

Mabey Bridge Chepstow Monmouthshire

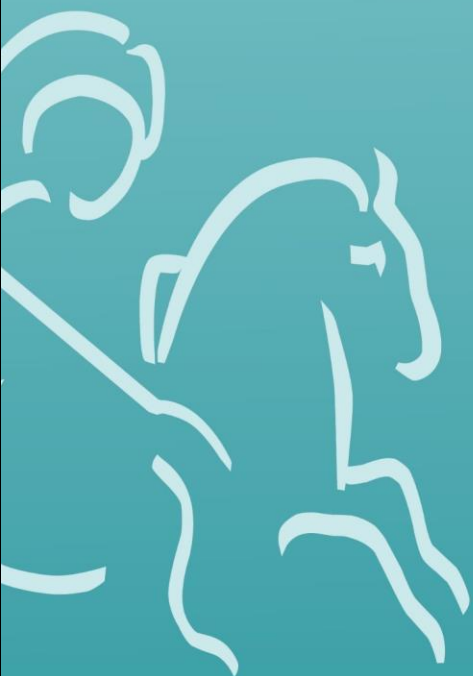
Archaeological Watching Brief



for:
Barratt Homes

CA Project: 6645
CA Report: 6645_1

November 2021



Mabey Bridge Chepstow Monmouthshire

Archaeological Watching Brief

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SUMMARY

Project name:	Mabey Bridge
Location:	Chepstow, Monmouthshire
NGR:	353824 193802
Type:	Watching brief
Date:	17 May 2019 – 15 June 2020
Planning reference:	Monmouthshire County Council Planning Ref: DC/2014/01290
Location of Archive:	To be deposited with Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW)
Site Code:	MBC 18

Between May 2019 and June 2020, Cotswold Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief during groundworks associated with residential development at Mabey Bridge, Chepstow, Monmouthshire.

No features or archaeological deposits predating the modern period were identified. A retaining wall of one of the six slipways comprising part of the National Shipyard (1916-1918) was identified, together with an associated wall and surface.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. Between May 2019 and June 2020, Cotswold Archaeology (CA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Mabey Bridge, Chepstow, Monmouthshire (centred at NGR: 353824 193802; Fig. 1). This watching brief was undertaken for Barratt Homes.
- 1.2. Monmouthshire County Council (MCC) has granted outline planning permission for new homes, offices, workshops, leisure, infrastructure and green space (MCC planning ref: DC/2014/01290). Condition 16 of this planning permission requires the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with an approved WSI.
- 1.3. The scope of this watching brief was defined by Judith Doyle, Senior Archaeological Planning Officer, Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT) and the archaeological advisor to MCC. The watching brief was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by CA (2018) and approved by Judith Doyle. A separate report will be compiled for the Historic Building Recording.
- 1.4. The watching brief was also in line with *Standard and guidance for an archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020), *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment (MoRPHE) PPN 3: Archaeological Excavation* (Historic England 2015) and *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment: The MoRPHE Project Managers' Guide* (Historic England 2015).

The site

- 1.5. The development site is approximately 18ha in extent and is located to the south and east of Chepstow town centre. It is bounded to the east by the River Wye, to the north and west by the Gloucester to Newport railway line and to the south by a former quarry. The site comprised derelict industrial buildings, areas of hardstanding and sidings and slipways alongside the River Wye. The site lies at approximately 15m AOD and is relatively flat
- 1.6. The underlying bedrock geology varies across site. Within the north-east, east, and central areas it is mapped as Cromhall Sandstone Formation. In the north-west of site, it is mapped as Llanelly Formation (limestone/cementstone/calculutite). In the south of site, it is mapped as Hunts Bay Oolite Subgroup (limestone). All these

deposits were formed during the Carboniferous Period and no superficial deposits are recorded. (BGS 2021).

2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1. The site was thought to have the potential to contain archaeological remains associated with boatyards and other infrastructure associated with the construction/maintenance and loading/unloading of ships during the medieval period (ADAS 2014).
- 2.2. In 1916, the government established 3 national shipyards in response to the loss of merchant shipping during the early years of the First World War. The land to the south of the railway bridge at Chepstow was selected as the location of National Shipyard Number 1, with the intention of constructing N-type ships (ADAS 2014, 27). Construction of the shipyard started in 1916 and this was the only national shipyard operating during the First World War, although the war ended before any ships were completed and launched (ADAS 2014, 27).
- 2.3. During the Second World War, however, the shipyard produced ships, landing craft and mulberry harbours, and the development of the shipyard had a strong influence on the expansion of Chepstow (the areas of Hardwick, Bulwark and Pennsylvania were built to house workers at the shipyard). Between the wars, in 1925, Fairfield Shipbuilding and Engineering Ltd bought the shipyard from the government. It later merged with The Mabey Group in 1966 to form Fairfield Mabey, an international bridge building company (ADAS 2014, 28).

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. The general objectives of the watching brief were:
 - to monitor the development groundworks, and to identify, investigate and record any significant buried archaeological deposits/features thus revealed;
 - at the conclusion of the project, to produce an integrated project archive and a report setting out the watching brief results and the archaeological conclusions that can be drawn from the recorded data.
- 3.2. The specific objective of the watching brief was to investigate and record any remains associated with the early shipyard and associated structures.

4. METHODOLOGY

- 4.1. The watching brief comprised the observation by a competent archaeologist of remediation works and/or ground reduction works associated with the proposed development (Fig. 2).
- 4.2. Archaeological features/deposits were investigated, planned and recorded in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 1: Fieldwork Recording Manual*.
- 4.3. Deposits were assessed for their palaeoenvironmental potential in accordance with *CA Technical Manual 2: The Taking and Processing of Environmental and Other Samples from Archaeological Sites*. No deposits were identified that required sampling.
- 4.4. CA will make arrangements with RCAHMS for the deposition of the project archive. The archives will be prepared and deposited in accordance with *Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives* (ClfA 2014; updated October 2020).

5. RESULTS (FIGS. 2 & 3)

- 5.1. This section provides an overview of the watching brief results. Detailed summaries of the recorded contexts are given in Appendix A.
- 5.2. Natural geological substrate, comprised of limestone in red silty clay matrix, was identified within Trench 7 at approximately 0.5m below present ground level (bpgl). It had previously been subjected to a horizontal truncation and was overlain by modern made ground. Natural substrate was not identified anywhere else on site.
- 5.3. Within Trenches 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8, made ground deposits, comprising mottled silty clays and silts, were identified at approximately 0.5m bpgl. Within Trenches 6 and 8, made ground deposits measured at least 1.2m in depth. They all remained undated and were overlain by modern demolition/ levelling deposits.

Trench 3

- 5.4. Structure 3001 was partially exposed against the western baulk of the trench. It was broadly aligned north/south and constructed from regular courses of stone blocks bonded with a dark grey cement. It measured at least at least 5m in length, 2.5m in

height and was butted/sealed by modern demolition/levelling deposit 3000. Structure 3001 was not visible in plan.

Trench 4

- 5.5. Structure 4001 was partially exposed against the western baulk of the trench and is likely the southern continuation of structure 3001 recorded in Trench 3.
- 5.6. Alluvial deposit 4009 was identified within the base of Trench 4 at approximately 4.5m bpgl. No relationship was identified between alluvial deposit 4009 and structure 4001. Both were sealed/butted by made ground deposit 4008 that measured approximately 0.8m in depth and in turn, was cut by construction cut 4006 containing wall 4005.
- 5.7. Wall 4005 was broadly aligned north/south and measured approximately 0.5m in width and 1.5m in depth. It was constructed from irregular courses of roughly hewn limestone blocks with a light grey mortar.
- 5.8. The eastern face of wall 4005 was butted by soil deposit 4007 in turn, overlain by levelling deposit 4002.
- 5.9. The western face of wall 4005 was butted by probable mortar floor 4004 that measured approximately 0.3m in depth and was sealed by levelling deposit 4003.
- 5.10. Levelling deposits 4002 and 4003 were both covered by modern made ground that measured approximately 2.5m in depth.

6. DISCUSSION

- 6.1. No features or deposits pre-dating the modern period were identified during the current work.
- 6.2. Made ground deposits identified in Trenches 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8 are probably part of the First World War construction of the shipyard. These deposits were up to 4m thick and had probably been imported to raise ground levels and establish a level site.
- 6.3. Structures 3001 and 4001 were the earliest features identified during the work and probably represent the continuation of the same wall. Walls 3001/4001 are probably the eastern retaining walls for the northern-most of the six slipways comprising part of the National Shipyard (Fig. 2). The base of the slipway was not exposed during the works,

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- 6.4. Surface 4004 and wall 4005 to the east may represent associated construction and/or redevelopment of the site.

7. CA PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1. Fieldwork was undertaken by Daniel Sausins, Sian Reynish, Liam Wilson and Noel Boothroyd. This report was written by Daniel Sausins. The report illustrations were prepared by Ken Lymer. The project archive has been compiled by Daniel Sausins and prepared for deposition by Hazel O’Neil. The project was managed for CA by Laurent Coleman.

8. REFERENCES

British Geological Survey 2020 *Geology of Britain Viewer*

<https://www.bgs.ac.uk/map-viewers/geology-of-britain-viewer/> Accessed
September 2021

ADAS 2014 Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment Fairfield Mabey Site,
Chepstow, Monmouthshire

Cotswold Archaeology 2018 *Mabey Bridge, Chepstow, Monmouthshire: Written
Scheme of Investigation for Historic Building Recording and an
Archaeological Watching Brief*

Roberts Limbrick Architects 2014 Mabey Bridge, Station Road, Chepstow; Design
and Access Statement

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT DESCRIPTIONS

Area	Context No.	Type	Fill of	Interpretation	Description	Length (m)	Width (m)	Depth/thickness (m)	Spot-date
1	1000	Layer		Made ground	Mixed demolition material with concrete, CBM, steel.			0.5	
1	1001	Layer		Made ground	Mixed red brown silty clay and silts with large stones and gravel			>0.3	
2	2000	Layer		Made ground	Mixed demolition material with concrete, CBM, steel			0.5	
2	2001	Layer		Made ground	Mixed red brown silty clay and silts with large stones and gravel			>0.3	
3	3000	Layer		Made ground	Mixed demolition material with concrete, CBM, steel.				
3	3001	structure		Retaining wall	Aligned N/S. regular courses of ashlar limestone blocks	>5.0	>0.1	>2.5	
4	4000	Layer		Made ground	Mixed demolition material with concrete, CBM, steel.			2.5	
4	4001	Structure		Retaining wall	Same as 3001		>0.3	>3.5	
4	4002	Layer		Levelling	Loose dark greyish black silt			0.3	
4	4003	Layer		Levelling	Mid brown silty clay with CBM flecking			0.3	
4	4004	Layer		Surface	Yellow white limestone mortar			0.3	
4	4005	Structure	4006	Wall	Aligned N/S. irregular courses of roughly hewn limestone blocks with light grey mortar		0.5	>1.5	
4	4006	Cut		Wall construction cut	Aligned N/S. vertical sides		0.5	>1.5	
4	4007	Layer		Buried soil?	Mid-dark brown silty clay with green mottling			0.5	
4	4008	Layer		Made ground	Mixed red brown silty clay and silts with large stones and gravel			0.8	
4	4009	Layer		Alluvium	Blue grey silty clay			>0.3	
5	5000	Layer		Hardcore	Gravel and cobble stone			1.0	
5	5001	Layer		Made ground	Red brown sandy silty clay			>0.1	
6	6001	Layer		Levelling				0.5	
6	6001	Layer		Made ground	Mixed red brown silty clay and silts with large stones and gravel			>1.2	
7	7000	Layer		Levelling	Loose dark greyish black silt			0.5	
7	7001	Layer		Natural substrate	Layered limestone in a red silty clay matrix				
8	8000	Layer		Levelling	Loose dark greyish black silt			0.5	
8	8001	layer		Made ground	Mixed red brown silty clay and silts with large stones and gravel			>1.2	

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 Site boundary

0 1km

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Ordnance Survey 0100031673



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PROJECT TITLE

Mabey Bridge, Chepstow, Monmouthshire

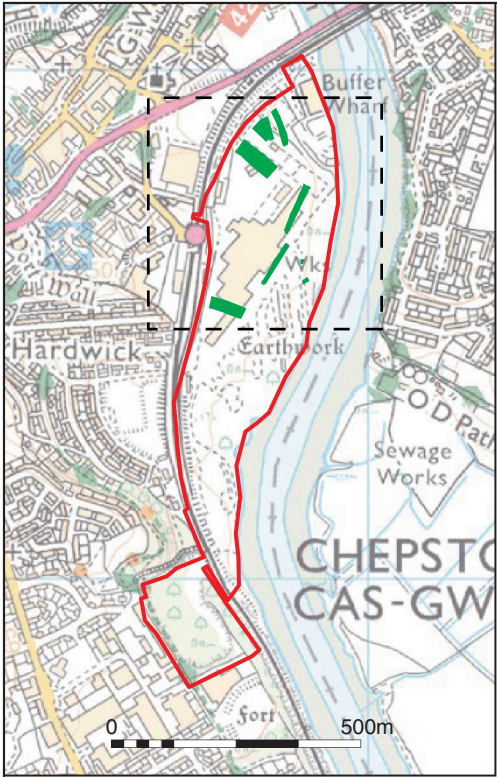
FIGURE TITLE

Site location plan

DRAWN BY KL
CHECKED BY DB
APPROVED BY LC
PROJECT NO. 6645
DATE 16/09/2021
SCALE @A4 1:25,000

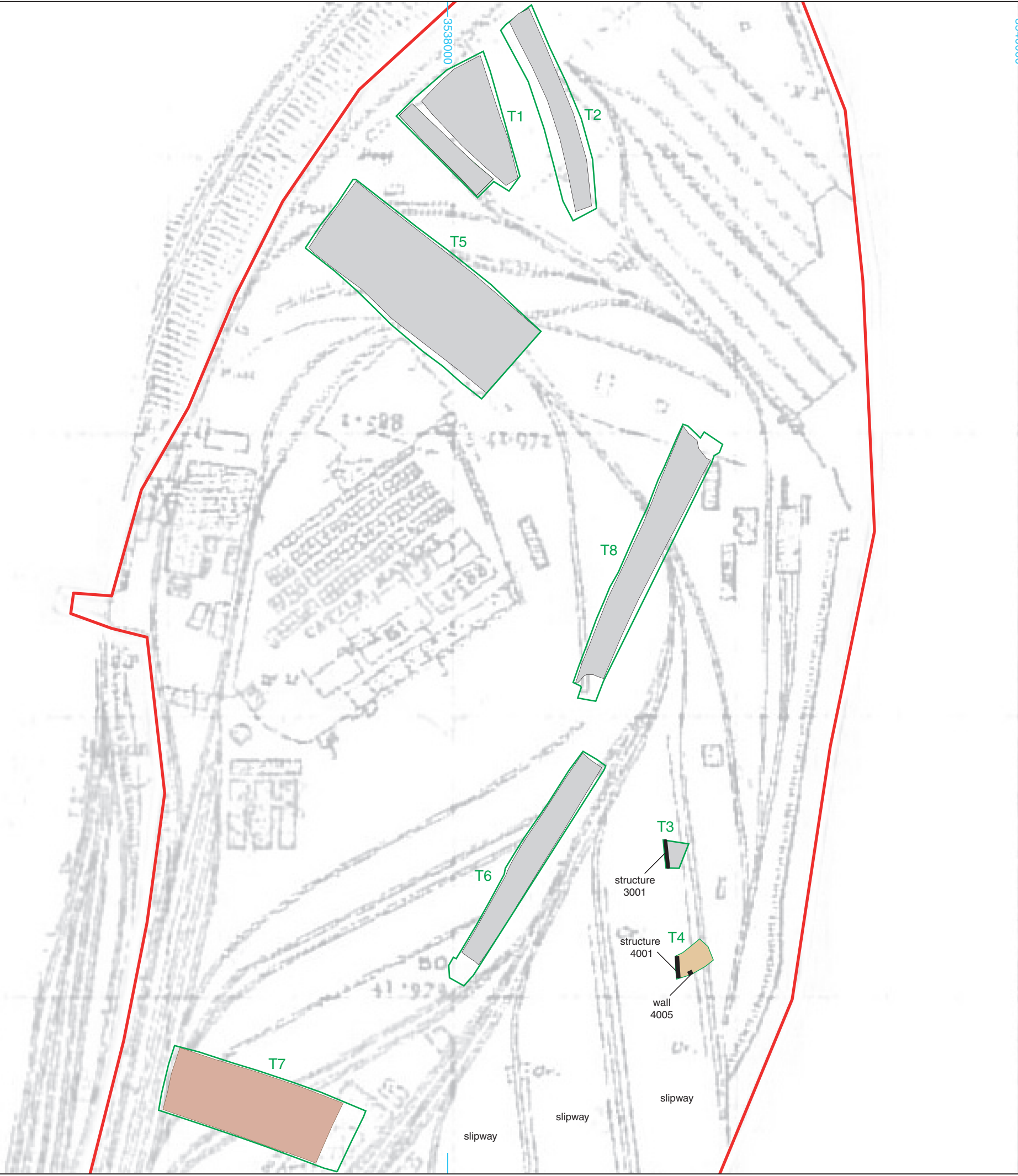
FIGURE NO.

1



193800

193600



- Site boundary
- Trench
- Made ground
- Natural
- Alluvium
- Structure

0 1:1500 80m

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PROJECT TITLE
Mabey Bridge, Chepstow, Monmouthshire

FIGURE TITLE
Plan showing trench locations and archaeological features on Ordnance Survey 1921 map

DRAWN BY	KL	PROJECT NO.	6645	FIGURE NO.
CHECKED BY	DB	DATE	12/11/2021	2
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Trench 3 structure 3001, looking west (scale 1m)



Trench 4 structure 4001 and wall 4005, looking south-west



Trench 6 section (scale 1m)



Trench 7, looking west



Trench 8, looking north-east


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FIGURE TITLE
Photographs

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CHECKED BY	DB	DATE	16/09/2021	3
APPROVED BY	LC	SCALE@A3	NA	