

The Ablutions Area Tradesmen's Camp Westlake Study Area 2003

The Tradesmen's Camp was established in early 1924 on the eastern side of the quagmire on the hillside opposite modern Lotus Bay. It was removed in late 1927.



Above – aerial view (2009) of East Stirling Park. The blue arrow points to the general area of the ablution's area and it stretches between the modern road of Forster Crescent down to the old road that cuts across the hill. The original camp extended over into the area of the embassies in Forster Crescent.

THE STUDIES

In 1998 an initial study of the camp areas was carried out and one of the results was that the NCA (National Capital Authority) with my aid, marked a number of the important sites using yellow painted concrete posts. In 2003 I decided to revisit the site and update information. This decision was aided by a prolonged drought that had reduced the grass growth and allowed the contours of the land to be clearly seen. This resulted in further garden beds and stone arrangements being exposed. Some of these stone arrangements are part of the drainage system and are placed in positions that slow down water flow and provide water for plants. Not all patterns were used as gardens.

Following is a drawing made in 1995 and reproduced in *Westlake One of the Vanished Suburbs of Canberra*. Because of the scale and my printing etc it is hard to read - however it does give a general idea of the work carried out then. The rubble at the top is shown by an oval shape. Of to the left is the drain dug across the hillside. The concrete post is today off to the right of the beginning of this trench that was dug to

[illegible]

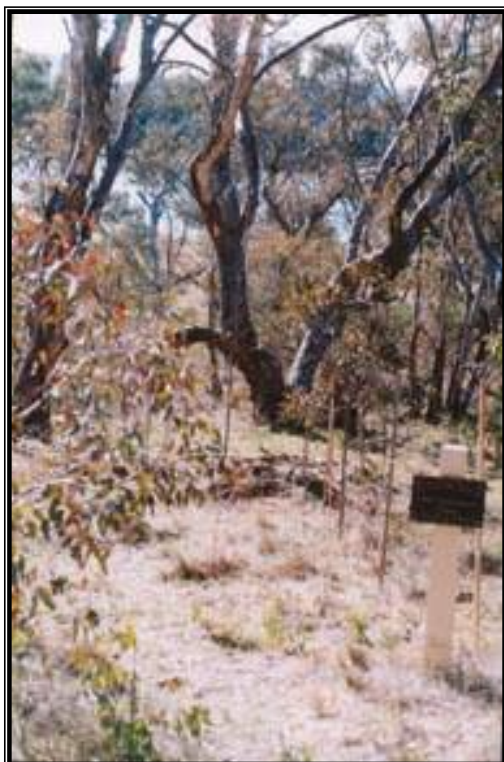
The site chosen by the camp planners to place the timber buildings for bathing, washing and earth closets was next to the quagmire on the upper side of the old road. The reason for this choice of site is that the quagmire provided a natural drainage area that could be utilized to remove storm and waste water from the site.

There is evidence of two separate groups of buildings on site. The first group, probably established in 1924, were replaced sometime after October 1925. Each area had at least three buildings that include Bathing, Lavatory and probably Clothes Washing. The site of the bathing building - used by between one hundred and hundred and fifty men - has more drains than the other buildings. Recent work in 2009 by Gary Skewes has found a number of the water pipes still in situ leading to now non-existent buildings..

Both sites - the older one near the top of the hill - consist of sites of buildings, pipe drain, drains and brick/rock patterns established as part of the drainage systems. The newer building site differs to the first in that a trench and two circular stone sumps have been added. All the brick and rock patterns designed to slow down and direct water away from buildings are different. They take advantage of the lie of the land and in a number of cases soil has been dug from around big rocks and in other areas dug to form ledges that in turn are edged with bricks and rocks.

The majority of drains in the lower section direct water to the quagmire, but a couple on the eastern side of the site send water to the old road. It in turn appears to have been reinforced with stones and brick pieces. Water then continues via other drains on the lower side of the road.

Within the quagmire there are a number of flat dry areas that appear to have been used as garden areas or decorative stone arrangements. Some may be Aboriginal in origin. One area next to the quagmire still has a big strawberry patch that has survived. This area too has an undulating line of rocks above a small drain cut diagonally across the hill. Other undulating lines of stones are found within the quagmire area.



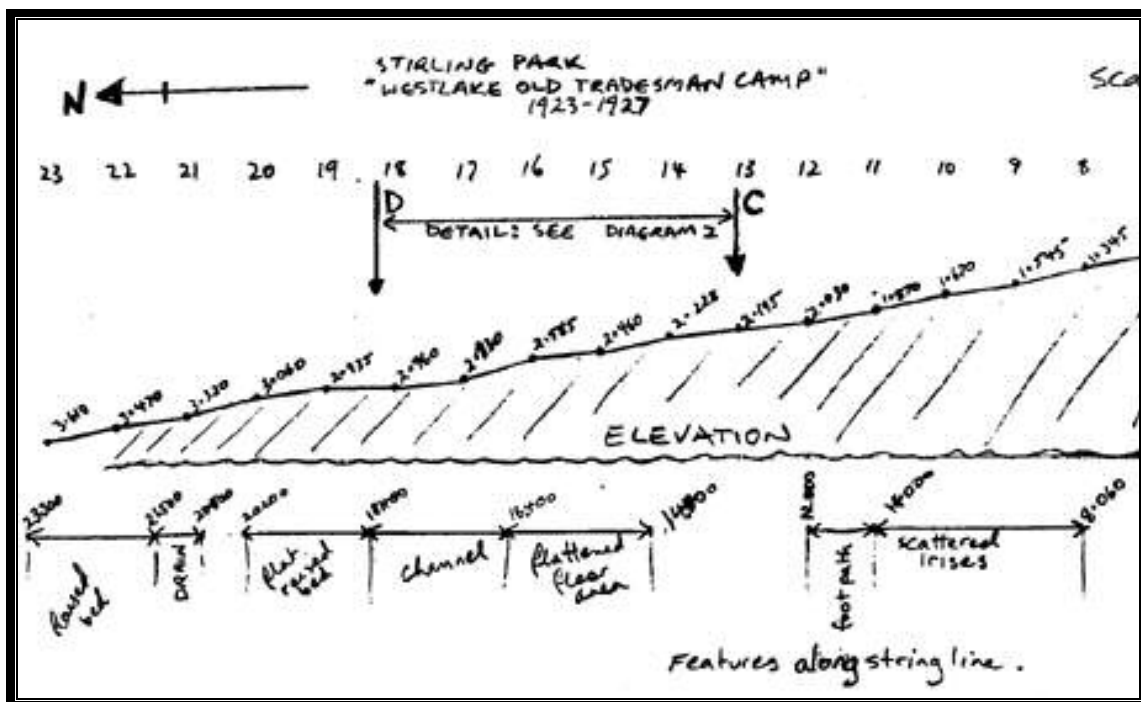
The Concrete Post & Measuring of the Drop of the Land

The concrete post seen in the photograph left is placed below the building sites of the upper group. At the time when the decision was made to measure the vertical drop of the land the decision was made to start on

the eastern side of the building sites at a point above the post opposite the big pile of earth and nearby hole. From this point the measuring continued down the hill to the opposite side of the old road. The reason for the decision to start at this point rather than at Forster Crescent was twofold. The area near the road has been disturbed by road making and the rubble and pile of earth was presumed to be building rubble piled up.

The purpose of the holes dug in this area and other areas of Block 2 and 3, Section 128 is now understood. They are used to collect water from buildings and slow down the water flow. One of the holes in the area near the road in the section where the Ablution buildings stood had underground near it one of the water pipes used to connect the water to the buildings.

Following is a detail of the measurements made in August 2003 by John Bruggerman and Karen Williams to show the fall in the land. It notes the major features on the land. Still to be done are the measurements across the site.

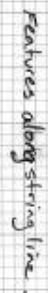


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STALING PAEK
"WESTAKE OLD TRADESMAN CAMP"
1923-1927

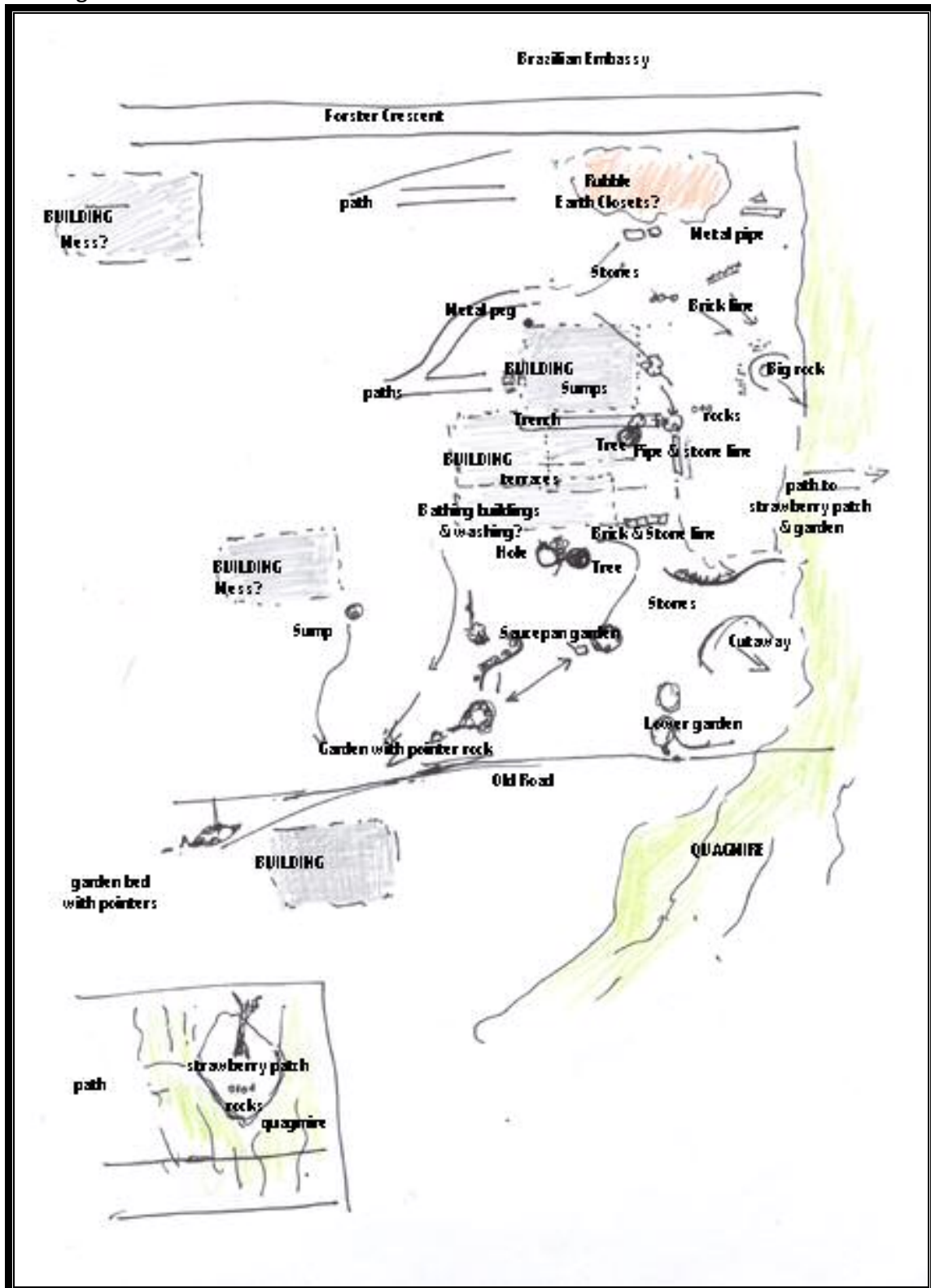
Diagram 1.

Merres



John Bruggerman, Aron Gugler, Karen Williams.

The mud map that follows was made before the measuring was carried out on the top building area.



During the process of examining the area an access road that comes up from the old road to a point on the eastern side of the lavatory block area was observed. There is sufficient flat land at the top of this access road to allow a horse and dray to turn around. The position of this road suggests that the full pans from the camp were transferred to the horse and dray and removed to the night soil depot at Westridge.

Documents in Australian Archives that refer to the Sanitation Area Tradesmen's Camp A memorandum from the Works Inspector to the Secretary dated 27th July 1927 contained a Sanitation Report on all the camps and settlements in the territory. The following is an excerpt that is relevant to the study of the camp site and in particular point 3 is relevant to the lower section of the of the Sanitation areas. There is a trench in this section. On the lower side of the old road there are two sites that have a trench and large hole. This suggests that there may have been other individual sanitation buildings in the camp?

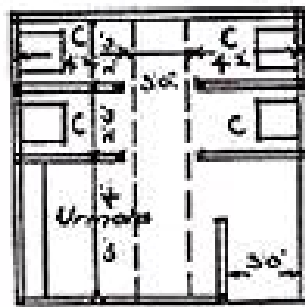
OLD TRADES CAMP, WESTLAKE

Being demolished and accommodation provided at Capitol Hill. 44 tents raised on wooden sides, upper canvas portions not in good repair, floors of wood in sections, litter under some floors, bins provided but lids not used. Mess Room and kitchen provided and run on co-operative lines instead of usual contracting caterer.

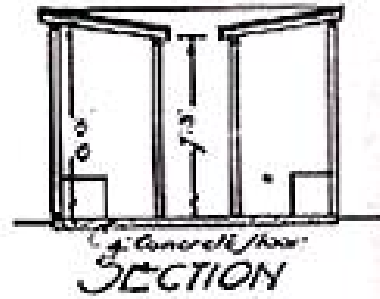
Recommendations

- 1. Rake under huts where necessary and keep garbage receptacles covered.*
- 2. Kitchen - improve natural lighting if demolition is delayed also rejoin kitchen benches.*
- 3. Sanitary Blocks - drainage to long quagmire to be shortened and directed to shallow trenched patches, used alternatively.*
- 4. Earth closets - institute portable boxes with lids for pan covers in lieu of fixed uncovered seats if conveniences remain.*

Following are details of the plans for the new buildings at the Tradesmen's Camp. These may have replaced buildings at top of hill - now part of the rubble? The date on the document below was October 1925.

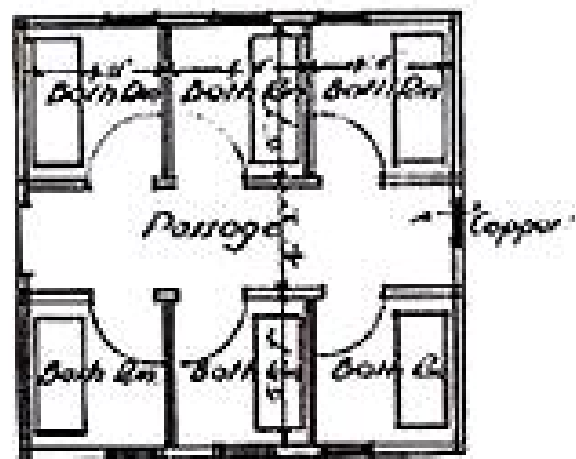
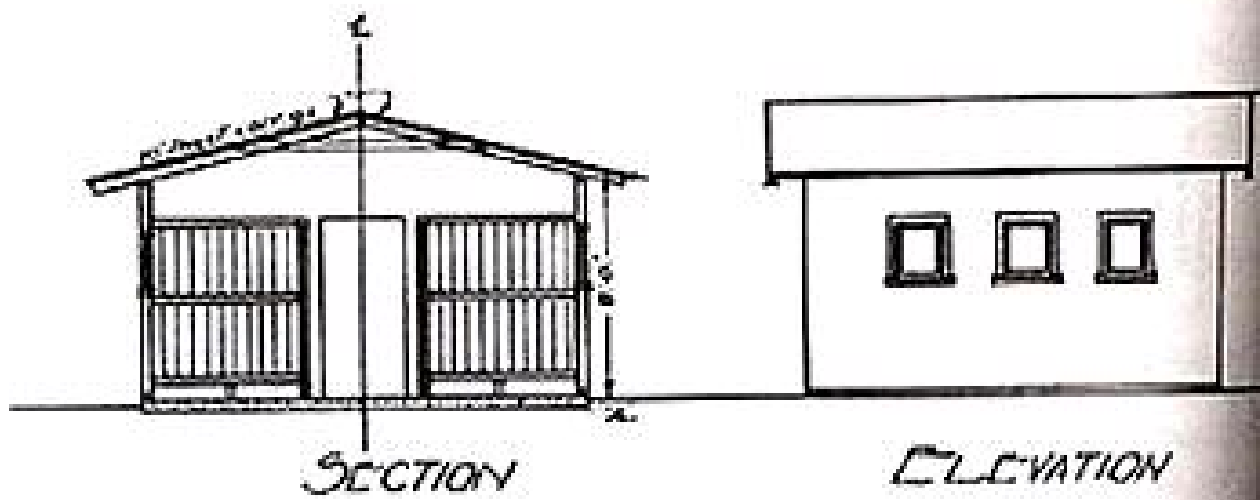


PLAN



SECTION

CLOSET BUILDING



PLAN.

BATH ROOMS.

Top of Hill Building and Drainage Systems

Many of the individual bricks on this site have a cover of concrete. Examination of the site indicates that the bricks are not just random ones left on site but parts of undulating and rectangular patterns of bricks used as part of the drainage system. The water from this area was directed via drains to a large hole and thence to the quagmire. One part of the hill where overflow water flowed has been covered in parts with smaller bricks, concrete and a few river rocks. There are a number of sites that have similar bricks with concrete adhering. One is near the site of the Hostel Camp Recreation Building and another on a Howie's Cottage site that has a concrete slab reused by the Freeman family during the period they lived in the tent cottage.

Area of Rubble at Top of Hill



Above left general view from the area where the levels commenced up to Forster Crescent and the Brazilian Embassy. Off to the right in this photograph that shows the white iris plants are the bricks and rubble. On the right is a detail of the flowers in August 2003.

Below is a photograph of a car part and part of corrugated iron roof. Another piece of metal roofing left behind is in the photograph below centre. On the right is one of the bricks on the hillside. They are the type used for the foundations Provisional Parliament House and they were produced in the Canberra Brickworks. Also on the site below is a flat tile with *Department of Works & Railways Brickworks Federal Territory*. This particular tile may have been produced between 1913 and 1916 before the Brickworks closed for the duration of the remainder of the First World War. The yards reopened in 1920/21 at which time the bricks found on the hillside were produced.



Above examples of the brick rubble still in situ. Since the photograph was taken the soil has been brushed back to reveal other bricks that form part of an undulating pattern.

Below piece of concrete on site. These photographs were taken in July 2003.



Below are two sections of concrete path below the large pile of earth. This may be the remains of a section of path laid near the entrance to the building. One of the buildings in the lower section of the hill complex has small stones laid at an entrance - the concrete and stones may have served the same purpose of reinforcing a well used entrance area.



Stormwater was slowed on its way to the quagmire by the undulating brick patterns. Earth near two large rocks has been dug away and water directed to these areas. Above one the earth has been reinforced on two sides with small rocks. The purpose of the rocks is to slow down water flow. Below are two photographs taken of the smaller of the two rocks. The left hand photograph shows a drain exit and on the right the lighter areas around the rock is the area where the small stones have been placed to stop erosion of the soil.





Below - detail of the rocks on either side of the big rock hole. Since this photograph was taken heavy falls of rain have taken place. The stones that include a number of bricks have been further exposed indicating that this area has a strong storm water flow and are still doing their job of stopping erosion.



Near one building site is a large metal pipe set into the ground. This too may have served to take water from a building to direct via connecting drain to the quagmire. At the point of exit of water from the pipe a small marble (or codd) was found along with a few pieces of broken white crockery. Below are details of the metal pipe prior to clearing away grass near the exit of the pipe.



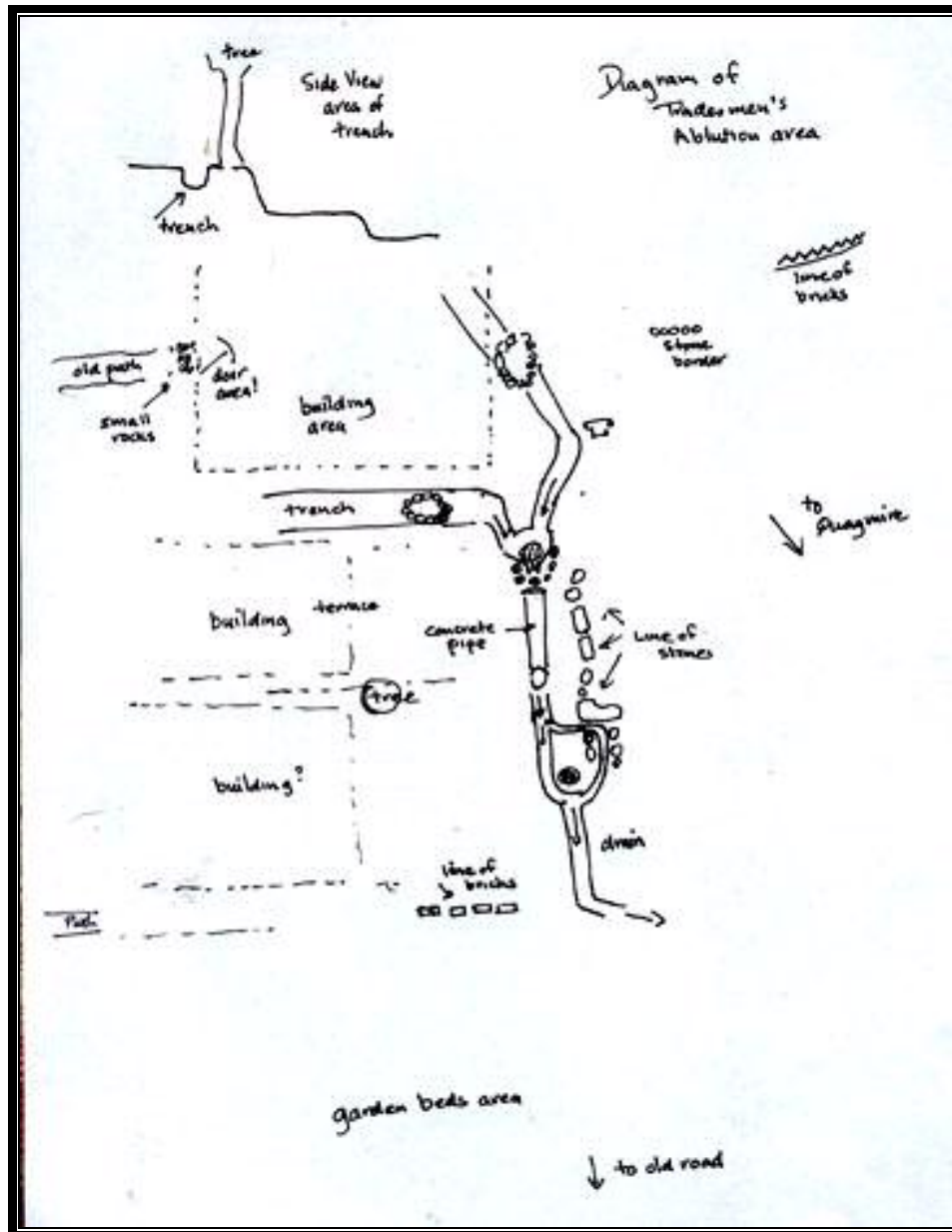
Between this building site and one of the large rocks that has had earth dug away from it on the upper side of the slope there is another brick line of rocks. These differ from the rubble ones in that they have been cleaned and set into the ground diagonally. The bricks slow the water, but the space between allows some to flow through. This hillside contains a system of slowing water flow from source to quagmire. Nearby to the brick pattern is one of the rock lines that serve a similar purpose. Below are photographs of the brick line.



Second Set of Buildings - Trench, Terraces, Drains, Rock Lines & Garden Beds

Central Area - Trench, Terraces and Rock Edges

Below diagram of the central area. This diagram has the main details of the area discovered in July 2003. More has been discovered since this drawing was made. NB The building site above the trench may be the new bathing block that has a central door entry. The area of the building on the plan is around 16ft square and this fits with the site.



Below are photographs that show the line of bricks and stones below the terraced area.



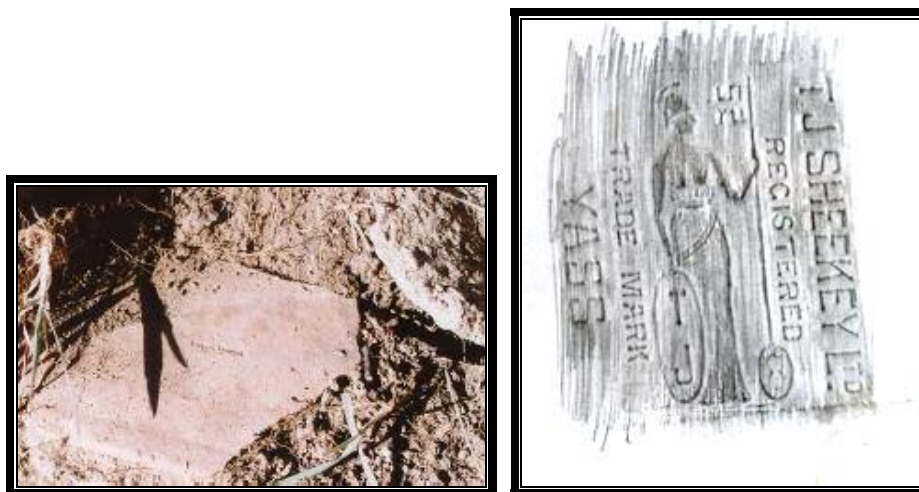
Above - two photographs joined to give panoramic view of the tree near the trench (left), terraces, line of bricks and in front of the smaller group of trees on the right the bank of earth with undulating line of rocks. Karen Williams and John Bruggeman measuring the drop in the land.

Drain from above the second tree leading to the saucepan circular rock bed.

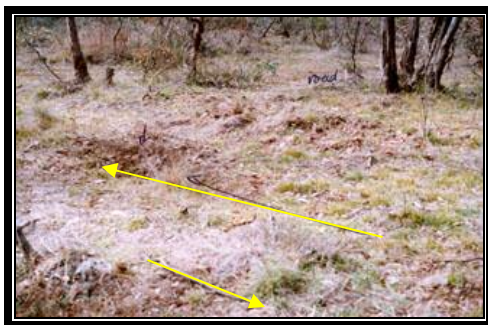
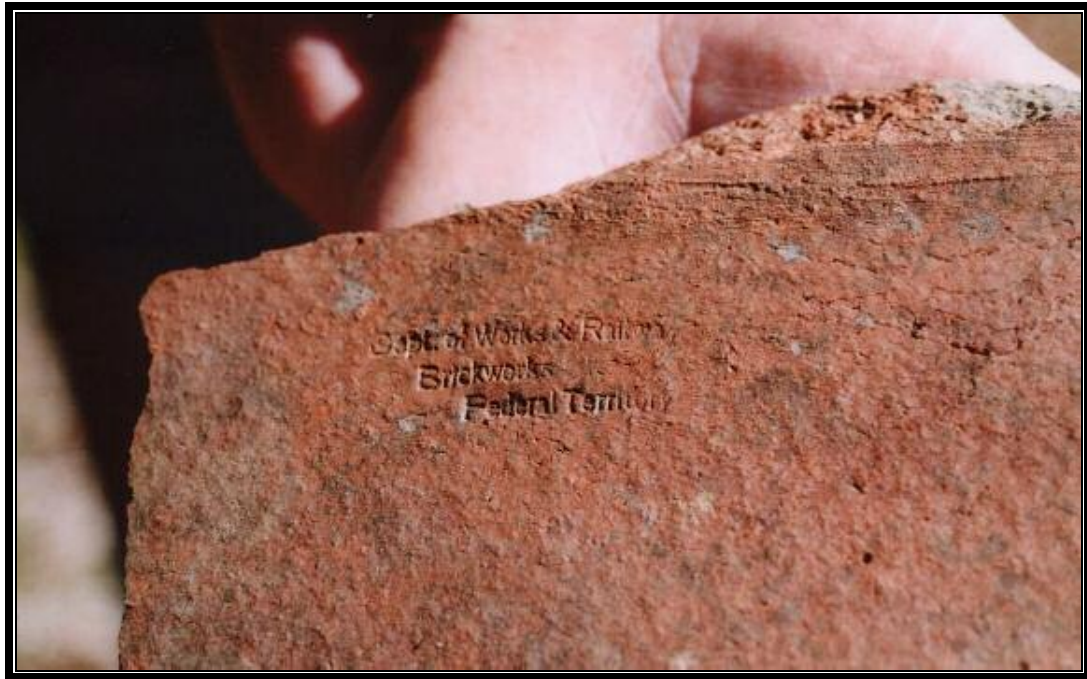
Between the area of John Bruggeman the small tree in the foreground is another drain that continues down to join the circular stone arrangement that included an upsidedown saucepan.

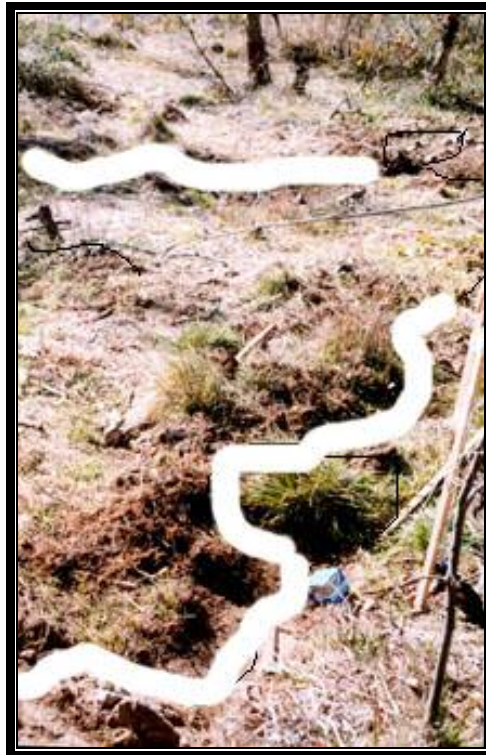


During the process of brushing away earth from the concrete, tile and brick in this drain a few pieces of a codd bottle came to the light of day. These pieces probably came from a TJ Sheekey soft drink bottle. A number of pieces that can be clearly identified have been found on site. Below right is a rubbing from a Sheekey bottle. Also found in the quagmire were a number of broken Stone ware ginger beer containers.



Above left is a details of the W&R tile in the drain and on the next page a photograph of another similar tile found near the sump rocks above the trench. It is held be John Bruggeman before being replaced in situ.







Trench & Terraces

In the middle section of the hill is a long trench and a number of terraces that traverse the slope of the hill. Water from this trench and a drain above it was directed into a concrete pipe and from there into a series of drains to the stone lines. A rock lined ledges is set in this area above the gardens. These series of rocks show the signature of the person who put them there - amongst the stone patterns are several river rocks and usually in each, one white quartz river stone. They had to be brought to the area. This use of stones is common throughout the park.

Below left - terraced beds, trench area (bags sitting on terrace) - looking up the hill towards Forster Crescent. Below right, looking down the hill from the terraced area to road. Karen Williams and John Bruggeman measuring.



Two old gum trees were left on the site of the Ablutions Blocks. Both have branches trimmed. The first sits just below the trench on the quagmire side and the second above the garden area. Below is a sketch of the area from the old road looking up the hill. The rubble section is above the tree on the right. The mid section between the two trees and the gardens below the lower tree and the road.





Above - view from the western side of the trench and terraces. The quagmire is in the background of the photograph. In the trench is one of two 13 circular stone bed. The other is above the trench on the quagmire side. Below left example of the small stones on the terrace above the trench. These stones are also in the big drain cut across the flat land below the tree line. On the right is a view from the quagmire side looking towards the trench area to the right of the tree.

The Shower/Baths buildings - The Trench.

Below left are pebbles from the big drain that crosses the flat land in front of Lotus Bay. Similar pebbles were dug from the trench - site behind the tree in photograph on the right.



Two views below showing Karen Williams and John Bruggeman in the vicinity of the trench. In the background on the photograph on the right is the Brazilian Embassy in Forster Crescent.



Above timber marker placed in a hole that has in it a metal peg.







Below left sump stones in trench and right sump stones in drain above the pipe. Thirteen perimeter stones in each.



Below views of the trench and terraces during the process of measuring the vertical fall of the land by Karen Williams and John Bruggeman - August 2003. Below - terraces below the trench.



Above side view of trench area with area of drain shown. It leads down to the *saucepan* circular garden bed.

The next series of photographs show the undulating line of rocks set on the edge of earth embankment below the trench area. This area contains a number of river rocks that have been deliberately placed in the arrangement. One, a small black flattened rock and another white rock appear to have been used for decoration. The rock arrangements on the lower side of the old road near a building have a similar signature of rocks.



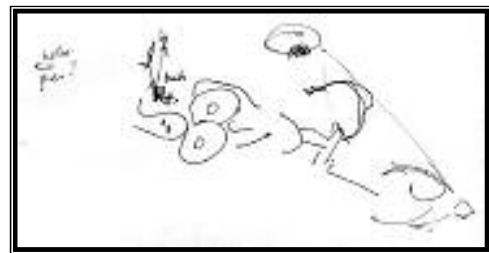
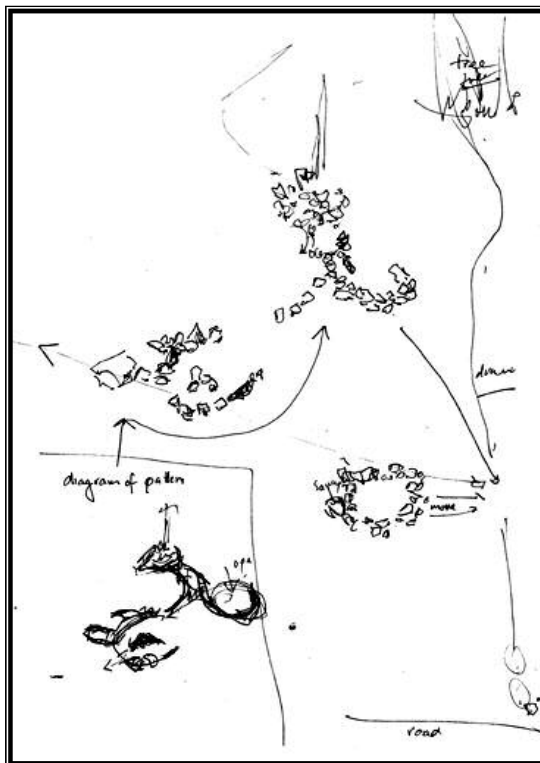
The photograph left shows the drain to the quagmire that directs water on that side from above the area of the undulating rocks - shown middle bottom section of the page. In the background are my two patient large Rottweiler dogs.





Above – arrow points to river rock in the pattern.

Stone Arrangements Lower Section of Hill



These patterns are not garden beds.



This area is the only known example of the remains of a construction era camp. A superficial examination has been made, but before any development takes place – and I believe that it is planned – then a thorough examination of this area and other sites within the park should be made.

One of Karen William's drawings of the stone arrangement near the old road is shown in the next diagram. A photograph showing the grid system used to define the stone area follows.

