

Archaeological Assessment

**Proposed LUAS Stop
St James's Hospital, Dublin 8**

Licence no. 01E0892

By
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For Light Rail Project Office
Córas Iompar Éireann

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Illustrations

Figures

- Fig. 1 Site location
- Fig. 2 John Rocque, *Exact survey of the city and suburbs of Dublin*, 1756 (extract)
- Fig. 3 Trench location
- Fig. 4 First edition Ordnance Survey, 1838–47 (extract)

Plates

- Plate 1 View of site looking southeast

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report describes the results of an archaeological assessment undertaken in the grounds of St James's Hospital, James's Street, Dublin 8 (Fig. 1). Line A of the LUAS, the light rail system linking Tallaght to Abbey Street, will pass through the grounds of the hospital, formally the South Dublin Union. A stop serving the hospital is to be constructed just inside the main hospital entrance on James's Street. As this is within the SMR designations DU006:050 (James's Hospital) and DU006:017 (Kilmainham), an application was made to test excavate the area of the stop prior to the commencements of the works.
- 1.2 The site was located between the main entrance to the hospital on James's Street and Ewington Lane to the east (NGR O 137 338). It was until recently occupied by a large hospital building in mass concrete, dating from 1934. This replaced a range of hospital buildings which had evolved over this part of the hospital precinct since the middle of the nineteenth century. There were no cellars under the structure, although the concrete foundations were quite substantial. Of particular interest in the immediate area was the bridewell depicted on Rocque's 1756 depiction of the city (Fig. 2). This stood on the street front outside the perimeter wall of what was then the city workhouse, directly on the line of the LUAS track. It would appear to have been a T-shaped structure, with two yards to the rear. While not much is known of the history of the structure, it was presumably the parish bridewell and may well have had its origins in the late medieval period.
- 1.3 The site slopes off to the north from a pre-demolition height of approximately 20.30m OD in the south to 18.45m OD at the northern end of the site.
- 1.4 The area was investigated by mechanically excavating a single non-continuous trench under licence from the National Museum of Ireland and Dúchas, the Heritage Service (licence reference 01E0892) (Fig. 3). The trench was opened to 2m over a distance of 58m. It was not possible to open a continuous trench due to the amount of services still on site. The work was undertaken by an Atlas with a 1.5m bucket and was carried out on October 8, 2001, in good weather conditions.
- 1.5 Prior to the assessment, the site was cleared of demolition rubble. Ground reduction in the region of 400mm was monitored archaeologically under licence 01E0733, which covers monitoring over the whole LUAS project. A layer of gravel was deposited over the site (Plate 1), bringing it to between approximately 17m OD (at the northern end of the site) and 19m OD (at the southern end).

- 1.6 The results of the test excavation showed that the initial 300mm or so of the ground underneath the gravel was disturbed by the foundations of the 1934 building. Below that, a 400–600mm deep deposit of garden soil sealed the natural subsoil. Several walls were encountered in the trench, along with the remains of a stone-vaulted sewer.

2 **Historical Background** (Linzi Simpson, Margaret Gowen & Co. Ltd.)

2.1 *Medieval James's Street*

James's Street forms part of the main thoroughfare into Dublin on the west side of the walled town. At the western end, James's Street led to Kilmainham, a small settlement west of Dublin, while at the eastern end, it led directly to the walled town, via Thomas Street. The route follows a more ancient, early medieval roadway known as the Slighe Mhór that extended across the country as far as Galway. After the Anglo-Norman invasion of Dublin in 1170, the western suburb developed rapidly, as did the other suburbs around the city. By the mid-thirteenth century, there were 'burgage' plots along Thomas Street and James's Street. The term 'burgage' refers to a special tenurial arrangement in Dublin and elsewhere in Ireland where the price of a plot or tenement was fixed at 36 shillings and the owner had certain status and privileges. These privileges were offered as an inducement to attract settlers from England, and their presence on the Thomas Street/James's Street route is an indication that the land along the roadside was divided up into organized plots by the thirteenth century.

2.2 *St Thomas's Abbey*

The rapid settlement of the western suburb was probably the result of the establishment of the Abbey of St Thomas the Martyr in 1177 to the southeast of the site. This Augustinian house was to become the most important house in Dublin, as it was founded by William FitzAldem on the orders of Henry II and enjoyed royal patronage throughout the medieval period (Gilbert 1889, xi).

The founding of the abbey and the establishment of a 'liberty' (an independent entity that was not bound by the Dublin administration) had an important impact on the western suburb. The lands of the abbey (to the south of the site) were rapidly exploited, especially the watercourses, which were rechannelled to run water-mills. One such watercourse was channelled along James's Street and Thomas Street and fed into a city cistern in High Street, providing the city with its own water supply.

2.3 *St James's Church*

The most important development was the granting of the parish church of St James to the Abbey of St Thomas. St James's Church lay to the northeast of the development site (at St James's Gate Brewery), on the north side of James's Street (to the east of Steven's Lane). Between 1181 and 1212, the archbishop of Dublin, John Cumin, granted the church to the monks of St Thomas's Abbey. The parish boundaries of St James's parish were also stated as stretching from the Newgate (the western city gate) in the east as far as Kilmainham to the west and on the north side as far as Bridge Street (McNeill 1950, 31). Thus, the parish of St James included the entire western suburb as far as the city gate.

The church survived the rigours of the late medieval period and was still in existence in 1530, when it was worth 12d (by comparison, the church of St Catherine to the east was also worth 12d, although the church of St John the Evangelist (in Fishamble Street) was only worth 6d) (McNeill 1950, 275).

2.4 *The Medieval Suburb*

That James's Street was settled to some degree in the medieval period is indicated by the fact that, by the late thirteenth century, Robert de Bedford granted one 'burgage plot' beside the church to the Abbey of St Thomas the Martyr (Gilbert 1889, 377). A second reference, similarly dated, records a grant of half a burgage plot by a W. White in James's Street (Gilbert 1889, 412). However, there was also open ground, which was probably under cultivation. In 1268, St Thomas's also received fifteen acres of fields close to the church (Gilbert 1889, 3).

James's Street appears to have retained its rural character throughout the medieval period. In 1541, an 'enclosure' next to St James's Church held by William Talbot is mentioned in a lease (Griffith 1991, 88, HVIII. 143). In 1543, Dermitius Labore (his first name, Dermot, suggests that he was probably an Irishman) held a tenement and a garden (Griffith 1991, 99–100, HVIII. 165). A third reference, dated 1576, also refers to 'gardens' under cultivation along James's Street (Griffith 1991, 222 Eliz. 80)

2.5 *St James's Gate*

The church gave its name to a mural tower that straddled James's Street known as James's Gate [first mentioned in 1555 (M'Cready 1975, 42), although probably built 200 years earlier]. This gate stood to the east of church, on the east side of Watling Street, as depicted on Speed's map of Dublin, dated 1610. It was similar in type to other suburban mural gates built in the thirteenth century around the city. Their main function was defence, but they were also places where tolls were collected from people entering the city. A 'toll-house' is listed in James's Street in the eighteenth century and is depicted on Rocque's map of Dublin (at the junction of St James's Street and Mount Brown; Somerville-Large 1979, 213; Fig. 1). The gate was still standing in 1728, when it is depicted on Charles Brooking's map of the city (Fig. 5). However, it is not depicted on John Rocque's map of Dublin, dated 1756 (Fig. 6).

2.6 *Post-Medieval James's Street: The Workhouse*

There were plans to erect a workhouse for the poor of Dublin as early as 1688, although nothing was done for a further fifteen years (Craig 1980, 75). However, in the early eighteenth century, an act of parliament was passed and Dublin Corporation granted a plot of land for the workhouse in Mount Brown, at the west end of James's Street. This land was described as being 'walled in grounds at the southwest end of James's Street and 14 acres adjoining.' Construction began in 1702, and, in the following year, the foundation stone was laid in the 'great hall' by Mary, duchess of Ormonde (Craig 1980, 75).

2.7 *Brooking's Map of Dublin, 1728*

The workhouse is depicted on Brooking's map of Dublin, dated 1728, where it is shown as a range of buildings arranged in a square with a central courtyard. The north range (which is wider than the other ranges) is probably the earliest and has two projections on the north side. The entrance is via a laneway from James's Street that approaches the main building from the south. This laneway leads through two rectangular buildings, which are oriented east-west and lie parallel to the main range. The city basin (the reservoir for the city's water supply) lies to the southeast, in an area that is now occupied by the modern hospital complex.

2.8 *The Foundling Hospital*

The foundling hospital was established in 1727 and consisted of two additional wings on either side of the existing workhouse. The new hospital had a notorious timber wheel where abandoned children were placed on arrival; their life expectancy was very short (Somerville-Large 1979, 172). In 1772, the hospital was rebuilt with the help of a subscription of £4,000 from Lady Arabella Denny, a descendant of William Petty the cartographer (Somerville-Large 1979, 212). However, the mortality rate of the children remained very high, with three-quarters of all infants admitted between 1784 and 1796 dying in the hospital (Somerville-Large 1979, 212). The hospital continued to operate throughout the eighteenth century and finally closed in 1837.

2.9 *Rocque's Map of Dublin, 1756*

The new workhouse/foundling hospital is depicted on Rocque's map of Dublin, dated 1756, where it is labelled 'the city work-house.' Two projecting wings were added to the original poorhouse (1703), and these are visible on the east and west sides. Within the complex, access to the projecting wings was from the central courtyard through arches on either side. Although access was via the original laneway to the south of the range, by 1756, there was a main gate in the north boundary wall facing onto Mount Brown/James's Street. To the south of the range, the original east–west buildings that lay to the rear are depicted by Rocque as 'public buildings' and are marked 'bedlam,' perhaps indicating the presence of a lunatic asylum. Two large buildings, oriented north–south, were also added on the western side on the main range and are marked as stables/outhouses on Rocque's map. These buildings are similar in type to two additional buildings in the northwest corner of the complex, which were also probably stables. A 'bridewell,' or prison, lies outside the north boundary wall on the eastern side.

2.10 *Francis Johnson*

In 1798, work on the main buildings was carried out by Francis Johnson, one of the most important architects in Ireland [responsible for St George's Church, Harwicke Place (1802–13); the Chapel Royal in Dublin Castle and the GPO]. He added wings and a crenellated parapet, as well as a cupola (dome). According to cartographic sources, these wings appear to have been added to the south side of the main building, with the rear buildings (bedlam) extended at either side. These are depicted on William Duncan's 1821

map, where the entire complex is labelled as the 'foundling hospital,' and on the Irish Railway map of 1837.

2.11 *Ordnance Survey of 1838–47 (Fig. 4)*

By 1847, the hospital complex, now the 'South Dublin Union work-house,' was built up considerably. The main, original, building (1703) was still visible in an almost complete form (the building was still standing in 1952 when Maurice Craig commented on the fact that the foundation stone laid by the duchess of Ormonde was still in position). The street frontage had been built up, as had the east and west sides. The main core, however, was still visible, with the wings (added by Johnson) and numerous buildings, including the infirmary and various schools, to the rear. Also of note was the church in the front of the grounds.

3 Proposed Development

- 3.1 The preliminary work for the LUAS has already necessitated the demolition of a hospital building dating from 1934. A further range of buildings to the south is due for demolition in the near future. Construction work in this area, where there is expected to be minimal ground disturbance, will be monitored under the 01E0733 licence.

- 3.2 The LUAS stop will involve ground disturbance of up to 2m below the present surface. The track itself generally involves disturbance of 1m. A buffer zone of 400mm has been agreed along the LUAS property take where there are archaeological deposits present.

4 Archaeological Assessment

- 4.1 The trench was located down the centre of the site, oriented approximately north–south along the footprint of the proposed stop. The northern end was located 14m from the timber hoarding fronting onto James's Street. The trench was not brought up to the hoarding due to the presence of water and gas mains. It was excavated mechanically to an average depth of 2.5m and measured 3m in width.
- 4.2 The testing took place just outside and to the east of the original hospital precinct, in an area that was an open yard in 1756 and a tannery during the first Ordnance Survey (1838–47). By the publication of the second edition of the Ordnance Survey in 1866, the area had been incorporated into the hospital, the eastern boundary of which was now Pigtown Lane (later to become Ewington Lane)
- 4.3 The trench was excavated in two lengths due to the presence of two water mains crossing the centre of the site; the northern length measured 14m, the southern length 30m, with a gap of 14m between the two sections.
- 4.4 There was a general spread of mortar and building debris occupying the initial 300mm below the surface. This would appear to relate to the construction phase of the hospital building, as opposed to its demolition phase.
- 4.5 The following descriptions of the stratigraphy run from the northern end of the trench.

For the initial 4m, the stratigraphy was as follows:

| | |
|--------------------|---|
| 0–00mm | Concrete, mortar and building debris. |
| 300–600mm | Mid- to light-brown clay with few inclusions. |
| 600–1,200mm | Mid-brown cultivated garden soil. |
| at 1,200mm | Bright yellow natural subsoil, deepening slightly to the south. |

- 4.6 At 4m, the deposits below the mortar described above were cut by a substantial masonry wall in calp limestone bonded by a hard lime mortar (Wall 1). The wall extended east–west across the trench and survived to 400mm below the present ground surface. The lower course of masonry was recorded at approximately 1,200mm below the surface, where the natural subsoil was evident at approximately 1,800mm.
- 4.7 The substantial nature of the wall would suggest that it is probably a wall initially depicted on the 1866 edition of the Ordnance Survey as dividing two yards. The wall is not depicted

on the first edition of the Ordnance Survey (1838–47), where the area is taken up by a tan yard.

At 13m, the stratigraphy was recorded as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| 0–350mm | Concrete, mortar and building debris. |
| 350–500mm | Mixed mortar and light-brown clay with modern pottery. |
| 500–700mm plus | Mid-brown cultivated garden soil. |
| at 700mm | Water ingress. |

4.8 Several concrete foundations were also uncovered in the northern section of the trench, all relating to the hospital building constructed in 1934.

4.9 The stratigraphical relationships in the southern section of the trench were broadly similar to those recorded further to the north.

At 30m, the following stratigraphy was noted:

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 0–250/300mm | Concrete, mortar and building debris. |
| 300–900mm | Mid-brown cultivated garden soil. |
| at 900mm | Light-brown clay, natural subsoil? |
| at 1,000mm | Water ingress. |

4.10 At 41m south, the foundations of a calp wall surviving to 450mm below the surface were recorded (Wall 2). The wall measured between 400mm and 450mm in width and survived to a height of 560mm. It cut through the post-medieval garden soil but was sealed by the mortar deposit.

4.11 This is probably the wall depicted on the second edition of the Ordnance Survey. It appears to have been built along the southern side of Ewington Lane after the demolition of the buildings depicted on the first edition. Its westward continuation (located here) acted as the gable wall of a building that extended to the north along the western side of Pigtown Lane.

4.12 Two metres to the south of Wall 2, the trench cut through a large culvert in calp limestone. The culvert extended towards the south-southwest and had been partly truncated by the hospital structure. It measured approximately 2.2m in width (7') and survived to a height of approximately 1.80m (6'). It appeared to be filled with silt and water, which immediately inundated the machine trench. The culvert had a barrel vault and appeared to be constructed without any red brick in its fabric.

The following stratigraphy was recorded at the southern end of the trench:

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| 0–150mm | Concrete, mortar and building debris. |
| 150–1,000mm | Mid-brown cultivated garden soil. |
| at 1,000mm | Light-brown clay, natural subsoil and water ingress. |

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.1 The results of the assessment would indicate the presence of up to 850mm of cultivated garden soil, which, on the basis of the evidence of Claire Walsh's adjacent excavation, would appear to be post-medieval in date. Although no finds were recovered from the test trench, the material excavated was quite similar to that recorded less than 30m to the west.
- 5.2 There are several walls depicted on the various editions of the Ordnance Survey, including the primary precinct wall of the hospital, depicted on Rocque, which appear to have left no archaeological trace. It is possible that the demolition that occurred prior to the erection of the 1934 building completely removed all but two of these walls.
- 5.3 It is recommended that the ground-reduction works be archaeologically monitored to ensure that any occupational evidence that may have survived the ground clearance in the area is recorded.
- 5.4 Actions on the basis of the results of this report are subject to discussions with and approval from the planning authority and Dúchas, the Heritage Service.

Franc Myles

December 7, 2001

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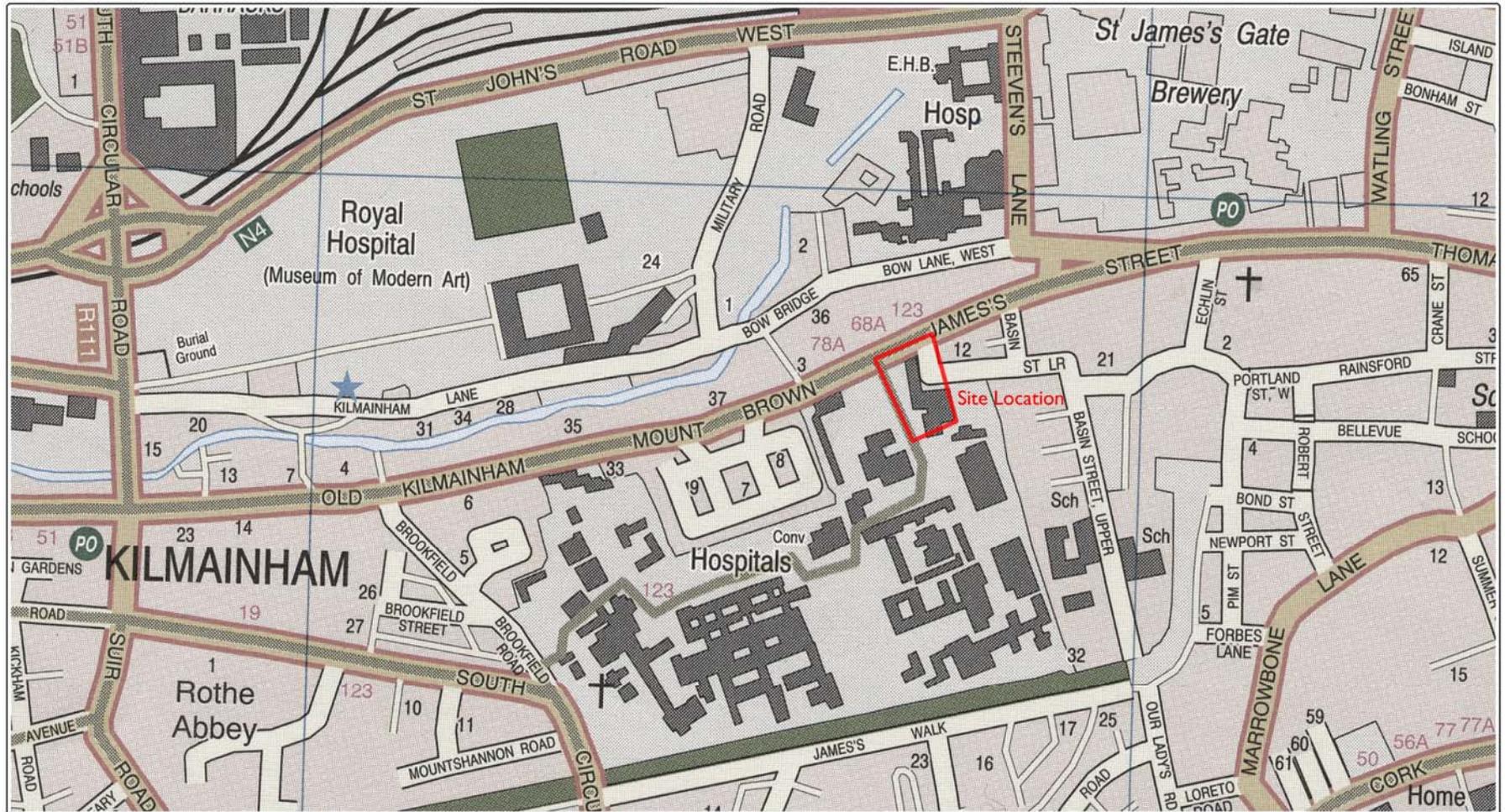
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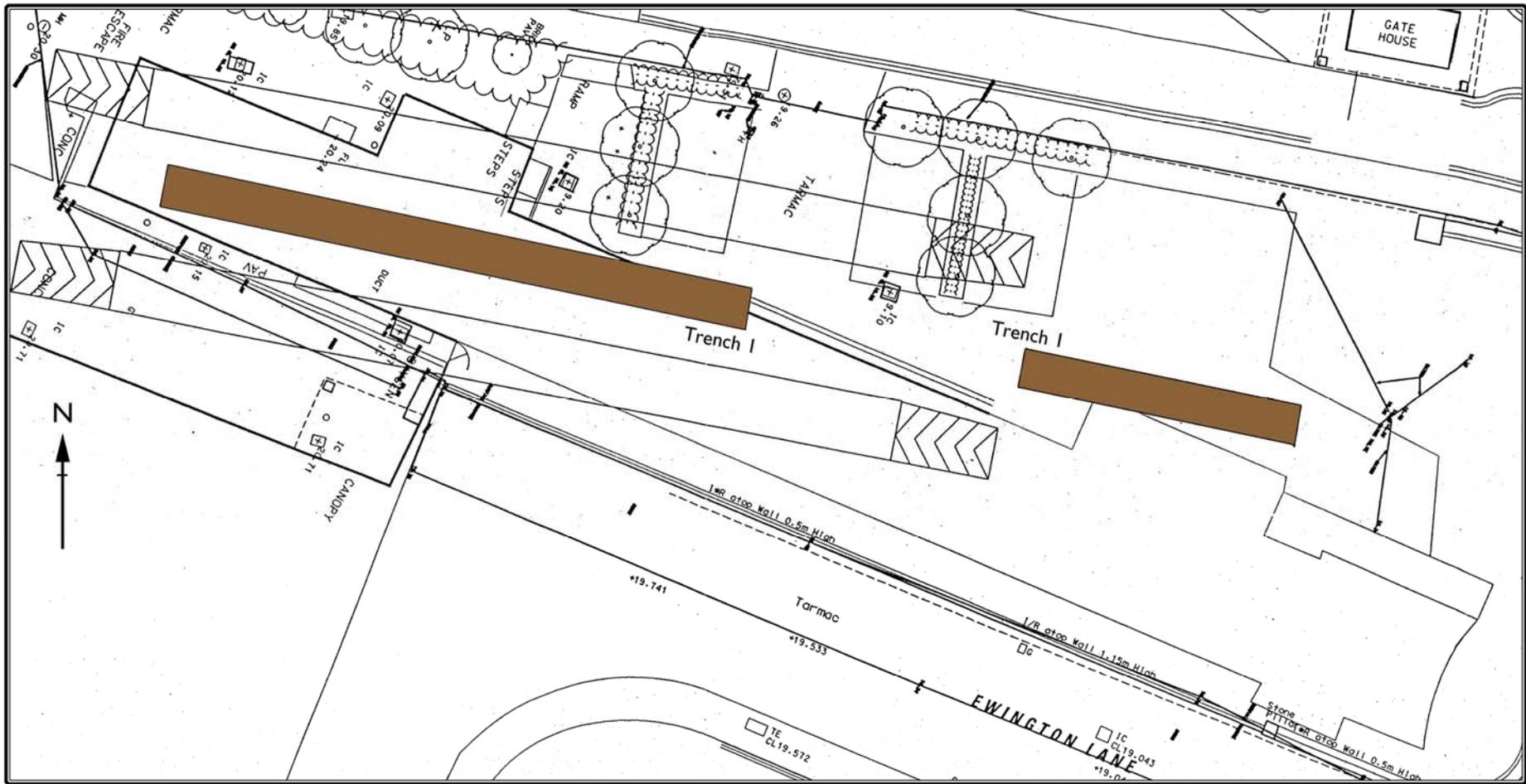
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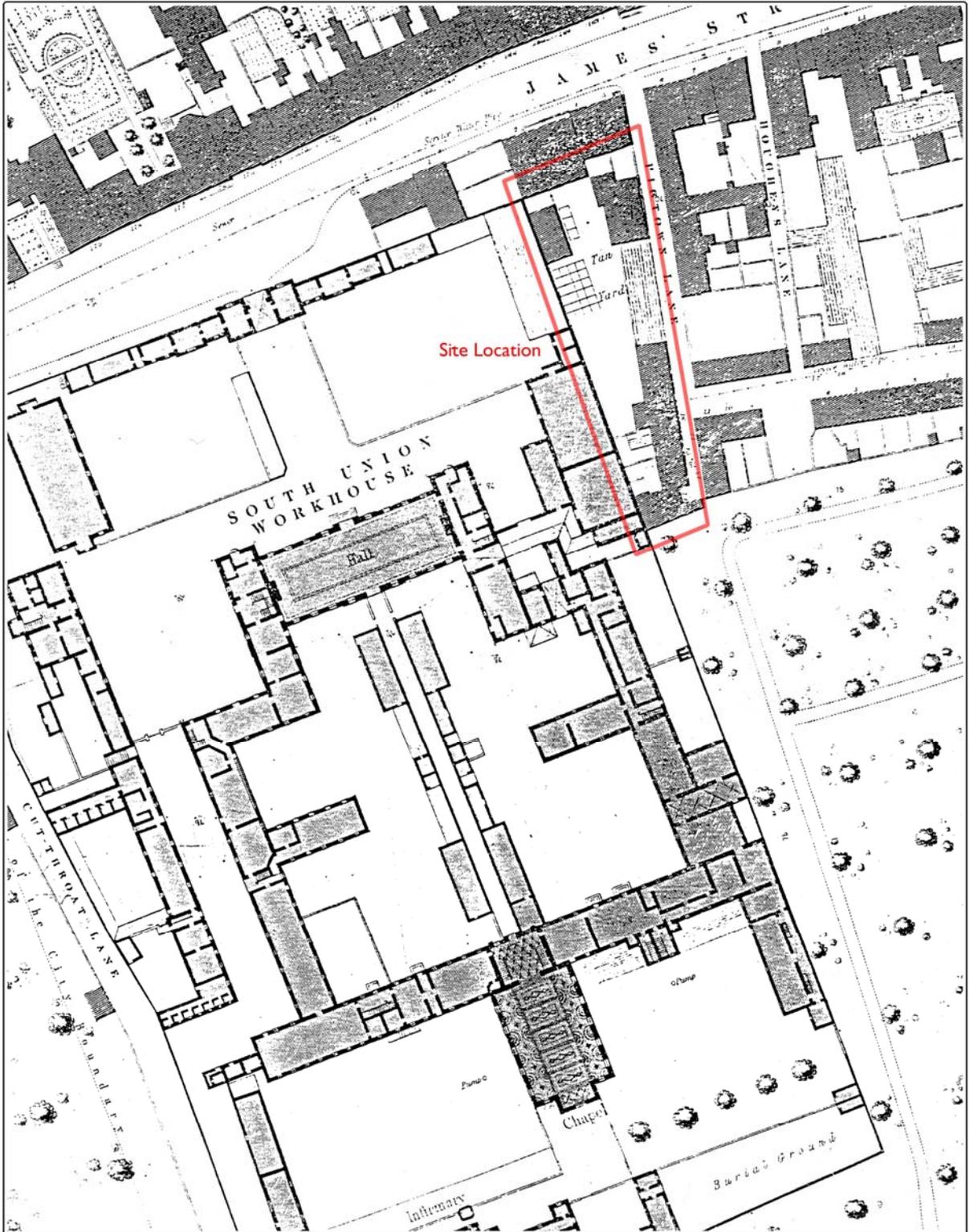
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Job LRT Line A, Dublin 8
Ref. 99216
Date 08.11.01
Client CIE/LRT
Scale 1:15,000 (enlarged)
Fig. 1 Site location



Job LRT Line A, Dublin 8
Ref. 99216
Date 08.11.01
Client CIE/LRT
Scale Not applicable
Fig. 3 Trench location



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Job LRT Line A, Dublin 8
Ref. 99216
Date 08.11.01
Client CIE/LRT
Scale 1:1,056
Fig. 4 Ordnance Survey 1838-47



Plate I View of site looking southeast