photographs of Holey Rock showing old coastguard look-out – one before and one during demolition of Holey Rock
24 September 1936	Sunderland Daily Echo	1 st Article - 150 years Of Infantry Soldiering – Landmarks in the History of the 7 th Battalion Durham Light Infantry 'Battle of Hendon' in 1799 by Major Mark Storey. States that around 1803 there was a large camp between Fulwell and Whitburn with 3,000 men camped there. (1 st Article of 3 see 1 st and 8 October)
1 October 1936	Sunderland Daily Echo	2 nd article - see above History of Sunderland's own Battalion the 7 th DLI.
8 October 1936	Sunderland Daily Echo	3 rd article – see above
2 January 1937	Sunderland Daily Echo	Photo of new coastguard station and old station after demolition of Holey Rock
11 February 1937	Sunderland Daily Echo	Three-inch shell found at Holey Rock dumped beyond the 3 mile limit at sea. Shell had been fired but not exploded – might have


Date	Newspaper	Comments
		been a war souvenir which had been hidden.
27 February 1937	Sunderland Daily Echo	Captain Rashleigh, Chief Inspector of H.M. Coastguard expressed approval of the new coastguard look-out on the Holey Rock as being more satisfactory than the look-out it replaced.
19 March 1937	Sunderland Daily Echo	Phot showing progress of work on the Holey Rock with old coastguard station.
10 July 1937	Sunderland Daily Echo	Photograph (different from others) of Holy Rock being demolished but no buildings are visible.
30 September 1937	Sunderland Daily Echo	Wearside Echoes - Appeal for photographs to be donated to the museum. Describes one of Roker front from the sea before 1884. A broken wooden jetty projects into the sea just south of the Holey Rock
21 April 1938	Sunderland Daily Echo	Famous Abbs Family of Fulwell. Info re Abbs family. Photograph but difficult to see any buildings. States John Abbs built a small fort at Through-hole Point, later known as Holey Rock. The fort was pulled down about 1791. Refers to a paper given to Sunderland Antiquarian Society.
8 July 1939	Newcastle Chronicle	50 years ago – On July 13, 1889, the Ecclesiastical Commissioners transferred to Sunderland Corporation land on cliffs at Roker, northwards from Holey Rock on Abbe's Battery to the Fulwell Sea Banks Lane. The land is various widths owing to undulations of the coastline and skirts the splendid new seaside drive to Whitburn. Proposal is to lay it out as a park. An ancient footpath along the edge of the cliff will be repaired and kept in order.
2 July 1948	Sunderland Daily Echo	Demolition of concrete wartime fortifications in full swing in an attempt to restore Cliff Park to normal conditions by August. Photograph with houses in background.
14 April 1949	Sunderland Daily Echo	Bede Cross now standing on its former site – needs some repairs
20 April 1949	Sunderland Daily Echo	Clearing of military ugliness from the Holey Rock portion of Cliff Park and re-erection of Bede Cross. Refers to an early incident of finding an unexploded bomb dropped by a Zeppelin in WW1 which lay hidden. Discovered when Holey Rock was partly blown up.
6 May 1949	Sunderland Daily Echo	7 weeks work on WW2 machine gun port demolition. Redoubt very difficult to demolish. Walls 2 ft 6 inches thick with 3 feet thick reinforced concrete floor. 20 steel tips snapped in the process of demolition.
10 June 1949	Sunderland Daily Echo	Roker gun pits to become sun traps.
9 December 1949	Sunderland Daily Echo	States that a small fort was built at Through-hole Point by John Abbs and in 1791 it was demolished and a new one erected by the State,
19 January 1953	Sunderland Daily Echo	2 photos 1 of Holey Rock pre-demolition but very indistinct
1 October 1954	Sunderland Daily Echo	Seventy Years Ago in Sunderland by R J N Willcox. Sometimes the volunteers would hold a parade and practice at the Abb's Point Battery, on top of the Holey Rock. It was great fun to stand behind, with ears plugged by fingers, and to watch the shot sail through the air toward the flag on the floating buoy far out to sea and drop with a great splash and ricochet and splash again and again. But we never saw the flag or buoy hit.

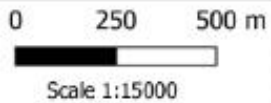


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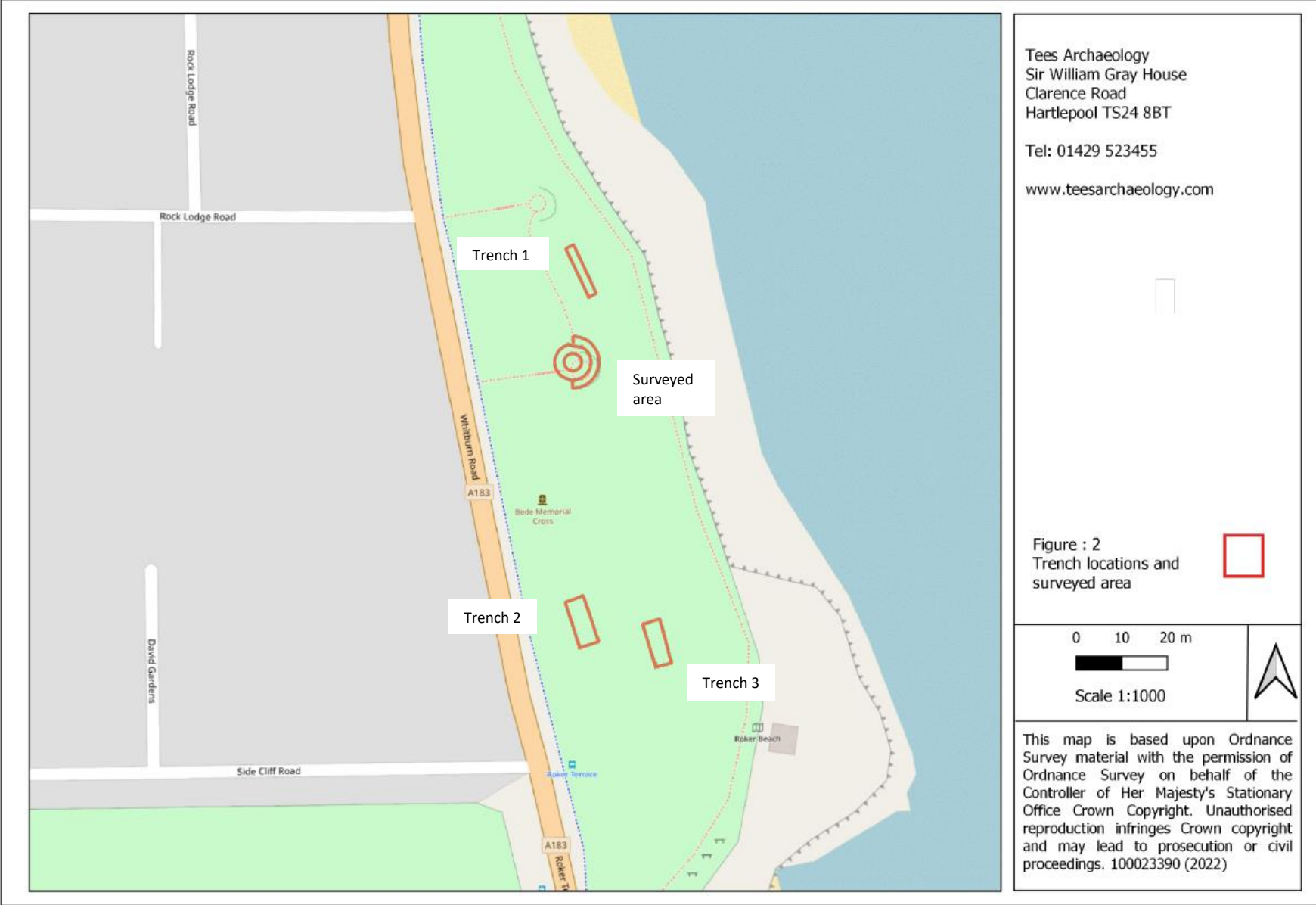
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 Figure 1: Site location

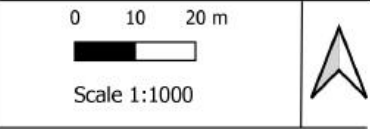


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Figure : 2
 Trench locations and surveyed area



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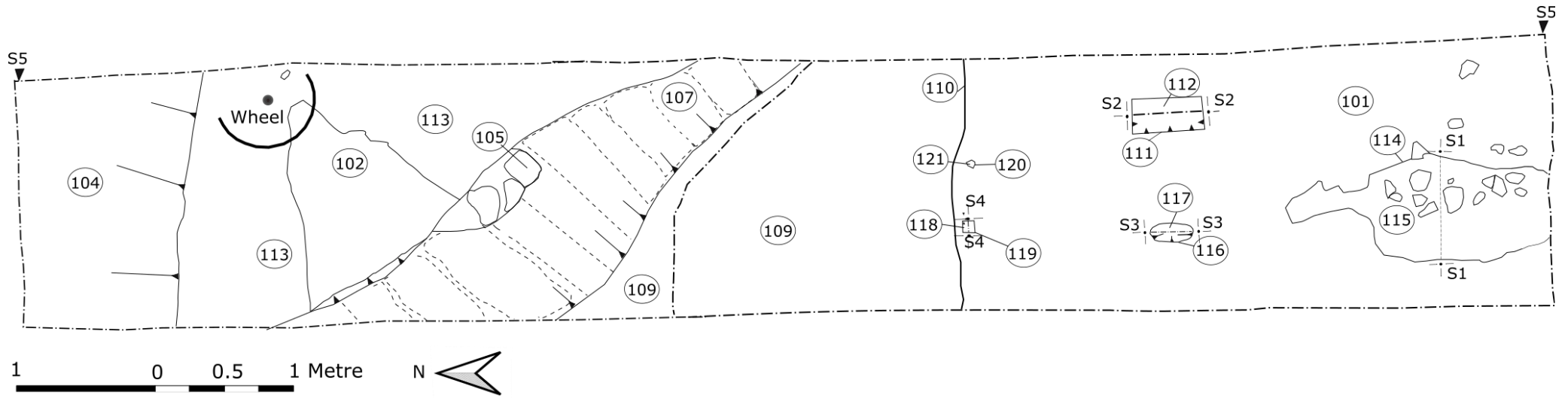
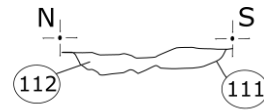


Figure 3: Trench 1 Plan

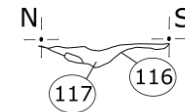
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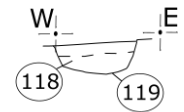
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Section 3



Section 4



Section 5

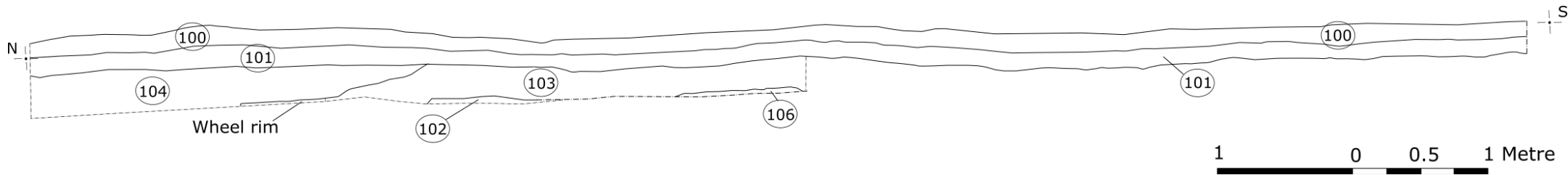


Figure 4: Trench 1 Sections

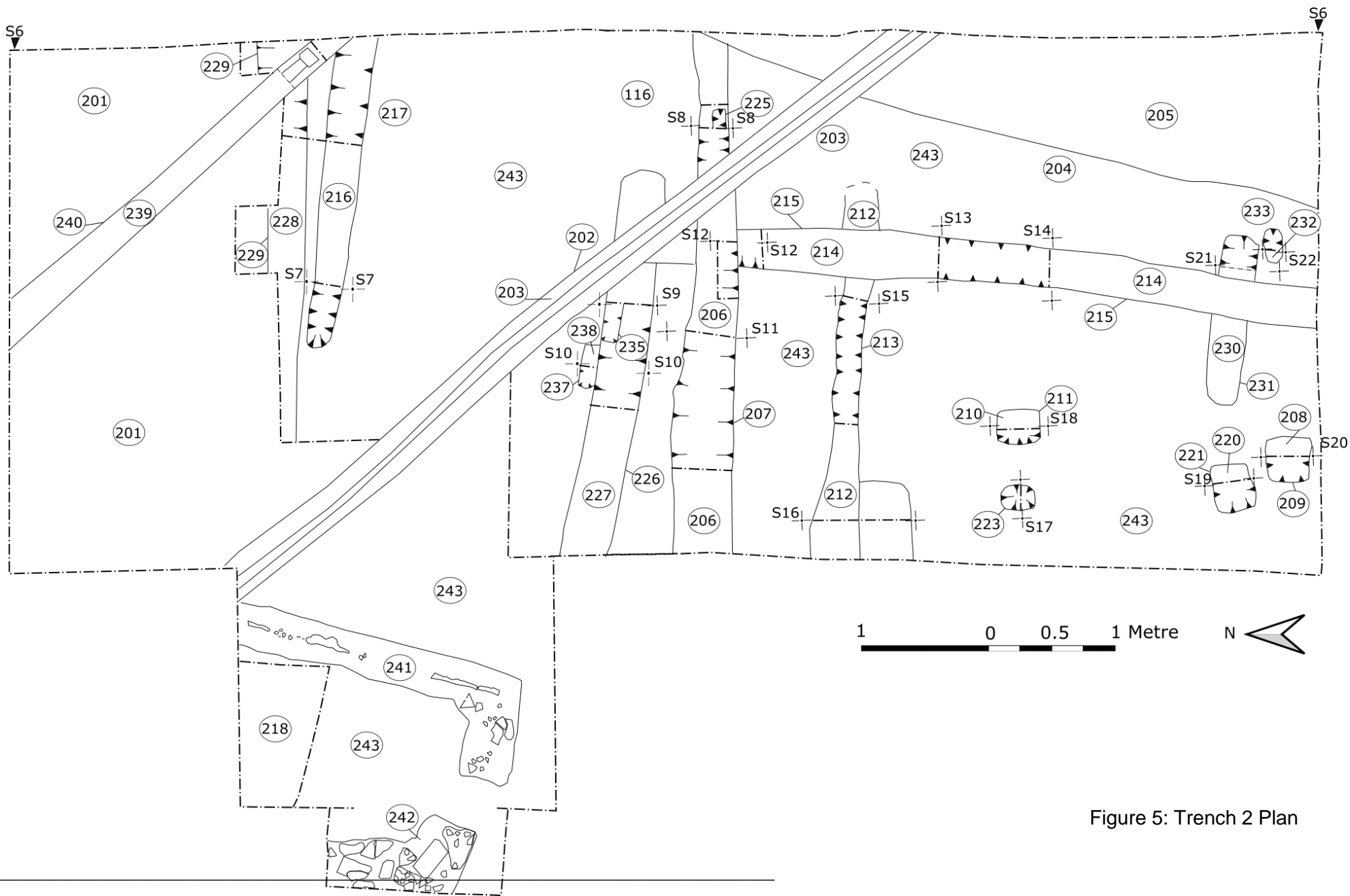
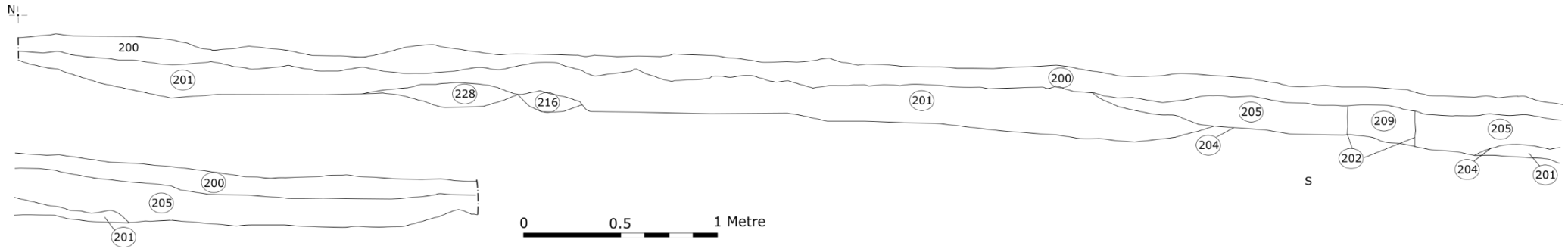
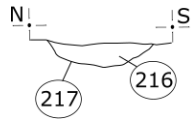


Figure 5: Trench 2 Plan

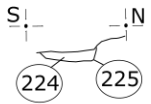
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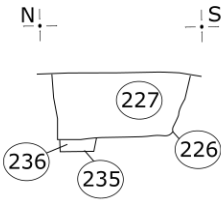
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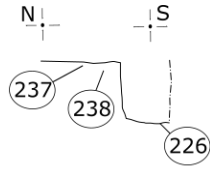
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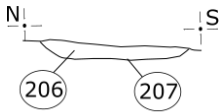
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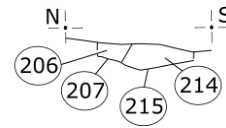
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Section 11



Section 12



Section 13

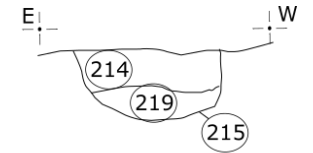
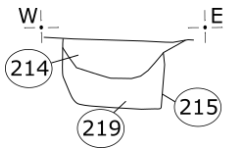
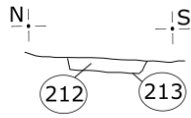


Figure 6: Trench 2 Sections 6 -13

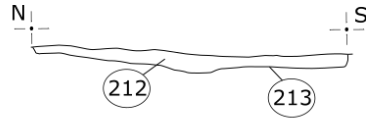
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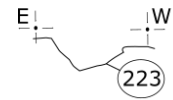
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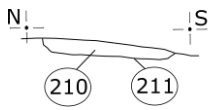
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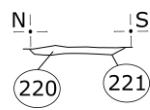
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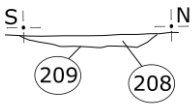
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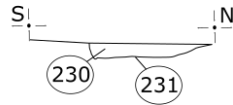
Section 19



Section 20



Section 21



Section 22

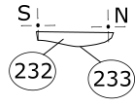


Figure 7: Trench 2 Sections 14 - 22

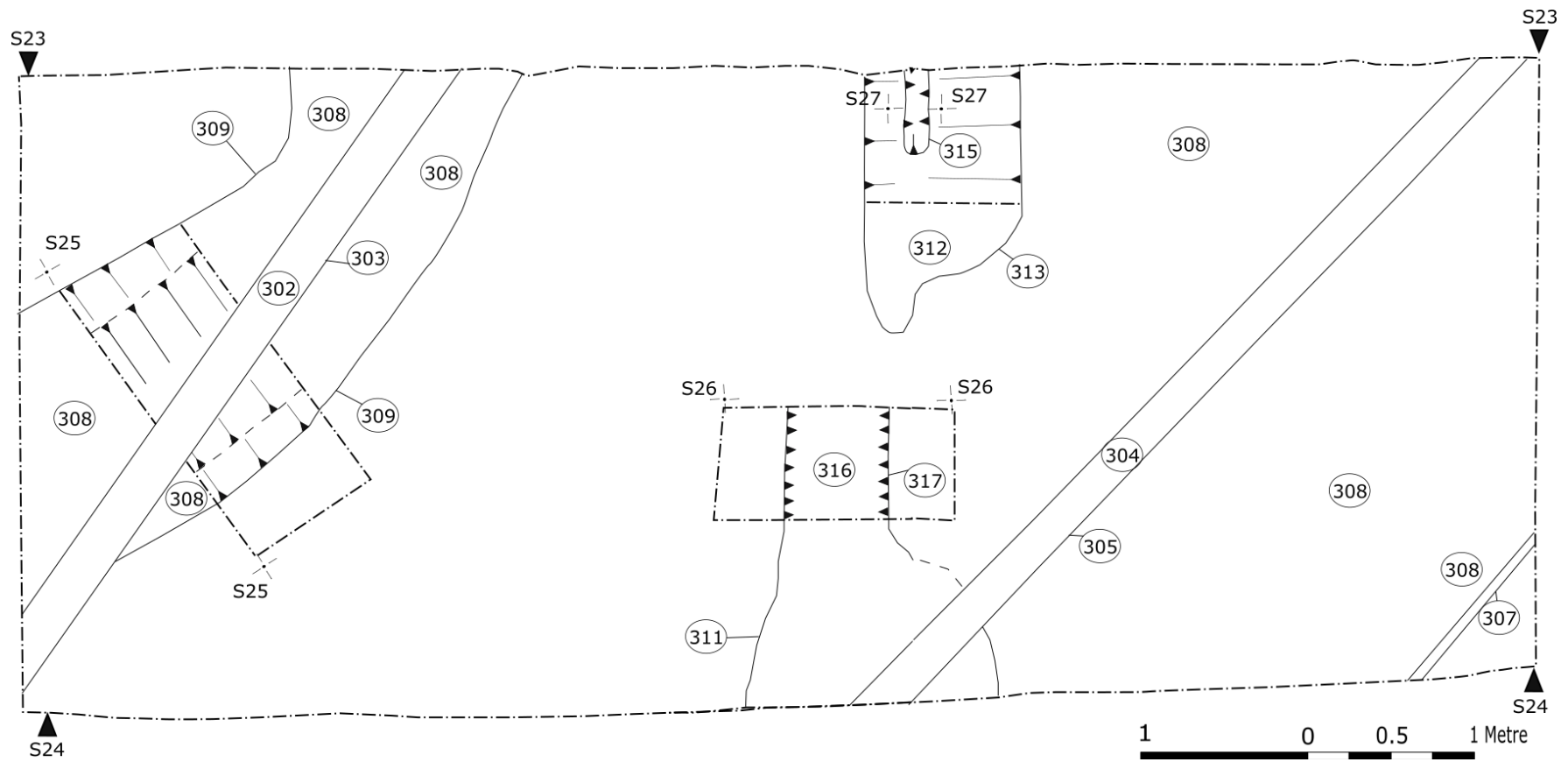
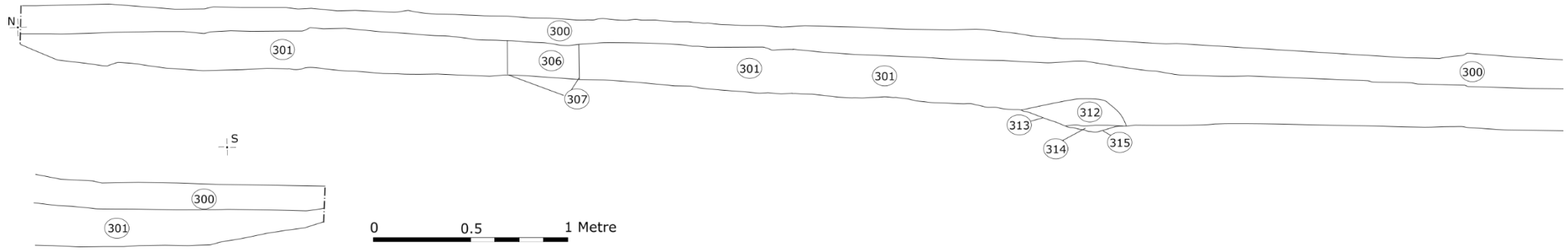


Figure 8: Trench 3 plan

Section 23



Section 24

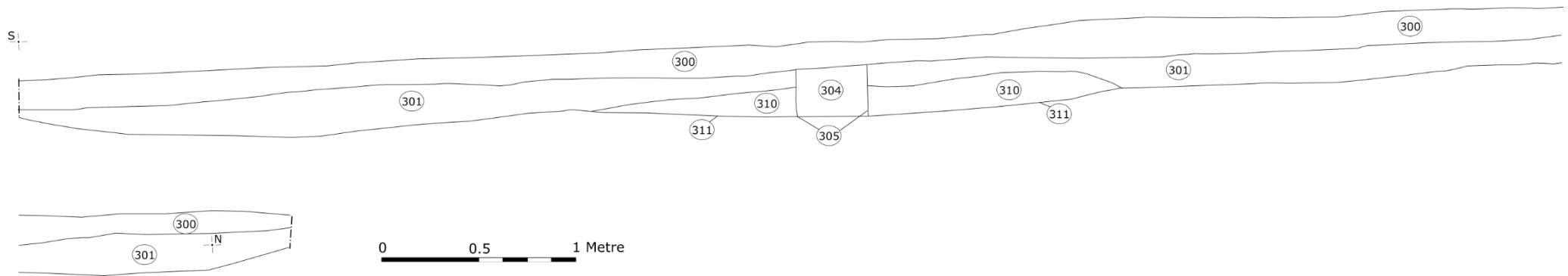


Figure 9: Trench 3 sections 23 and 24



Figure 10: Trench 1 looking south with infilled gun pit in foreground, tarmac edging and the position of the sandbag revetment beyond. Note the front wheel of a motorcycle



Figure 11: Trench 1, remains of sandbag revetment with tarmac and infilled gun pit beyond



Figure 12: Trench 2, section across linear (207), looking east



Figure 13: Trench 2, section across linear (209), looking west



Figure 14: Trench 2, sections across post-hole (236) & linear feature (237), looking east



Figure 15: Trench 3, North-west facing section across linear (309), looking north-west



Figure 16: Trench 3, section 23 showing features (313 & 315), looking east



Figure 17: Trench 3, section 24 looking west showing features (311 & 305), looking west



Figure 18: Trench 2, remains of a concrete building (241 & 242), looking south



Figure 19: Working shot, volunteer being interviewed for radio in trench 2



Figure 20: Working shot, volunteers planning trench 1



Figure 21: a) Sunderland Lustreware (Trench 1)



b) Carbon rods and terminals from Carbon Arc Lamp (Trench 3)



Figure 22: Princess of Wales Own Regiment Button, 1876 – 51 (image courtesy of J Moore)



Figure 23: From top to bottom, .303 Cartridge, small find 17; .45 cartridge, stamped 'WESTERN 45 AUTO', small find 22; 22 cartridge, small find 24



Figure 24: Pieces of cap of No 69 hand grenade and complete example from Imperial War Museum ©IWM MUN 1585



Figure 25: Remains of pre-First World War gun battery in south facing cliff face



Figure 26: Remains of pre-First World War gun battery in east facing cliff face

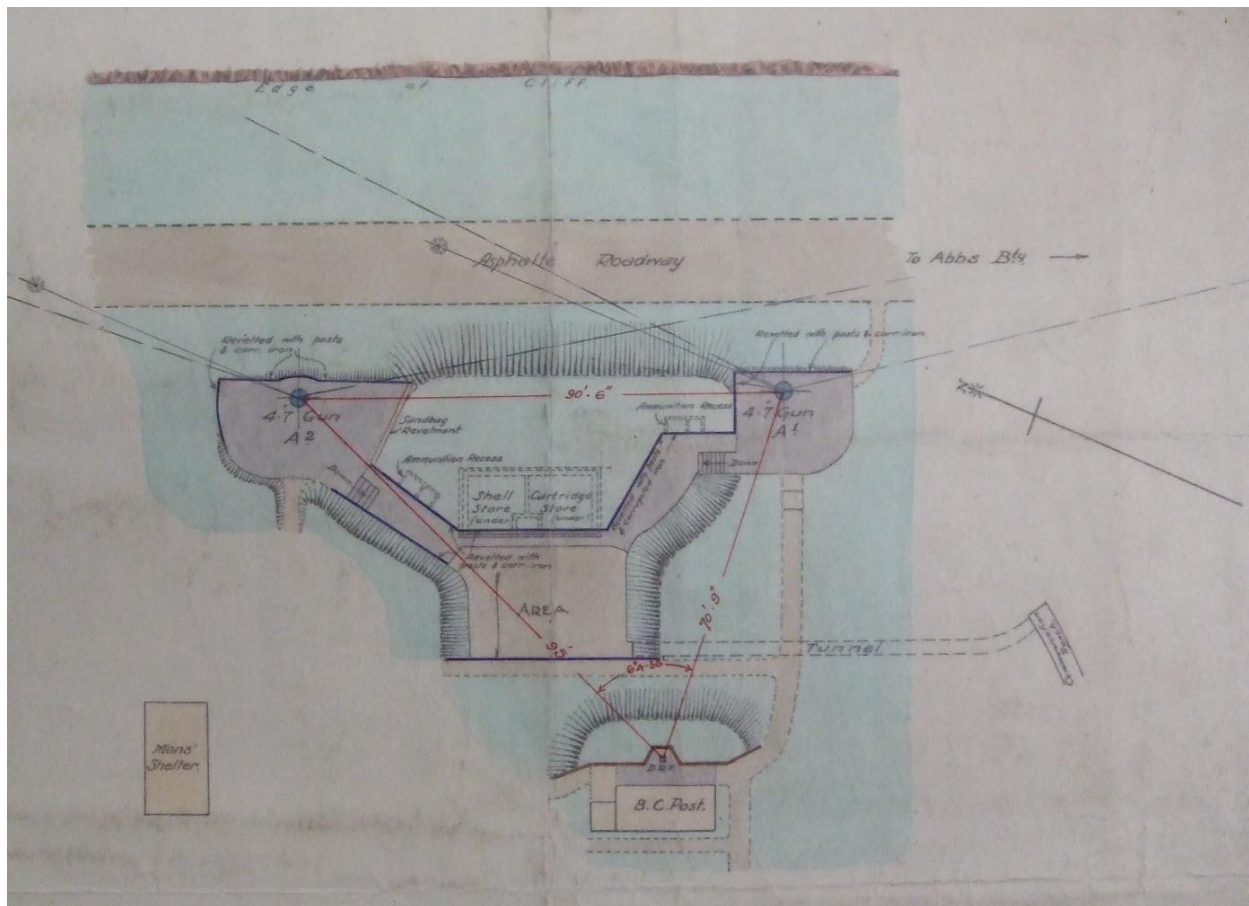


Figure 27: Plan of the First World War Examination Battery. The northern gun pit was the one found in the trench 1 excavation



Figure 28: Aerial Photograph of the site in 1941 showing the gun positions, ancillary buildings and military camp (raf_4_br51_vd_0034, © Historic England)



Figure 29: Southernmost Second World War gun position, seating are in distance is the second gun position



Figure 30: Southernmost Second World War gun position when in situ (©IWM)



Figure 31: War Dept. fencing around site of Second World War military camp

