25-29 Lower Street
Islington Green, London

NGR TQ 3170 8359

Archaeological Field Evaluation Report

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

August 1995

25-29 LOWER ST, ISLINGTON GREEN, LONDON
NGR TQ 3170 8359

ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION REPORT
PREPARED FOR TESCO STORES
BY THE OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

9/8/95

Author: Jon Hiller
Project Manager: David Wilkinson

25-9 LOWER STREET, ISLINGTON GREEN, LONDON
NGR TQ 3170 8359
ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD EVALUATION REPORT

1 SUMMARY

No archaeological features or finds were observed during these excavations, which revealed a substantial build up of modern debris on the site of a former row of Georgian terraced houses.

2 INTRODUCTION

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook an archaeological field evaluation on the site of a disused garage at 25-9 Islington Green during July 1995. The work took place in advance of the development of the site for residential use and a new smaller filling station. Outline planning permission (planning application Nos 94/0324 and 94/0325) has been granted for the development, subject to a number of conditions. One of these conditions was a programme of archaeological work undertaken in accordance with a scheme submitted by the developers to the local planning authority.

The evaluation followed a borehole survey and trial test pitting on the site (Soil Mechanics, 1995, for Tesco Stores). An archaeological and historical desk-top assessment of this site has already been undertaken (OAU, 1995), and a brief summary of that information follows below. The garage site is to be redeveloped by Tesco Stores, and the OAU carried out the evaluation on behalf of that company. Plans for the redevelopment of the site were drawn up by architects W.A. Fairhurst and Partners of Watford, north London.

3 TOPOGRAPHY AND GEOLOGY

The garage site (Fig. 1) occupies the space of five former Georgian terraced houses (Nos 25-9) which fronted onto Lower Street opposite Islington Green (Fig. 2). The garage forecourt is flat, and lies at a general level of 31.70 m OD. According to the British Geological Survey map of the area (sheet 256, 1994), the underlying geology is London Clay sealed beneath brickearth: a substantial build-up of made ground is also present on the site.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Evidence for prehistoric and Roman activity in the area has been limited to a few findspots, but there is no substantial evidence of settlement in these periods. Islington is first mentioned in an Anglo-Saxon charter of c. A.D. 1000, and was known as *Gislandune* ('Gisla's hill or down'). The parish of St Mary Islington is mentioned in Domesday, and consisted of the manors Highbury, Barnsbury and Canonbury.

The early medieval settlement was centred on and around the site of the present St Mary's Church (a building known to date to at least to the twelfth century and replaced in the fifteenth century, and completely rebuilt in the C18), situated 0.5 km to the north of this development site. The roads through Islington are thought to date to the medieval period, during which time the proposed development site appears to have lain in open fields. By 1734, a map showing the parish of Islington reveals the presence of tenements on the site.

A row of terraced houses (the Rosomans Buildings) was constructed in 1768 on the east side of what is now Lower Street. The buildings were built with deep basements or cellars to the front, and lowered backyard spaces to the rear. At the rear of these properties a large soda water factory was constructed in 1831. Several of the terraced buildings (Nos 25-9) were demolished in the 1960s and a petrol station was constructed in their place.

Several test pits and trial holes were excavated on this site as part of a ground survey by Soil Mechanics (Wokingham, Berkshire). The survey was carried out in June 1995 and revealed 2.4 m of modern ground build-up, overlying a layer of clay: the survey did not reveal if this clay layer was the natural, and the results of this archaeological investigation proved that this layer was made ground.

5 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

The principal aims of the evaluation were to establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains on the site, and to determine the date and extent of any features. An evaluation trench measuring 10 m by 2 m was positioned on the proposed site of a new kiosk in the garage forecourt. The garage redevelopment proposal suggested that the excavations for the footings of the kiosk would be sunk down to 'the clay bearing strata'. It was therefore important that this evaluation identified the depth at which natural clay was encountered.

The excavation of the trench was carried out with a JCB machine equipped with a toothed ditching bucket.

The proposed length of the trench had to be slightly reduced owing to the presence of a substantial brick-built manhole and drain. A further complication was the presence of a British Telecom phone cable and duct which ran along the north side of the trench before crossing the proposed line of the trench to enter the garage building.

After consultations with Ms S. Cole of English Heritage, it was agreed that a slightly smaller trench be excavated avoiding the known services. The trench was also moved to the west of the proposed location. A trench 9 m long and 2.9 m wide was excavated in the area formerly occupied by house number 25 (Fig. 3).

6 RESULTS

The trench was excavated to a general depth of 2.50 m, and a deeper slot was dug by machine at the west end of the trench (Fig. 4). The lowest deposit in the trench was a layer of tenacious, mid dark grey-brown clay (9) which was identified 3.40 m below the present ground level. Layer 9 was sealed by 6, a layer of tenacious grey clay containing brick fragments. This layer was 0.90 m thick. A linear feature (10) aligned NW-SE was observed to cut into layer 6. Feature 10 was filled by black clay and grey gravel (10), and was waterlogged.

Above feature fill 11 lay a thick deposit of sandy loam (5) which contained 50% whole and half bricks. This layer was observed to be 2.38 m thick at the east end of the trench. At the west end of the trench layer 5 was overlaid by 4, a compacted layer of crushed bricks 0.20 m thick.

A square brick structure (7) with associated ceramic drain pipe was set into layers 3 and 4. The structure was 1.60 m wide and 1.30 m tall and was sealed with a layer of concrete, 2, the present surface of the garage forecourt.

The foundation wall of No. 24 formed the N edge of the evaluation trench. The footing was observed to a depth of 3.40 m, and appeared to continue further downwards.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Natural clay was identified 3.40 m below the present ground surface, in a machine cut slot. This clay was clean and contained no inclusions. The layer above was either formed after the demolition of the house (the cellar floor of which must have been removed at the time of the demolition of the terrace), or more likely represents ground consolidation prior to the construction of the houses on the site.

The linear feature cutting layer 6 must be a drain associated with No. 25, and would have run beneath the basement floor. Undated plans obtained from the Islington branch of the Water Board show this drain clearly.

The substantial build-up of brick debris filled the space of the demolished cellar, and extended nearly to ground level. This levelling dates to the 1960s and preceded the construction of the garage. The brick structure was a manhole serving a NE-SW aligned drain, associated with the present garage buildings. The present concrete surface is 0.12 m thick.

8 RELIABILITY OF RESULTS

It is clear from this investigation that the cellars of houses 25-9 would have removed any archaeological features to a considerable depth. The sunken backyard spaces of these demolished structures would in all probability have removed archaeological horizons, as

would the construction of the soda water factory at the rear of the terrace. The spoil excavated from the evaluation trench was carefully monitored, but no finds other than C20 debris were observed. Additional intrusive work for new petrol tanks should encounter made or disturbed ground only. It is unlikely, therefore, that any archaeology survives on this development site.

9 SOURCES CONSULTED

British Geological Survey : 1994. 1:50 000 geological map of north London (Solid and Drift), sheet 256

Ordnance Survey maps, 1916, 1954, 1974

OAU, February 1995 *Proposed Tesco Stores Development, 85 Colebrook Row, Islington: archaeological desktop assessment*

Soil Mechanics, 1995 *Site investigation for a proposed petrol filling station, Islington Green, London*

J. Hiller
OAU
August 1995

TRENCH MATRIX DIAGRAM AND INTERPRETATION

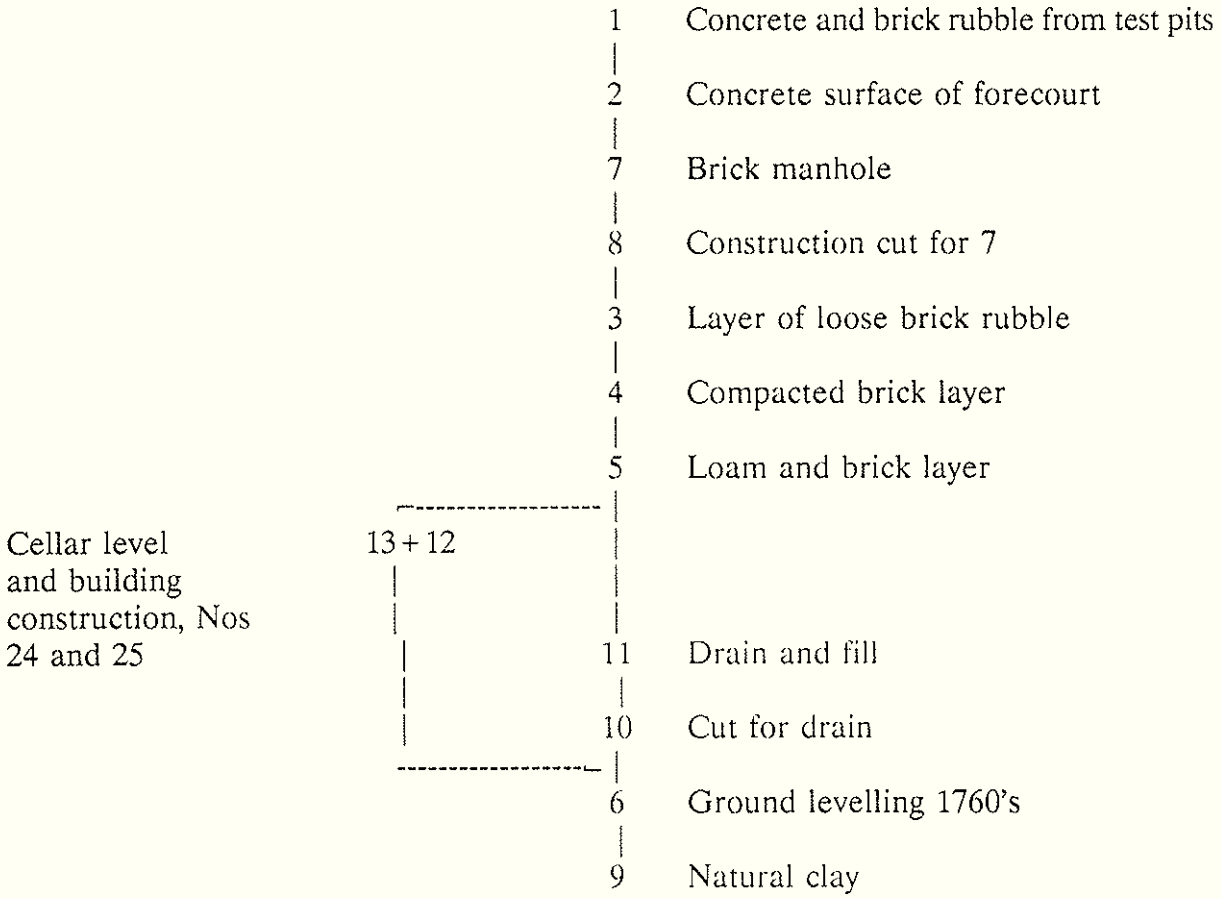
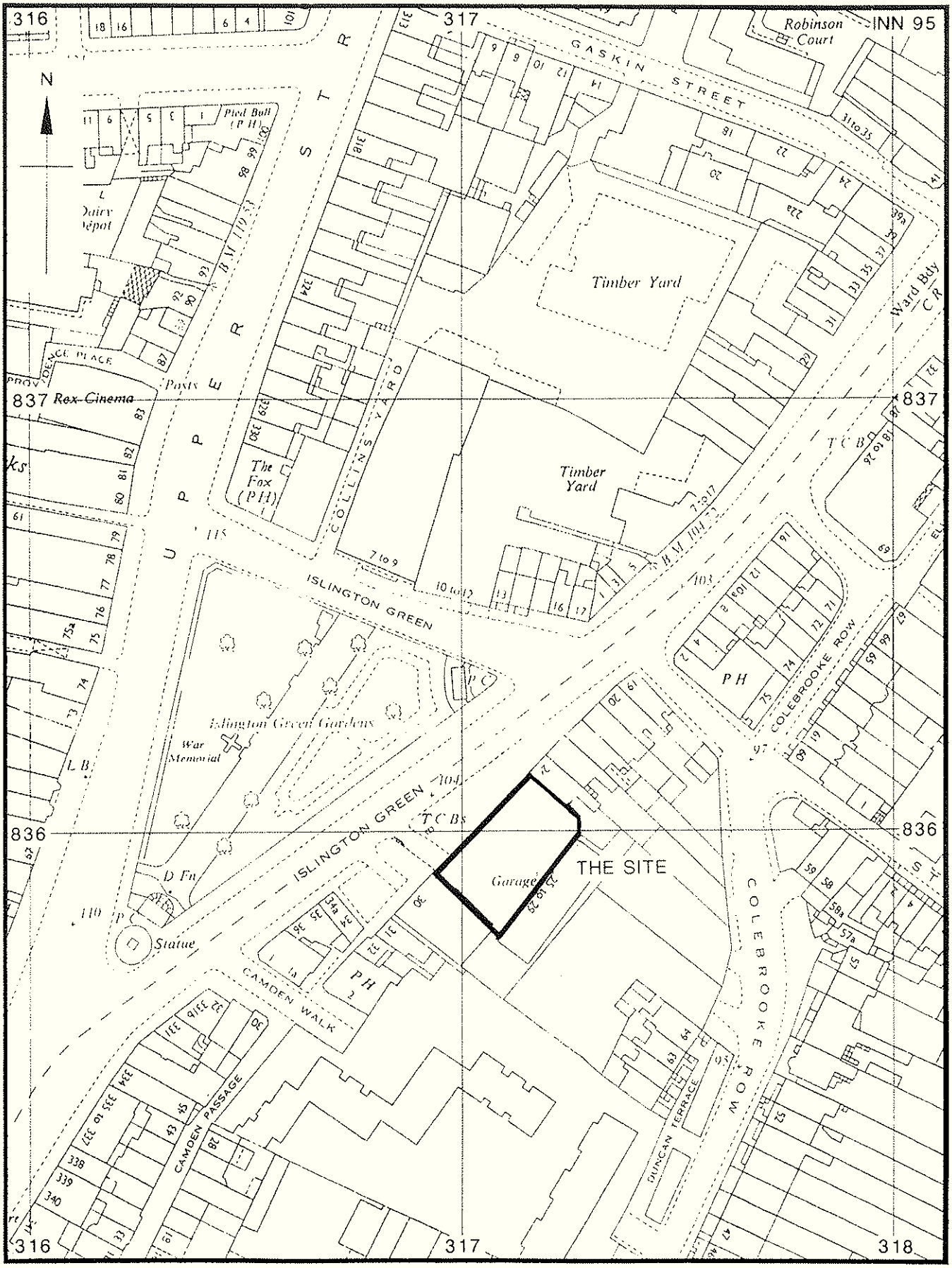


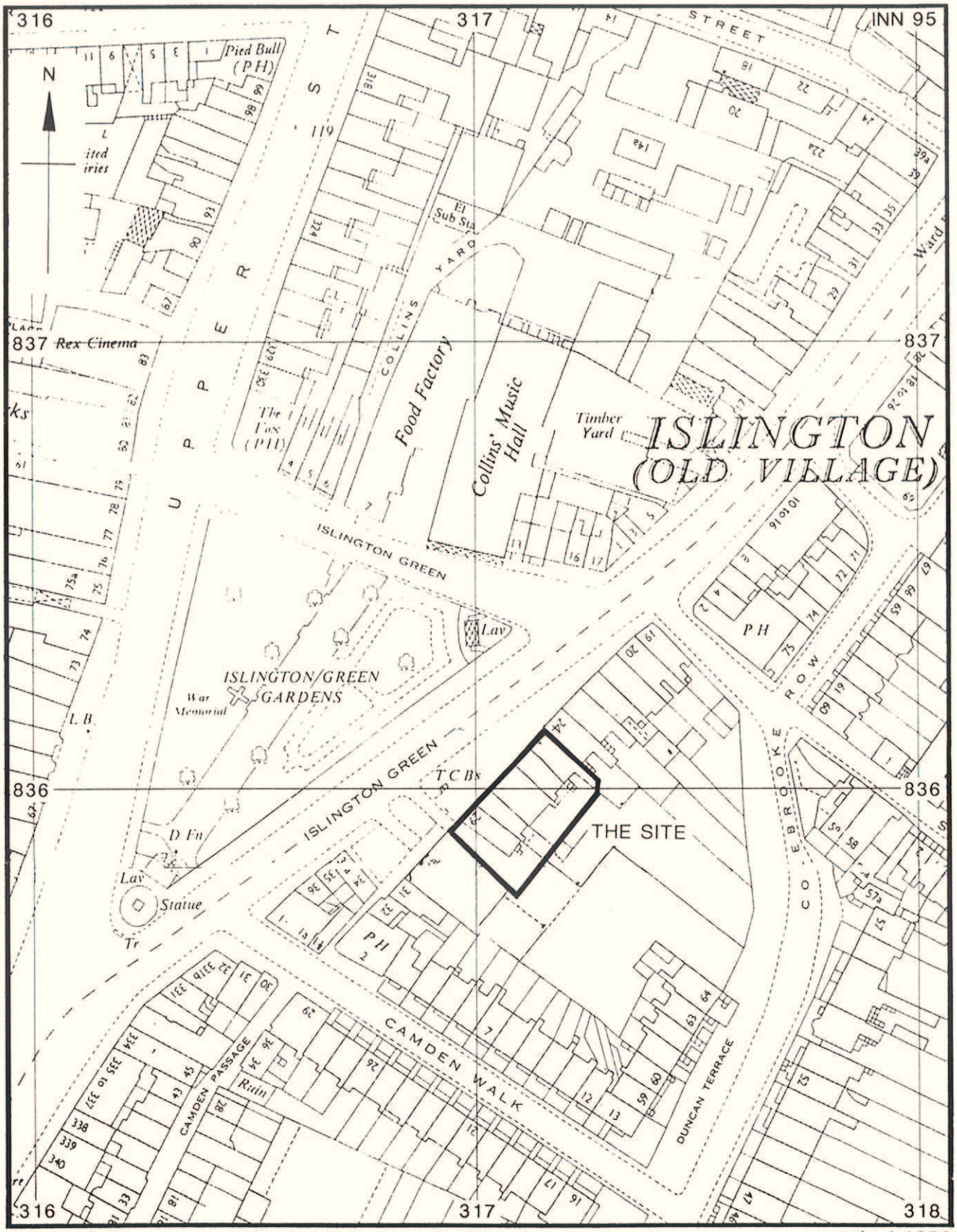
TABLE OF CONTEXT INFORMATION

CTX	TYPE	DEPTH	WIDTH	COMMENTS
1	Layer	0.30 m	-	Debris resulting from recent removal of services
2	Layer	0.08 m	-	Concrete surface of forecourt
3	Layer	0.32 m	-	Rubble deposit cut by construction of manhole 7
4	Layer	0.18 m	-	Compacted brick layer
5	Layer	2.38 m	-	Loam layer with bricks
6	Layer	0.90 m	-	Level from which cellar was constructed, levelling deposit, 1760's
7	Structure	1.30 m	1.60 m	Modern brick-built manhole
8	Cut	1.32 m	1.62 m	Cut for manhole 7
9	Layer	0.08 m	-	Natural grey clay
10	Cut	-	0.50 m	Cut for drain beneath removed cellar floor
11	Fill	-	-	Dark grey clay in cut for drain 10
12	Structure	3.0 m+	-	Foundation wall of No. 24
13	Cut/Event	-	-	Level from which basement was constructed = level of layer 6



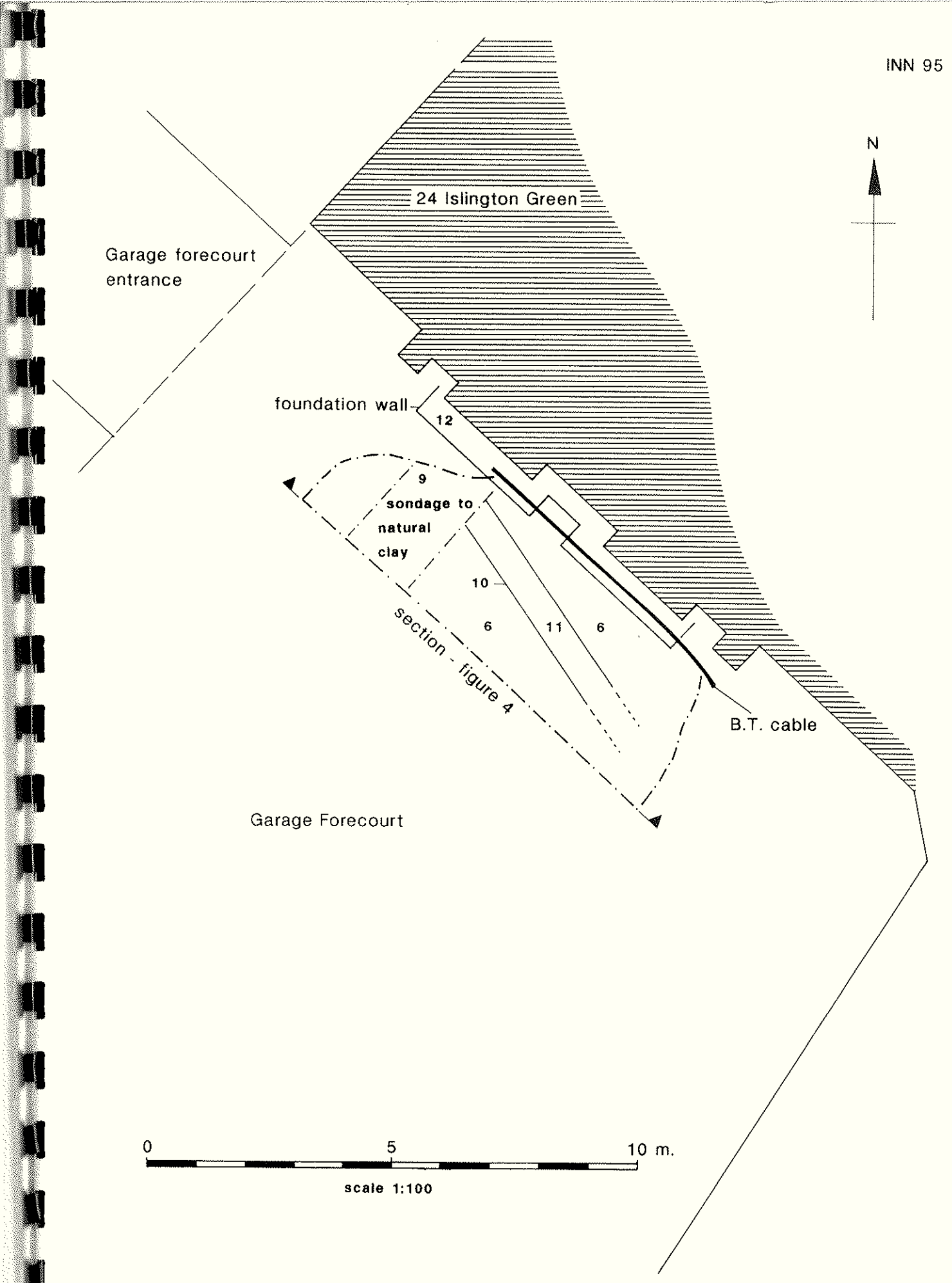
TQ 3183 SE Islington O.S. map of 1969 showing garage scale 1:1250

figure 1



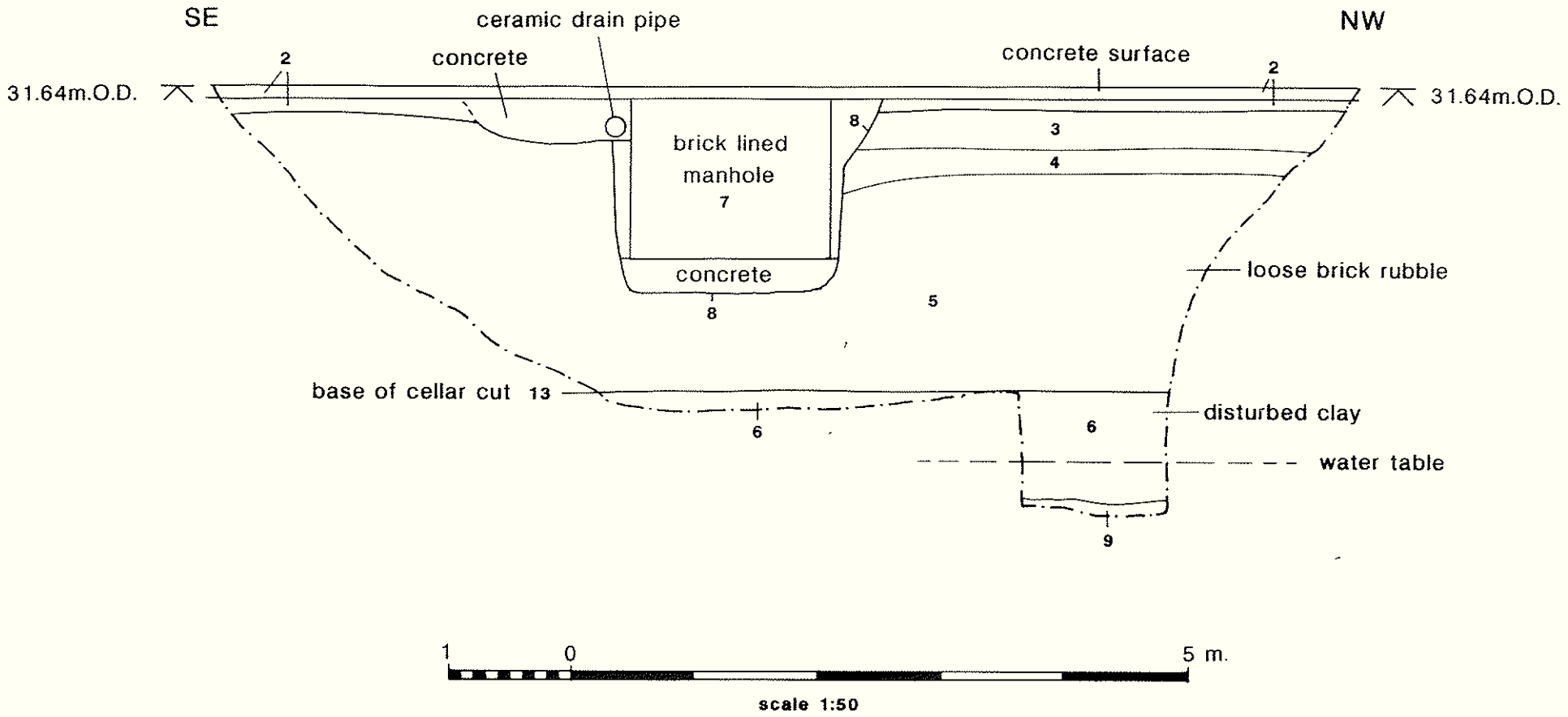
TQ 3183 SE — Islington O.S. map of 1954 showing terrace — scale 1:1250

figure 2



trench location plan

figure 3



SE-NW trench section

figure 4

OXFORD ARCHAEOLOGICAL UNIT

46 Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford, OX1 2EP

Head Office Tel: 01865 243888 Fax: 01865 793496

Post-Excavation Tel: 01865 204642 Fax: 01865 204637