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Mr Christopher Paterson
Palassis Architects
Level 1, 353 Rokeby Road
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WA 6008
4th July 2013

Dear Mr Paterson

**RE: FREMANTLE PRISON, REFACTORY BLOCK EXPLORATORY EXCAVATION –
INVESTIGATION OF PAINT ON YARD WALL**

At the request of Palassis Architects, an archaeological investigation was undertaken in the yard of the Refractory Block on the 3rd July 2013 by Eureka Archaeological Research and Consulting, UWA (archaeologists on site: Amanda Gow and Sean Winter). The aim of the investigation was to establish the likely date of a pink/red render visible on the walls of the Refractory Block yard, by locating the lower limit of the render on the walls.

In order to conduct this investigation, a trench measuring 1.40 m x 0.65 m was excavated parallel to an existing section of the render on the south yard wall (Figure 1, Plate 1). Sediment removed from the trench was passed through a 6 mm sieve in order to recover artefactual material to assist with interpretation.

Methodology

The top layer of bitumen (context number 001) and an underlying layer of painted bitumen (002) were removed by masonry workers on site using a mechanical saw. Underlying the painted bitumen (002) was a compacted orange gravel deposit (003), likely a levelling layer for the overlying bitumen (Plate 1).

Removal of 003 revealed the degraded remains of a possible earlier concreted yard surface (005), located between 100 -150 mm below the current yard surface. This deposit measured between 10 and 50 mm, but was not continuous throughout the trench (Plate 3). A machine made brick (post 1890) was collected from this deposit. Below the possible former yard surface was a layer of degraded limestone measuring approximately 120 mm in depth. This limestone levelling deposit (004) is of a similar nature to that which is seen in other areas of the Prison. This deposit contained a small amount of redeposited 19th century artefactual

material, including a hand wrought nail, crown pane window glass fragments, handmade brick fragments and a clay pipe bowl fragment.

Removal of limestone layer (004) revealed an underlying fine brown sand (006). Removal of (004) also revealed the limit of the pink/red render on the face of the south yard wall, at approximately 200 mm below the current yard limit (Plate 6, Figures 2, 3 and 4). Although it was apparent at this stage that the limestone levelling deposit (004) was deposited after the application of the pink/red render, it was felt that more information was required to establish a date of application and the excavation of the trench therefore continued.

At this level, the edge of an elongated cut feature [007] was visible running parallel to the northern side of the trench (Plate 3). This was filled with degraded limestone and sand (008) and contained numerous fragments of butchered animal bone (likely sheep) and a heavily corroded iron shank button. It is likely that this is the edge of rubbish pit; similar features have been excavated in other areas of the Prison grounds.

After removing sandy layer (006) another deposit of degraded limestone (009) was uncovered. Excavation of this deposit revealed two iron pipes running parallel to the yard wall (positioned 400 mm apart and located at 350 mm below the current yard surface; Plate 4). The remainder of (009) was excavated and pale yellow sandy subsoil was revealed below this, at approximately 510 mm below the current yard surface; excavation stopped at this depth (Plate 5). The yard wall foundations were also uncovered at this depth.

The lowest deposit in the excavation trench (009) contained inclusions of handmade brick and charcoal and artefactual material including a fragment of stoneware, iron fragments, crown pane window glass, fragments of painted wall plaster and small fragments of butchered animal bone. Also recovered from this deposit was a fragment of amethyst bottle glass, which has a production date between 1890 and 1916.

At the base of the wall, in the southeast corner of the trench, a small patch of white render/limewash was revealed (Plate 6, Figure 2). This render appear to be on a block of stone which may have been replaced, although it is not possible to judge this with any certainty as only a small section was visible at the limit of the trench and none of this render was visible on the remainder of the wall at this level.

The investigation trench was backfilled at the end of the excavation.

Interpretation

Site plans of Fremantle Prison dated to 1900 (SROWA Cons no. 1647, Item no. 21092 and ND) depict pipes in roughly the same location as those encountered during the excavation. Even if the pipes on the plan do not depict the exact pipes revealed during the excavation, it is likely that these iron pipes were laid around this time. As no cut features could be seen in the walls of the excavation trench (which would indicate a trench for the laying of the pipes) it is presumed that the whole of the lower deposits of the trench (009, 006 and 004) were backfilling deposits for the laying of these pipes. This would therefore suggest that these lower deposits date to the late 19th century. This is supported by the artefactual material

which was recovered from these lower deposits (no 20th century material was recovered). In particular, the amethyst glass fragment provides a good indication of late 19th century date.

The results of the archaeological investigation therefore suggest that the pink/red render was applied to the yard walls prior to the laying of the iron pipes, and was therefore applied before the end of the 19th century. However, it is likely that it does not date to the original construction of the Prison. There is a possibility that a white render/limewash may have been the original finish on the yard walls, but further investigation would be required to verify this.

Recommendations

Palassis Architects are advised that:

- An archaeological investigation has been undertaken in the yard of the Refractory Block at Fremantle Prison by Eureka Archaeological Research and Consulting, UWA.
- The excavation revealed the lower limit of the red/pink render on the south yard wall at approximately 200 mm below the current ground level.
- The application date of the render is estimated to be prior to the end of the 19th century, but not necessarily original to the construction of the Prison.
- The material recovered from the excavation is being temporarily stored at UWA but a decision should be made as to this material will be kept in the long term.

Yours sincerely,

Amanda Gow
Archaeologist

Plate 1: Pre-excavation of levelling layer 003 and pink/red render on S yard wall (Scale = 2 m)



Plate 2: Pre-excavation of limestone deposit 004 – note machine made brick at S side (top) of trench and possible former yard level 005 at W side (right) of trench (Scale = 2 m).



Plate 3: Pre-excavation of sand 006, with pit feature 007/008 visible at N side (bottom) of trench (Scale = 2 m)



Plate 4: Iron pipes revealed in 009 (Scale 2 m)



Plate5: Final excavation depth of trench (Scale = 2 m).



Plate 6: South yard wall at final depth of excavation, base of pink/red render marked with red arrows. White render in lower corner of trench also shown (white arrow). (Scale = 50 cm intervals)



Plate 7: E facing (left) and W facing (right) sections of trench at final depth of excavation (Scale = 50 cm)



Plate 8: View of SW corner of trench, showing base of red/pink render on S wall (red line) and base of limestone deposit 004 on E facing section (white line).



Figure1: Trench location sketch plan

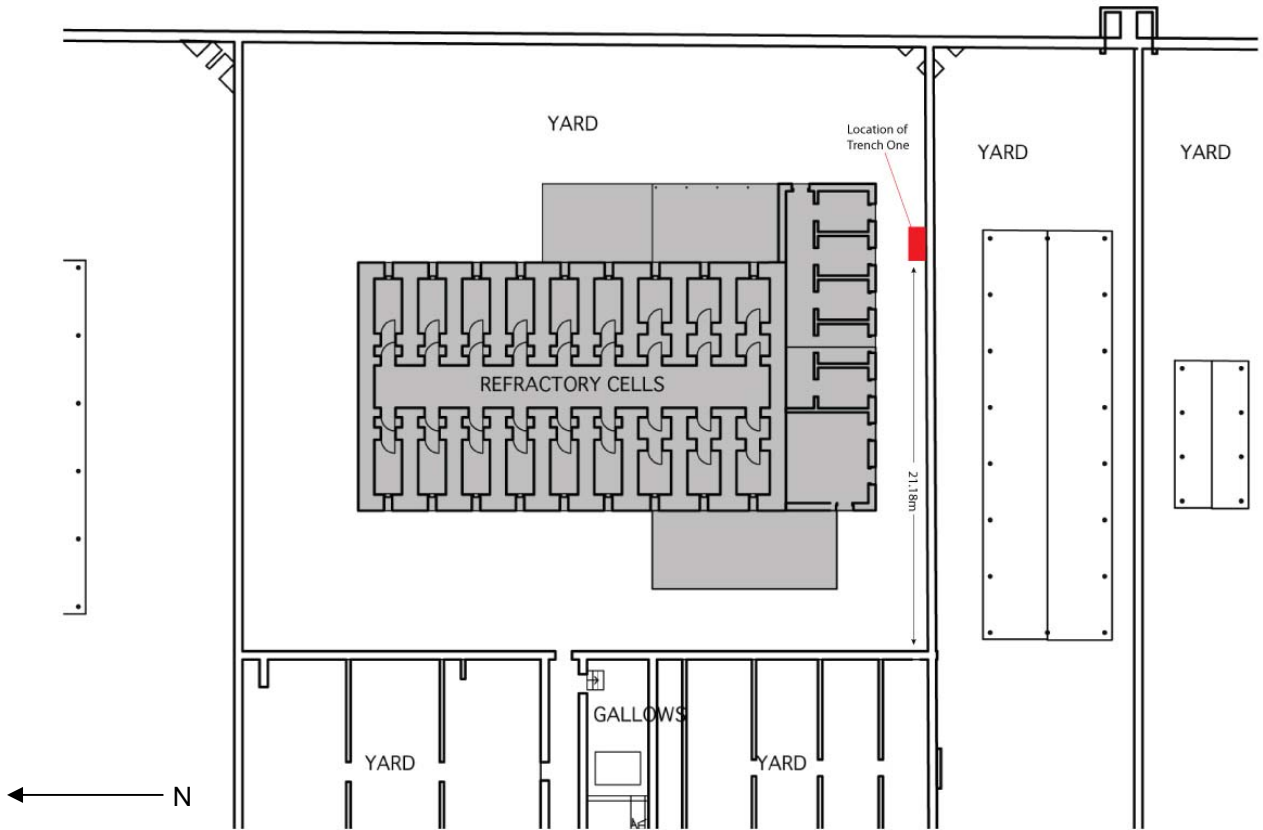


Figure 2: Drawing of south yard wall below current ground level

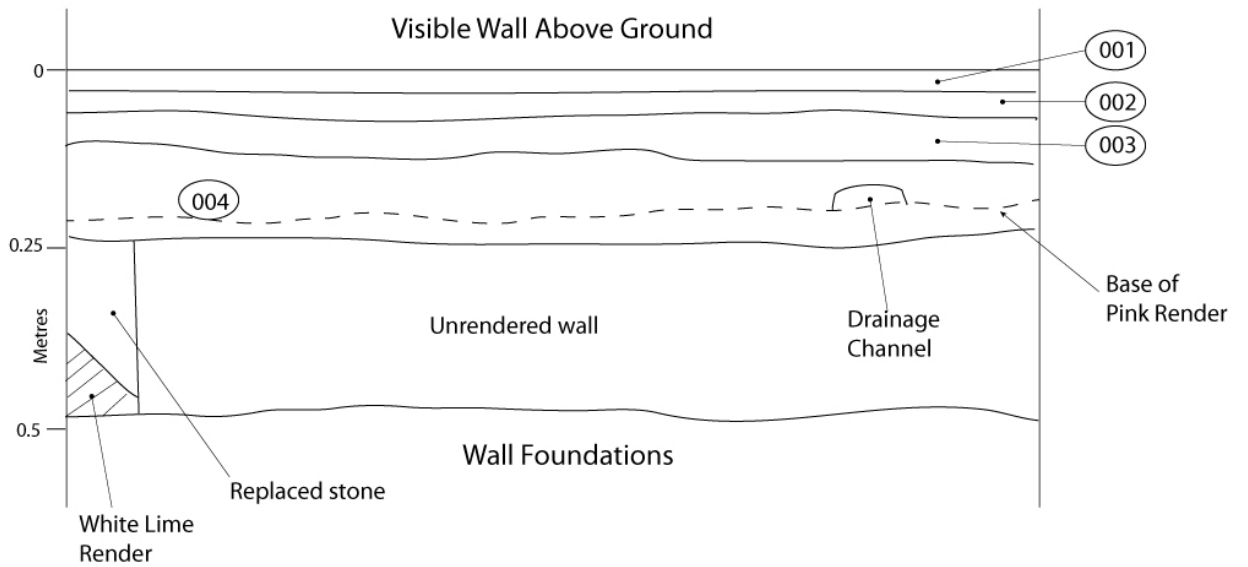


Figure 3: East facing section, showing limit of render on south wall

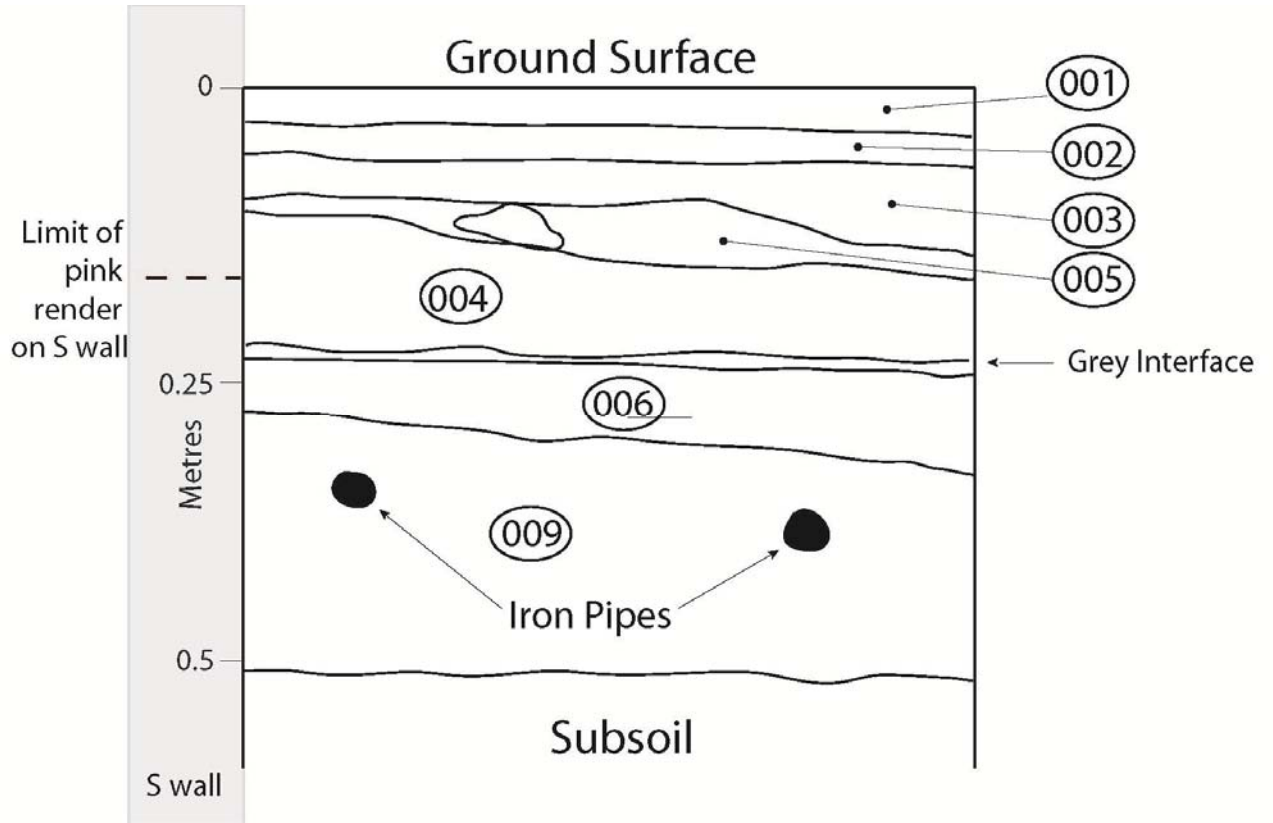


Figure 4: West facing section, showing limit of render on south wall

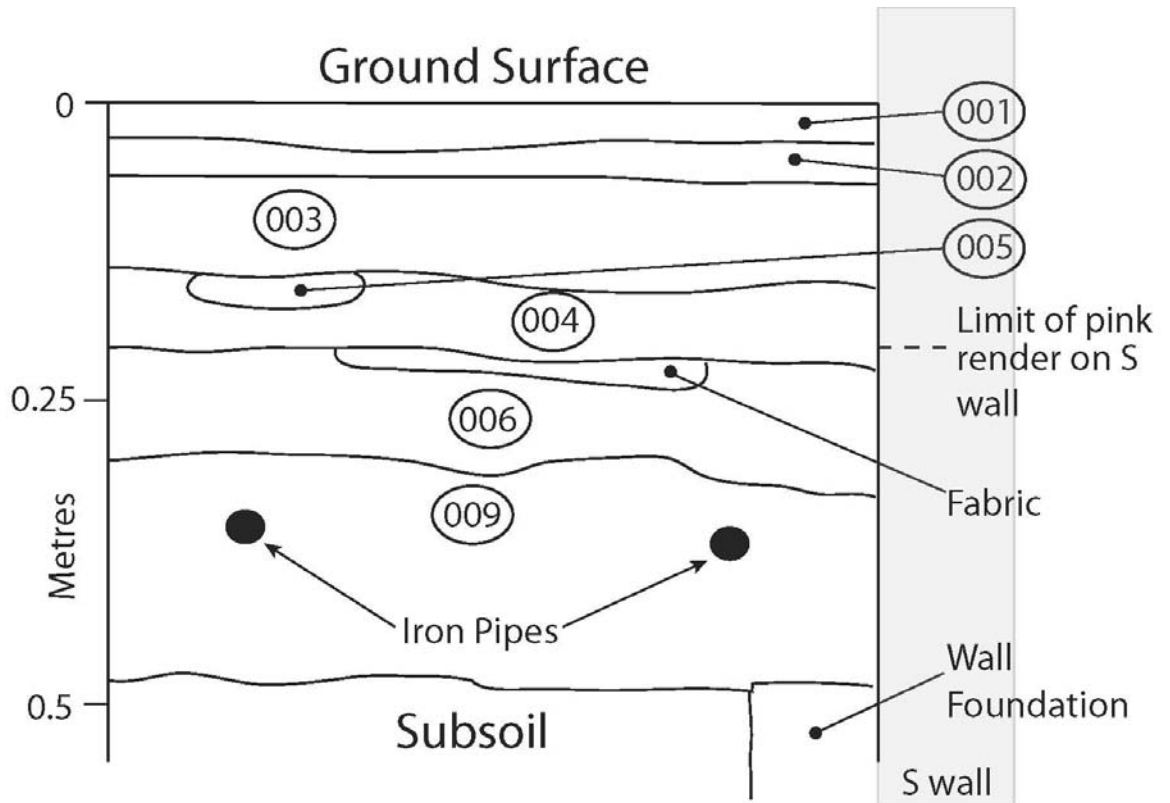


Figure 5: North facing section

