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Slough
Berkshire

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Poyle House, Slough, Berkshire

Archaeological Investigation Report

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Illustrated by Georgina Slater

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Summary

Between April 2009 and June 2011 Oxford Archaeology South (OAS) carried out an archaeological investigation at Poyle House, Slough, Berks (TQ 030 765). The work was carried out on behalf of Rising Star LLP, in advance of the construction of a new hotel. The work revealed evidence for the footprint for a medieval timber building, possibly the pre-cursor to Poyle House, and contemporary drainage/boundary ditches. Features associated with the post-medieval Poyle House were also recorded, including the late 19th-century ornamental moat and boat house and a revetment wall on the southern edge of the Poyle Channel. The works followed on from an excavation within the footprint of the hotel in 1999, also by OAS (then the Oxford Archaeological Unit), which revealed residual Mesolithic and late Neolithic/early Bronze Age worked flints, medieval structural remains and several medieval and later boundary/drainage ditches.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 Between April 2009 and June 2011 Oxford Archaeology South (OAS) carried out an archaeological investigation at Poyle House, Slough, Berks (TQ 0300 7650) during the construction of a new hotel (Fig. 1). The work was on behalf of Rising Star LLP Ltd and comprised a watching brief during groundworks, a strip map and sample during general reduction ahead of flood relief measures, a small excavation on the site of a column base, and a geoarchaeological test pit investigation. The strategies for each phase of work were agreed with Mary Neale, Berkshire Archaeology (BA) and Written Schemes of Investigation outlining how OA would manage the archaeological requirements of the work were produced (OA 2009a, b and c and 2010).

1.1.2 The works followed on from an excavation within the footprint of the hotel by OAS (then Oxford Archaeological Unit) in 1999 (Foreman *et al.* 2001), which revealed residual Mesolithic and late Neolithic/early Bronze Age worked flints, medieval structural remains and several medieval and later boundary/drainage ditches.

1.1.3 The site of Poyle House occupies an area of c. 0.5 ha to the west of the village of Poyle, on the north bank of the stream known as Poyle Channel, a tributary of the Colne Brook. Poyle falls within Berkshire (Slough Unitary Authority) but has at various time in the past belonged to Middlesex, Surrey, and Greater London.

1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 Poyle lies on the floodplain of the Colne Brook, c. 5 km north of its confluence with the Thames. The natural geology of the site consists of alluvial silty clay overlying floodplain gravel.

1.2.2 The site has been occupied since the medieval period by Poyle House and its associated buildings and grounds. At the time of the excavation in 1999, the only visible remains of the last house, a mansion originally built *c* 1700, comprised piles of building debris in the central part of the site, obscured by heavy undergrowth. The surviving stable block, converted to residential use, forms part of a separate property to the west of the site. A water channel, once thought to be a medieval moat, is now known to be part of a 19th-century ornamental canal.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The site lies in an area noted for evidence of prehistoric activity. Excavations at Stanwell Moor, Yeoveney, and Heathrow have revealed Neolithic enclosures and Bronze Age field systems. Some evidence of Iron Age and Roman farmsteads has been revealed on slightly higher ground to the south-west. Poyle and Horton are mentioned in the Domesday Book and therefore probably have Anglo-Saxon predecessors, although no convincing archaeological evidence for Saxon settlement has been recovered in the area.

1.3.2 During the medieval period, the site lay within the medieval parish of Stanwell, part of Spelthorne Hundred in Middlesex. A manor at Stanwell is first mentioned in Domesday, suggesting that there was a settlement here in the years prior to the conquest. Poyle itself is not specifically mentioned as a manor, although the Domesday entry for Stanwell suggests that the manor contained two subsidiary estates, one of which may have occupied the site which later became Poyle Manor. The Domesday entry for

Stanwell indicates that the late 11th-century settlement at Stanwell was fairly prosperous: the manor is described as supporting more than 40 households and as containing four mills and three weirs, which between them produced over 1,400 eels per annum.

1.3.3 The documentary sources (VCH Middlesex III, 39-40) suggest Poyle developed as an independent estate in the early 13th century. It is first mentioned by name in 1235 when it was recorded that Walter de Poyle held land within Stanwell and, although this is not *prima facie* evidence for the existence of the manor at this time, it is perhaps more likely than not that this reference records the existence of some form of settlement. More definite evidence comes from a document of 1265. The Calendar of Inquisitions for this year records that 'William de Poyle held one carucate of land worth 12 marks. William de Bello Campo and John de Purden took and carried off the goods found there'. This reference is of interest not only for the light it throws upon political instability of the times (England was embroiled at this time in the so-called 'Barons' War' precipitated by Simon de Montfort's rebellion against Henry III, and this looting would appear likely to be evidence of this factionalism), but also because it would appear to suggest that by 1265 the estate was both well established and prosperous enough to contain goods worth stealing. Nevertheless the actual landholding is not large (a carucate, more commonly known as a hide, is defined as being sufficient land to support one household for a year).

1.3.4 The second half of the 13th century saw consolidation of the holding and by 1299 the manor would appear to have been the centre of a prosperous estate. The Chancery records of this year recorded that the holdings of the manor included a house and a mill, associated with 50 acres of demesne arable land, and held by the lord of the manor for his own use. The estate also included a further 72 acres of arable land held by free tenants, suggesting that the manor now contained a small independent settlement away from the area of the house.

1.3.5 The descent of the manor is well documented throughout the medieval period, although the documentary references do not materially enhance our knowledge of the estate. The last useful medieval reference comes from the Chancery Rolls for 1423, and indicates that by this time the estate comprised a house and 200 acres of arable with an additional 40 acres each of pasture and meadow.

1.3.6 Poyle Manor, which appears to have become united with Stanwell Manor sometime in the early 16th century, passed into the ownership of the crown in 1542 and remained crown property until 1612. During this period it was leased to various people including, between 1587 and 1591, the well-known Elizabethan miniaturist painter Nicholas Hilliard. Earlier this century it was claimed that the family of the poet John Milton (1608-1674) leased the manor as a second home outside London, and that Milton spent much of his early life there, although there is no firm evidence to support such a claim. Even after it ceased to be crown property the manor remained united with Stanwell Manor, and when it finally gained its independence in 1678 it appears to have lost its manorial status and henceforward is referred to as Poyle House or Poyle Farm. The estate was enlarged in the 18th century when it occupied most of the land between the western boundary of the parish, the Bath Road to the north, the Wraysbury River and Poyle Road.

1.3.7 The last house was built c. 1700, possibly incorporating elements of an earlier Tudor building, although the recorded earlier features, including a brick fireplace in the east wing and elements of the staircase, may have been brought from elsewhere. The south

front was constructed in the later 18th century and various additions and alterations were made at later periods. The house was destroyed by fire in 1969.

1.3.8 There are references to a mill within the holdings of the manor in 1299, 1423 and finally in 1612. The precise location of the mill is not specified, but it was probably on the same site as the later village mill which survived into the 20th century, and stood to the east of the manor house in the village of Poyle. The history of the village mill is well attested (VCH Middlesex III, 42-3). The first secure reference to it as operating independently from the manor comes in 1636 (*ibid.,* 43), and there are numerous further references to it throughout the post-medieval period. It appears to have had a somewhat chequered history, being used variously as a corn mill, paper mill, leather mill and for the making of asbestos and card.

1.3.9 A four trench evaluation in 1999, was immediately followed by the excavation of the proposed footprint of the western part of the new hotel (the evaluation found no significant deposits in the eastern part of the site). The southern part of the excavation area was seen to contain a substantial block of medieval stratigraphy, and it was decided to preserve this area *in-situ.*

1.3.10 The excavation revealed deposits, features and artefacts that covered the development of the site from the 11th to the 13th centuries, and a major phase from the 18th to the 20th centuries (Foreman *et al*. 2001).

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 OA would like to thank Mary Neale of Berkshire Archaeolgy for her help assistance and understanding during the works. Thanks are also extended to Colin Morris of EPR Architects, Ken Goudie of Arcadis UK, Nick Field, Teresa McGuane and Ian Porter of Sisk, and David Osborne of Rising Star LLP Ltd.

1.4.2 The investigation work was carried out by Ian Cook, Mike Donnelly, Vix Hughes, Laura King, Paul Leader, Rowan McAlley, Matt Morgan, Jim Mumford and Mike Simms. The drawings were produced by Georgina Slater. Thanks are also extended to the Archives, Finds and Environmental departments for their help and hard work.

2 Investigation Aims and Methodology

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The aims and objectives of the work are as follows:

- To determine the existence or absence of any archaeological remains on areas of the site impacted by the demolition procedures; and should remains be found to be present to ensure their preservation by record.
- To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence.
- To determine or confirm the approximate extent of the remains.
- To determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains.
- To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.
- To assess the associations and implications of the remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- To determine the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artefactual evidence present.
- To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence and the forms in which such evidence may be present.
- To relate any and all archaeological deposits, features, artefacts and ecofacts to the evidence already taken from the site during previous works.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 As the 1999 evaluation demonstrated that much of the development site contained little or no evidence of archaeological significance, and the subsequent excavation had fully recorded the footprint of the west wing of the hotel, the archaeological investigation was limited to the areas to the west, north and south of the west wing of the hotel.

2.2.2 Only shallow works were proposed within the area immediately to the south of the 1999 excavation area as this was to be left *in situ.* However, following unscheduled deeper excavation of this area, a recording exercise was implemented to record any surviving deposits.

2.2.3 The main works comprised the following elements:

- The excavation of six geoarchaeological test pits (Fig. 2, Test Pits 1 – 6 and 8, April-May 2009);
- The excavation of a 2 m² column base foundation hole at the north-east corner of the 'preservation *in situ* area' (Fig 2, Test Pit 7, May 2009);
- A watching brief on the excavation of a pile trench around the hotel footprint (and other associated ground works) (Fig.2, June 2009);
- A watching brief during the excavation of an access road through the 'preservation *in situ* area' and associated lamp-post trenching (Fig.2, Access Road and LP1-4, June-October 2010);

- A strip map and sample during the excavation of a balancing pond (Fig. 2, June 2010 – October 2010);
- Excavation of the post-medieval ornamental moat and other flood-related general reduction, and a watching brief during garden landscaping, tree pit excavations and flood alleviation works (Fig.2, orange-shaded areas, January -June 2011).

2.2.4 In all cases areas were mechanically excavated to the upper archaeological horizon, and any revealed deposits were hand-excavated and recorded. If necessary mechanical excavation continued to the next horizon or natural geology depending on the proposed impact of the works. The six geoarchaeological test pits were mechanically excavated in spits and the arisings examined for the presence of worked flint.

2.2.5 All machine work took place under the guidance of an experienced archaeologist. Recording followed procedures detailed in the OAU Fieldwork Manual (Wilkinson 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 The results presented in the main text of the report provide an overview of the findings from the archaeological works. The locations of all test pits and construction operations areas covered by the watching brief are shown on Figure 2. Some elements of the watching brief produced useful archaeological results while others did not. The Access Road excavations and associated lamp post foundations were excavated through modern made ground only and are therefore not described further below.

3.1.2 Summaries of the finds and environmental reports can be found below, with further details in Appendices A and B.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 In the west of the site the deposits generally comprised natural gravels at a depth of c. 1 to 1.2 m below ground level (19.6 m OD), overlain by 0.8 m of medieval/post-medieval cultivation soils, below c. 0.4 m of modern topsoil. In the east of the site the deposits comprised c. 1.2 m of 19th / 20th century dumped levelling deposits.

3.2.2 Geoarchaeological test pits 1 and 2 were excavated through recently disturbed deposits at the base of the 1999 excavation and into the Pleistocene gravels. In the test pits outside the previous excavation area, excavation was to depths of up to 2.5 m.

3.3 Geoarchaeological test pits and column base excavation (April – May 2009)

3.4 Test Pits 1 – 6 and 8, and column base excavation (Test Pit 7)

3.4.1 The geoarchaeological test pits (1 – 6 and 8) measured up to 3 m long and 2 m wide and were excavated to the base of the floodplain gravel (of probable Pleistocene age). Six geoarchaeological test pits (Test Pits 1-6) were initially proposed, but due to flooding in Test Pit 2 a further test pit was excavated (Test Pit 8). Test Pit 7 refers to the excavation of a column base in the NE corner of the 'preservation in situ' area. For the purposes of this report only the deposits within Test Pit 4 are illustrated, as the least disturbed and most representative sequence. The test pit locations are shown on Figure 2. None of the test pits encountered significant archaeological remains. The sediment sequences are described below.

Test Pit 1 (Fig. 2)

3.4.2 Test Pit 1 was located within the western part of the previously excavated basement area. The test pit was excavated to a depth of 2 m and measured 2.8 m x 1.6 m.

3.4.3 A clast-supported sandy gravel comprising cobbles and pebbles (1004) was revealed at 1.5 m - 2 m depth. The cobbles were small, sub-angular to sub-rounded and measured approximately 0.12 m in diameter. The water table was encountered at a depth of 0.2 m and flooding consequently impeded interpretation.

3.4.4 A deposit of black-grey sandy clast-supported gravel, comprising cobbles and pebbles (1003) was revealed at a depth of 1.1 m - 1.5 m.

3.4.5 A gravelly matrix-supported deposit (1002) overlay 1003. It was grey in colour and consisted of sand, and sub-rounded to sub-angular pebbles and cobbles.

3.4.6 The upper deposit (1001) was a yellowish grey matrix-supported silty gravel layer of sand and pebbles, with some sub-angular to sub-angular cobbles measuring up to 0.12 m in size.

Test Pit 2 (Fig. 2)

3.4.7 Test Pit 2 was located in the west of the site within the area of previous archaeological investigation. The test pit measured 2 m² and the depth of excavation was limited to 0.65 m due to flooding. Consequently only three contexts were observed:

3.4.8 The lowest deposit was a clast-supported mid-brownish grey sandy gravel, comprising pebbles and cobbles (2003). Cobbles were sub-angular to sub-rounded and up to 0.2 m in size. Most cobbles were 0.06 m-0.18 m in size.

3.4.9 Above this was a clast-supported sandy gravel (2002) below a loose gravel and sand matrix-supported deposit (2001).

Test Pit 3 (Fig.2)

3.4.10 Test Pit 3 was located to the west of Test Pits 1 and 2, outside the basement excavation. It measured 3.2 m x 1.6 m and was excavated to a depth of 2.1 m

3.4.11 The lowest deposit was a mid-greyish brown layer of silt, pebbles and cobbles (3008), which formed a clast-supported gravel layer. Overlying 3008 was a matrix-supported mid-grey sandy gravel (pebbles and cobbles; 3007). The cobbles were sub-angular to sub-rounded in formation. A similar deposit (3006) but containing fewer large cobbles overlay 3007.

3.4.12 A mid-grey brown matrix-supported formation (3005) overlay 3006. It comprised a sandy gravel clay, possibly a flood deposit. Overlying this were modern dumped silty-clays (3002-3004) below the modern topsoil (3001).

Test Pit 4 (Figs. 2 and 3)

3.4.13 Test Pit 4 measured 3.2 m x 1.6 m and was excavated to a depth of 2 m. The lowest deposits were a clast-supported gravelly matrix of purple/black manganese-stained pebbles and cobbles (4007 and 4008). The dark colour of the deposit was indicative of leaching and the deposits may have been cut by an early channel. An environmental sample was taken from 4007 (Sample 2).

3.4.14 The overlying layers appeared to be fills of the assumed channel, and consisted of a clast-supported layer of orange-yellow sandy gravel comprising pebbles and cobbles (4006) below a gravelly matrix-supported structure of silt, sand and pebbles (4005). Deposit 4005 was overlain by a gravelly dark grey matrix-supported formation of clay, silt, sand, with some pebbles (4004).

3.4.15 Layer 4003, which overlay 4004, was very similar in formation to that of 4005 except that a sand lens was evident within the deposit. The lens may have been indicative of a minor flooding episode. A layer of clay, silt, sand and gravel (4002) overlay 4003 and was overlain by the modern disturbed ground (4001).

Test Pit 5 (Fig. 2)

3.4.16 Test Pit 5 was located at the eastern end of the site and measured 3.2 m x 1.6 m and 1.6 m deep. The lowest context comprised a gravelly clast-supported matrix consisting of sand, pebble sand cobbles (5004), which lay below the current water table. Overlying this layer was a matrix-supported grey sandy gravel with cobbles (5003). The

cobbles were sub-rounded to sub-angular in shape and were approximately 0.18 m in size.

3.4.17 The deposit was overlain by a matrix-supported formation of sandy gravel with occasional pebbles and cobbles (5002). The cobbles were more prevalent towards the base of the layer. The deposit was overlain by a grey matrix-supported sandy gravel formation (5001) below the modern topsoil.

Test Pit 6 (Fig. 2)

3.4.18 Test Pit 6 was located in the east of the site and measured 2.6 m x 1.6 m and 2.3 m deep.

3.4.19 The lowest layer was a clast-supported sandy gravel (pebbles; 6007) at a depth of 1.9 m. The layer was overlain by a thin band of a clast-supported mixed sand and pebbles (6006).

3.4.20 Layer 6006 was overlain by a matrix-supported light grey gravelly silt formation (6005) below a similar sand matrix (6004). The layer comprises an orange-yellow gravel clast supported layer. This was overlain by the modern topsoil horizon (6001).

Test Pit 8 (Fig.2)

3.4.21 Test Pit 8 was located close to Test Pits 3 and 4 to the eastern half of the hotel footprint and was 3.2 m x 1.6 m and 2.5 m deep. The lowest deposit was 8006 which consisted of clast-supported cobbles, pebbles, gravel and sand. Above this deposit was 8005, which was a clast-supported pebble, gravel and sand deposit.

3.4.22 Layer 8004 which overlay 8005 consisted of clast-supported cobble and gravel sand formation, which was light grey in colour. Overlying 8004 was a similar deposit (8003) but contained less gravel. Deposit 8002 was overlain by 8002, a matrix supported formation of cobbles, brown clay and gravel. The deposit was overlain by the modern topsoil (8001).

3.5 Column base (Test Pit 7)

3.5.1 Gravel (7010) was seen at a depth of between 1 m and 1.3 m below ground level (19.2 m OD; Fig. 3, Section 700). The gravel was overlain by c. 0.3 m of dark silty clay (7009). Animal bone was recovered from this deposit (see Appendix B.2), which most likely formed a cultivation soil. Soil 7009 was overlain by a similar soil (7008), which in turn lay below a layer of redeposited gravel (7007). Soil 7008 contained fragments of post-medieval pottery, broken peg-tile and animal bones. A third soil deposit (7006), which overlay 7007, produced a single sherd of early post-medieval pottery (see Appendix A.1).

3.5.2 Soil 7006 was overlain by a modern dumped deposit (7002) that was truncated by a foundation cut (7003) for a brick structure (wall footing 7004), comprising at least six courses of red frogged bricks. Abutting wall 7004 was a north-south aligned wall footing 7005 which formed a corner. Overlying this sequence is the modern topsoil/demolition layer 7000.

3.6 Pile trench footprint and associated groundworks (June 2009)

3.6.1 No significant archaeology was recorded during these construction activities, and opportunities for geoarchaeological observation were minimal.

3.7 'Preservation *in situ* area' and balancing pond / general ground reduction (June – October 2009)

3.7.1 Natural gravel (9078) was overlain by an orange layer of sandy silt alluvium (9048), which was revealed at 1 m below ground level within the western end of the 'preservation *in situ* area' (c. 19.6 m OD; Fig. 3). The deposit was cut by a north-south aligned ditch (9036), 2 m wide, which was only revealed in plan. The ditch was filled with a silty clay (9037). The terminal of a second ditch was revealed to the west (Fig. 4), which was 3 m wide, 0.45 m deep and had a flat base (9081). The ditches probably represent further lengths of two 11th/12th century ditches (1066 and 1067) which were revealed within the the 1999 excavation to the north (Fig. 4). The ditch fills were overlain by a bluish sandy silt alluvial layer (9035). The difference in alignment and mismatch in some features could be due to the features being planned at slightly different levels as a result of different machine stripping levels, or discrepancies in surveying between the two phases of excavation. It is most likely due to a combination of the two.

3.7.2 A third ditch was revealed within the balancing pond excavation to the west of the 'preservation *in situ* area'. Ditch 9098 was curvilinear and 0.65 m wide and 0.3 m deep (Fig. 4). It was filled by dark silty clays (9099 and 9100) that contained 11th- or 12th-century pottery.

3.7.3 A rectangular posthole (9046) was observed to the west of ditch 9036 and measured 0.65 m by 0.3 m by 0.2 m deep. The silty clay posthole fill (9045) was cut through the overlying soil horizon (9038), a silty clay up to 0.4 m thick.

3.7.4 Posthole 9064 was cut through soil horizon 9038 and measured 1 m by 0.4 m by 0.5 m deep. It was filled by a bluish silty clay (9065) that contained a sherd of probable 13th century pottery. The postholes formed part of a group of eight additional postholes (9001, 9066, 9068, 9070, 9072, 9074, 9076 and 9092) seen in plan (Fig. 4) which together suggest the footprint of an 11th - 13th century structure. The postholes measured between 0.2 m wide and 1 m wide and due to truncation were not more than 0.2 m deep. The structure extended to the south where it incorporated a beam and posthole construction (1185, 1188, 1265 and 1270), seen in the southern section of the 1999 excavation area. The structure had a possible footprint of c. 6 m east-west and over 9 m north-south. Later phases of the building had been lost to truncation.

3.7.5 An undated irregular tree hole was also observed (9062; Fig. 4).

3.7.6 Soil 9038 was overlain by a 0.2 m thick layer of sandy gravel (9043), which may have formed a medieval or post-medieval path at the south edge of the structure (Fig. 3).

3.7.7 Within the eastern part of the area (Fig. 3, Section 901) soil 9038 was overlain by dumps of post-medieval silts and clays. The lower deposits were cut by pit 9027 and foundation trench 9049 for a brick wall (9009) in the east, which were overlain by more modern dumped deposits (9019 and 9020). Dump 9020, to the west, was cut by a landscaping trench (9041), which was filled by a dump of clayey silt (9042). The fill was overlain by later levelling deposits and cut by the construction trenches for a brick culvert (9010) and a brick well (9007).

3.7.8 Modern brick soakaways or wells (9008, 9087 and 9090) and a pit (9054) were seen in plan in the eastern part of the site (Fig. 4). Soakaway 9090 was previously recorded in 1999 (1444). North-south aligned brick-built surface drains (9094 and 9096) were also revealed during the general reduction for the new road through the 'preservation *in situ* area'.

3.7.9 Part of the revetment of the 19th-century ornamental moat was revealed during general ground reduction to the west (Fig. 2). The brick structures were overlain by a 21st-century levelling layer (9011; Fig. 3).

3.7.10 The remains of the boathouse and footbridge over the moat were also recorded (Fig. 2). Two 'T'-shaped brick structures survived (9107 and 9108), which comprised two parallel walls either side of the moat and each measuring 6 m wide and 2.4 m high (Plate 1). The walls were constructed from roughly laid courses of red frogged bricks, measuring 0.23 m x 0.1 m x 0.07 m. Two flights of east-west aligned brick steps were constructed against the wall's outer faces (Plate 2). The walls retained patches of a white wash coating and the structure is first shown on the 1896 OS plan (Fig. 2), as it does not appear on the 1885-89 OS map.

3.8 Tree Pits (January – April 2011)

3.8.1 On the northern side of the Poyle Channel, in front of the hotel entrance, five small tree pits were excavated for the planting of new trees as part of the landscaping of the new hotel grounds. The layout of the pits was in the form of two clusters of three: Tree Pits 1-3 to the west and Tree Pits 4 and 5 to the east. The latter group incorporated an existing tree, so only five pits were required. All works were completed within one day using a 3 tonne mini-excavator with a bladed bucket.

Tree Pit 1

3.8.2 Tree Pit 1 was the westernmost pit and was located on the flat land just north of the river bank. The test pit was excavated to a depth of 0.85m and measured 2m x 1.4m.

3.8.3 A dark brown clayey silt with occasional inclusions of brick fragments and clay and charcoal flecks (9111) was revealed at the base of the tree pit. The deposit was 0.4m thick. This deposit was also tentatively identified in Tree Pits 2 and 3.

3.8.4 Above this was a 0.15m thick layer of a more concentrated brick rubble (9110). The brick fragments were at most 0.12m by 0.08m by 0.06m in size. The boundaries of the horizon were diffuse.

3.8.5 At the top of the sequence was a 0.3m thick layer (9109) of highly mixed material including fragments of tile, brick and concrete. This uppermost layer formed the ground surface during the construction works for the hotel.

Tree Pit 2

3.8.6 Tree Pit 2 was the northernmost pit in the western cluster and was located on the flat land just north of the river bank. The test pit was excavated to a depth of 0.85m and measured 1.5m x 1.45m.

3.8.7 A mid brownish grey clayey silt with occasional stone inclusions (9115) was revealed at the base of the tree pit. The deposit was 0.12m thick.

3.8.8 Above this was a 0.0a6m thick layer of a mid yellowish brown sandy clay (9114), with small stones throughout. This deposit was only present in the north-western part of the tree pit and may be a localised lens. In the south-western corner of the tree pit, two other thin deposits were seen also above 9115 and below 9111. Layer (9134) was 0.04m thick and consisted of coal and charcoal flecks. This lay below (9133) which was a mid orange clay lens. Layer 9111 was 0.3m thick in this tree pit and was stratigraphically above 9114 and 9133.

3.8.9 Overlying layer 9111, was a thin layer, 0.08m thick, (9113) seen only in the eastern side of the tree pit. This layer was a soft mid yellow clay and its position just below the current rubble surface layer indicated that it is probably of recent date.

3.8.10 At the top of the sequence was a 0.32m thick dark layer of highly mixed material including fragments of tile, brick and concrete, forming the present ground surface.

Tree Pit 3

3.8.11 Tree Pit 3 was the easternmost pit in the western cluster and was located on the flat land just north of the river bank. The test pit was excavated to a depth of 0.7m and measured 1.45m x 1.4m.

3.8.12 At the base of the tree pit was a mid grey stony sandy silt (9117) probably a natural alluvial. It was 0.08m thick at the northern end of the tree pit but sloped downwards to the south, towards the river. Only the upper surface layer was visible at the southern end of the tree pit. It had appeared similar to deposit 9129 in Tree Pit 5 to the east.

3.8.13 Above this was a 0.2m thick layer of firm pale brown clay (9116), with no visible inclusions. This layer appeared to be natural in origin, consistent with a water lain deposit, but it appeared relatively high in the sequence, and could have been redeposited by groundworks.

3.8.14 Above this was the same sequence of 9111 (0.3m thick) overlain by 9112 (0.18m thick) as seen in the Tree Pits 1 and 2.

Tree Pit 4

3.8.15 Tree Pit 4 was the northernmost pit in the eastern cluster and was located on the flat land just north of the river bank. The test pit was excavated to a depth of 0.86m and measured 1.4m x 1.4m.

3.8.16 At the base of the tree pit, in the south-eastern corner were two adjacent deposits 9122 and 9123 (their stratigraphical relationship lay outside the area of the tree pit). The small area of 9123 showed it to be a pale yellow sand, while the more extensive layer 9122 was a 0.16m thick, mid brown sandy silt with clay flecks, small stones and occasional small brick fragments.

3.8.17 Overlying layer 9122 was a very thin layer (9121), of dark brown clayey silt that had a fine texture an appeared to be a previous soil layer. This was supported by the presence of the associated layer above (9120) which was a fine black silt with fragments of grass preserved within it. These two layers were clearly comparatively recently buried turf and topsoil layers. This sequence of layers 9120-9122 were only visible in the eastern part of the tree pit.

3.8.18 Above both the old turf layer (9120) and the yellow sand (9123), was a 0.21m thick layer (9119), of mid grey silty clay, which had occasional small stone inclusions and areas of grey and yellow clay patches. This layer was not sufficiently similar to 9111 to be regarded as the same.

3.8.19 Covering layer 9119 was a mid greyish brown gravelly silt, (9118) which was 0.14m in thickness and had a diffuse boundary with the layer above (9112). Truncating layer 9118 and the western two-thirds of the tree pit was a cut feature 9131. This feature was aligned north/south and was 1.2m wide, over 1.4m in length and over 0.64m in depth. The presence of a pipe within the fill suggested that it was the result of ground disturbance for services. The fill was highly mixed and contained brick fragments, stones, as well as coal and charcoal pieces.

3.8.20 At the top of the sequence an aggregate layer (9112) formed the present construction surface. .

Tree Pit 5

3.8.21 Tree Pit 5 was the westernmost pit in the eastern cluster and was located on the sloped land adjacent to the river bank. The test pit was excavated to a depth of 0.8m and measured 1.45m x 1.4m.

3.8.22 At the base of the tree pit was a pale whitish grey mid grey stony silt (9130). It was 0.1m thick at the northern end of the tree pit but sloped downwards to the south, and only extended 0.4m into the tree pit before it dipped below the level of excavation. This deposit was consistent with natural river deposits. Above this was a mid grey stony sandy silt (9129), that again sloped south towards the river. This deposit may have been a natural river gravel at the far edge of the bank. It had some similarities to depots 9117 seen in Tree Pit 3 to the west.

3.8.23 Overlying the natural deposits was a mid greyish brown silty clay (9128), which had brown streaks within it that appeared to be possible indications of mineral leeching associated with water-logged conditions. The presence of one fragment of red brick might indicate that it was a naturally accumulated deposit which was subject to occasional human activity.

3.8.24 Covering this layer was a 0.08m band of grey gravel, (9127) The gravel may have been deposited in a high energy environment such as the initial stages of a flood. This layer, was in turn, sealed by a pale yellowish grey silty sand, (9126). In appearance it was similar to 9116 in Tree Pit 3, but was paler in colour. Above this was a dark greyish brown silty sand with frequent inclusions of rounded gravel, (9125). Between this layer and 9126 below, were several fragments of red brick; seen in the western section, these were highly intermittent and were also found within 9125 and pressed into 9126. On the southern side of tree pit the top deposit (9124), in the sequence was the 0.1m thick layer of current soil and grass. On the northern side this topsoil was covered by the mixed layer of the current construction ground surface 9112.

3.9 Flood compensation areas (January – June 2011)

3.9.1 Two areas were excavated for flood alleviation either side of the Poyle channel. The first, Area A, measured 31 m x 6 m and lay to the north of the channel, directly outside the front of the new hotel (Fig 2). Area B lay to the south-west of area A, on the southern side of the channel and measured 43 m x 15 m.

Area A

3.9.2 Area A was reduced by 0.85 m to 19. 88 m aod. A north-south aligned wall (9145) was seen near the centre of the stripped area. The wall was seen only in plan and was built using a combination of red and purple bricks, bonded with a yellow sandy mortar. This was overlain by a buried topsoil layer (9146) which was in turn sealed by a layer of modern topsoil combined with building material (9147). The gravel geology was not reached in this area.

Area B

3.9.3 Area B was reduced by 0.9 m to 19.55 m aod. The lowest recorded deposit was a largely undisturbed floodplain gravel (9149) this was cut by the revetting wall (9148) on the southern bank of the Poyle Channel. The wall was constructed from red machine cut bricks measuring 230 mm x 110 mm x 60 mm laid in a header bond, using a creamy

yellow sandy mortar. The wall was overlain by a buried topsoil (9150), which in turn was sealed by a layer of made ground (9151) and a modern topsoil 9152).

3.10 Finds summary

3.10.1 A very small assemblage of artefacts and faunal remains was recovered by hand excavation during the watching brief, including pottery, metalwork, animal bone and oyster shell. The only significant finds were occasional medieval and post-medieval pottery sherds from Test Pit 7, and from the 'preservation *in situ* area'. These form the basis for dating potentially *in situ* medieval and post-medieval layers and features, but the finds themselves are not intrinsically significant.

3.11 Environmental summary

3.11.1 A single soil sample was taken from layer 4007 (Test Pit 4) to examine an unusual very dark blue-black concretion, which had formed on the flint pebbles. It is likely that this relates to the downwards movement of manganese (permanganate) forming a pan on this horizon. Although there was some very fresh looking ‘struck’ flint in this sample, these all derived from the machine stripping of this layer when the blade of the bucket scraped along the concreted flint pebbles. There were no examples of older, patinated, potentially Palaeolithic material within this sample.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1.1 Many of the observations made during the investigations at Poyle were within disturbed deposits or shallow excavations, and little could be added to the results of the 1999 excavations. No evidence for Pleistocene or Holocene prehistoric activity was seen during the geoarchaeological test pit investigation.

4.1.2 The results of the work did shed light on the size of the medieval house revealed in section during the 1999 works, and the 11th- or 12th-century drainage/boundary ditches observed during these earlier works continued to the south and presumably drained into the Poyle Channel.

4.1.3 The ditches clearly respected a contemporary structure, which the 1999 investigation indicated was part of a farming settlement of above average status, and possibly part of the manor at Stanwell (Foreman *et al*. 2001, 21). Although the bulk of the building was truncated, ten postholes survived in plan and demonstrated that the structure was at least 6 m wide and 9 m long. The two easternmost postholes were generally smaller than those to the west and may have formed part of an ancillary structure. It is possible that the building extended to the south and may have originally been longer and divided into bays (*ibid.*). Ditch 9090, to the south, was curvilinear and it may have bounded the building complex, limiting its length to c. 17 m. No evidence of stonework was seen and the building must have been of a timber framed construction. The building may have formed a simple rectangular hall within part of a larger complex, such as the 12th-13th-century stone and timber hall at nearby Chazey Court Farm (OA forthcoming), or similarly dated structures further afield at Wintringham, Huntingdonshire (Hurst 1988, 871 and fig. 9.6) and Penhallam, Cornwall (Beresford 1974, fig. 27). The Poyle structure may have been similar in size to the chapel at Penhallam, which was 12 m long and 7 m wide (*ibid.*). The postholes revealed to the north-west of the structure in 1999, are likely to form part of an ancillary structure (Fig. 4).

4.1.4 The tree pit excavations demonstrate that the area north of the Poyle Channel retained a sequence of *in situ* alluvial deposits, overlain by a number of more recent deposits, most of which incorporated some building debris. The lowest of these might be related to the demolition of early structures, but with no datable artefacts forthcoming this was difficult to establish. There was no evidence of preserved medieval occupation material in this area.

4.1.5 No evidence for later phases of the post-medieval activity were seen during the recent works, but the investigated boat house, brick wells, drains and other structures are most likely to have been associated with the 18th-century rebuilding of the house. Earlier buildings associated with the medieval house may still survive within the southern and western part of the 'preservation *in situ* area'.

APPENDIX A. FINDS REPORTS

A.1 Pottery

By John Cotter

A.1.1 A total of five sherds of pottery weighing 118 g. were recovered from four contexts and spot-dated. This is of medieval and post-medieval date. For each context the total pottery sherd count and weight were recorded on an Excel spreadsheet, followed by the context spot-date which is the date-bracket during which the latest pottery types in the context are estimated to have been produced or were in general circulation. Comments on the presence of datable types were also recorded, usually with mention of vessel form (jugs, bowls etc.) and any other attributes worthy of note (eg. decoration etc.). The five sherds are described in some detail in the spreadsheet and therefore just summarised below.

A.1.2 Two contexts (9059 and 9065) produced only medieval pottery including Surrey Limpsfield-type coarse greywares of c 1150-1300 (one sherd in each context) and a single fresh jug sherd possibly in Camley Garden-type ware (Berks.) of c 1200-1300+. A deposition date of c 1200-1300 might be suggested for both. The other two contexts produced only post-medieval pottery including a sherd of London area early post-medieval redware (7006) and an unusually robust ?bowl or skillet rim in green-glazed Surrey/Hampshire Border whiteware (7008) which may be from the earlier end of the c 1550-1700 date range. If these contexts are related then a deposition date of c 1550-1650 might be suggested for both.

Table A.1.1: Pottery spot dates

Context	Spot-date	Sherds	Weight	Comments
7006	c1480-1650	1	12	Bs London area or Surrey-type early post-med redware with thin internal white slip under a reduced greenish glaze (formerly 'Guy's Hospital' ware)
7008	c1550-1700	1	50	Very probably Surrey/Hants white Border ware, green glazed (BORDG). Rim from robust thick-walled form with angled squared or hammerhead rim. Oily speckled green glaze on rim top and partially internal. Unglazed ext. Possibly from a skillet or shallow pipk
9059	1150-1300?	1	29	Probable Limpsfield ware. Hard-fired reduced greyware with iron-stained quartz. Chamberpot with sub-squared steeply angled rim. Wheel-thrown. Fairly fresh
9065	c1200-1300?	2	27	Fresh body sherd from a jug in hard-fired sandy pale grey-brown ware with abundant medium-coarse rounded to sub-angular iron-tinted orange and rose quartz, specks of greenish-brown glaze on exterior - possibly Camley Garden kiln ware nr Maidenhead? 1x sli
TOTAL		**5**	**118**	

A.2 Metal

By Ian Scott

A.2.1 The single metal find comprises a piece of copper alloy sheet with folded edges (context 9025, a modern made ground layer) (L: 84 mm; W: 61 mm). It is possibly just a piece of sheet with the sides folded up. However there do appear to be corners created by the folding, which might suggest that the sheet could have been formed into a crude binding to protect the end of a piece of wood. Against this idea is the fact that there are no nail or pin holes visible. The object is not closely datable. No further work required.

A.3 Animal bone assessment

By Lena Strid

A.3.1 The animal bone assemblage comprised 5 bones from cattle, pig and horse (Table 1). The bones were in a good to fair condition. The cattle and pig tibiae showed signs of animal gnawing, probably dog. Judging by bone surface structure all remains belonged to adult or sub-adult animals. The cattle phalanx in context (7006) was fused proximally, indicating an age-at-death of more than 20-24 months (Habermehl 1975).

A.3.2 No further information can be derived from the assemblage, which is small, poorly stratified and undated.

Table A.2.1: Occurrence of animal bones, by context

	Context7006	**Context 7008**		**Context 7009**
	Cattle	Horse	Pig	Cattle
Tooth		1		
Tibia	1		1	
Metatarsal				1
Phalanx 1	1			
TOTAL	**2**	**1**	**1**	**1**
Weight (g)	246	66	20	143

APPENDIX B. ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTS

B.1 Environmental samples

By Rebecca Nicholson

B.1.1 A single sample was taken from layer 4007 (Test Pit 4) to examine an unusual very dark blue-black concretion, which had formed on the flint pebbles forming the gravel. It is likely that this relates to the downwards movement of manganese (permanganate) forming a pan on this horizon. Although there was some very fresh looking 'struck' flint in this sample, these all derived from the machine stripping of this layer when the blade of the bucket scraped along the concreted flint pebbles. There were no examples of older, patinated, potentially Palaeolithic material within this sample.

APPENDIX C. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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Appendix D. Summary of Site Details

Site name: Poyle House, Slough, Berkshire

Site code: SLPM 09

Grid reference: NGR TQ 030 765

Type: Archaeological Investigation

Date and duration: April 2009 - June 2011

Area of site: 0.5 ha

Summary of results: The work revealed the traces of a timber-built 11th-13th-century house and associated boundary/drainage ditches. Post-medieval structures associated with an 18th-century house were also revealed.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Reading County and Art Gallery in due course, under the following accession number REDMG 2009.300.

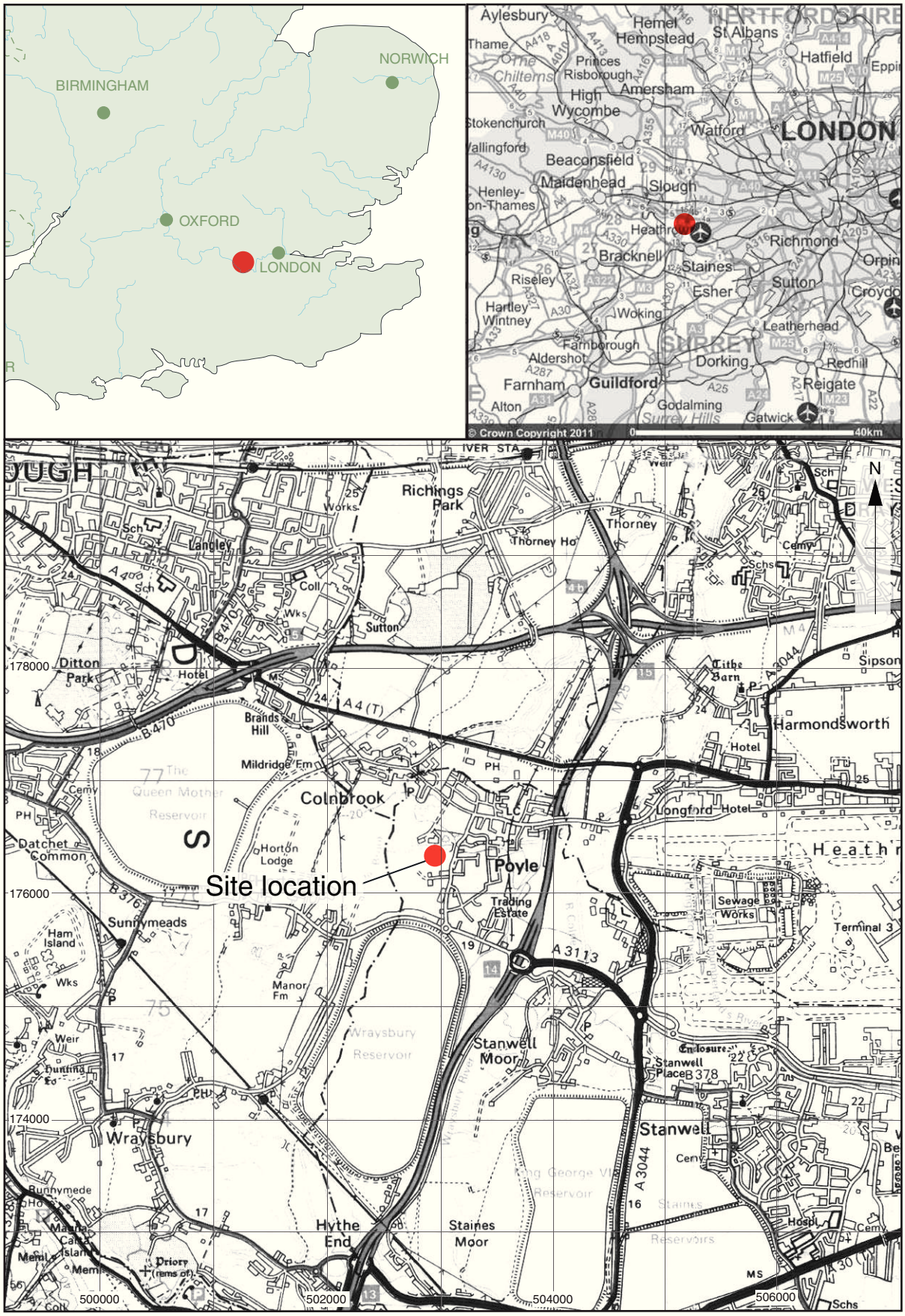

Figure 1: Site location

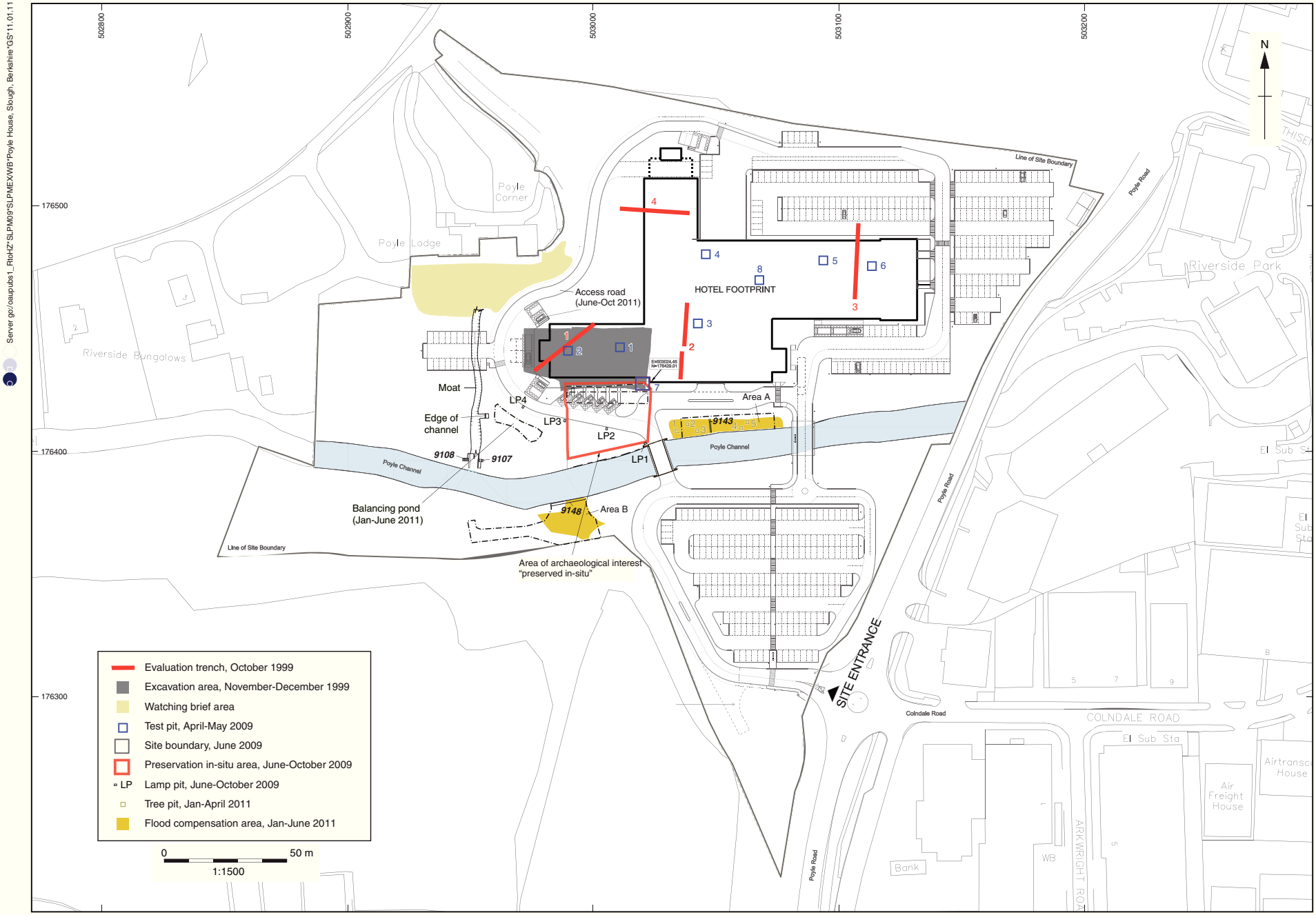

Figure 2: Investigation areas

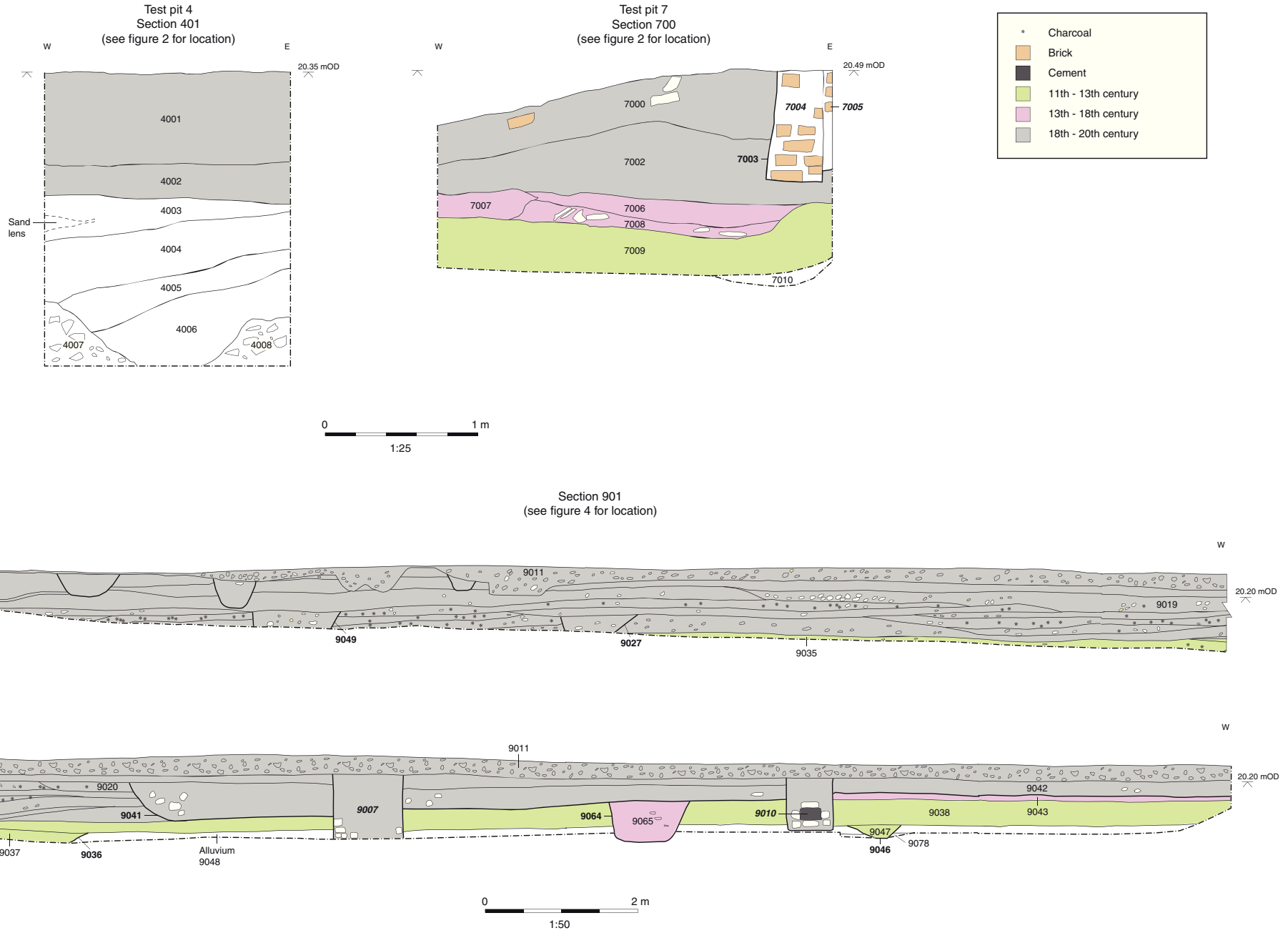

Figure 3: Test pit 4, Section 401; Trench 7, Section 700; Preservation in situ area, Section 901

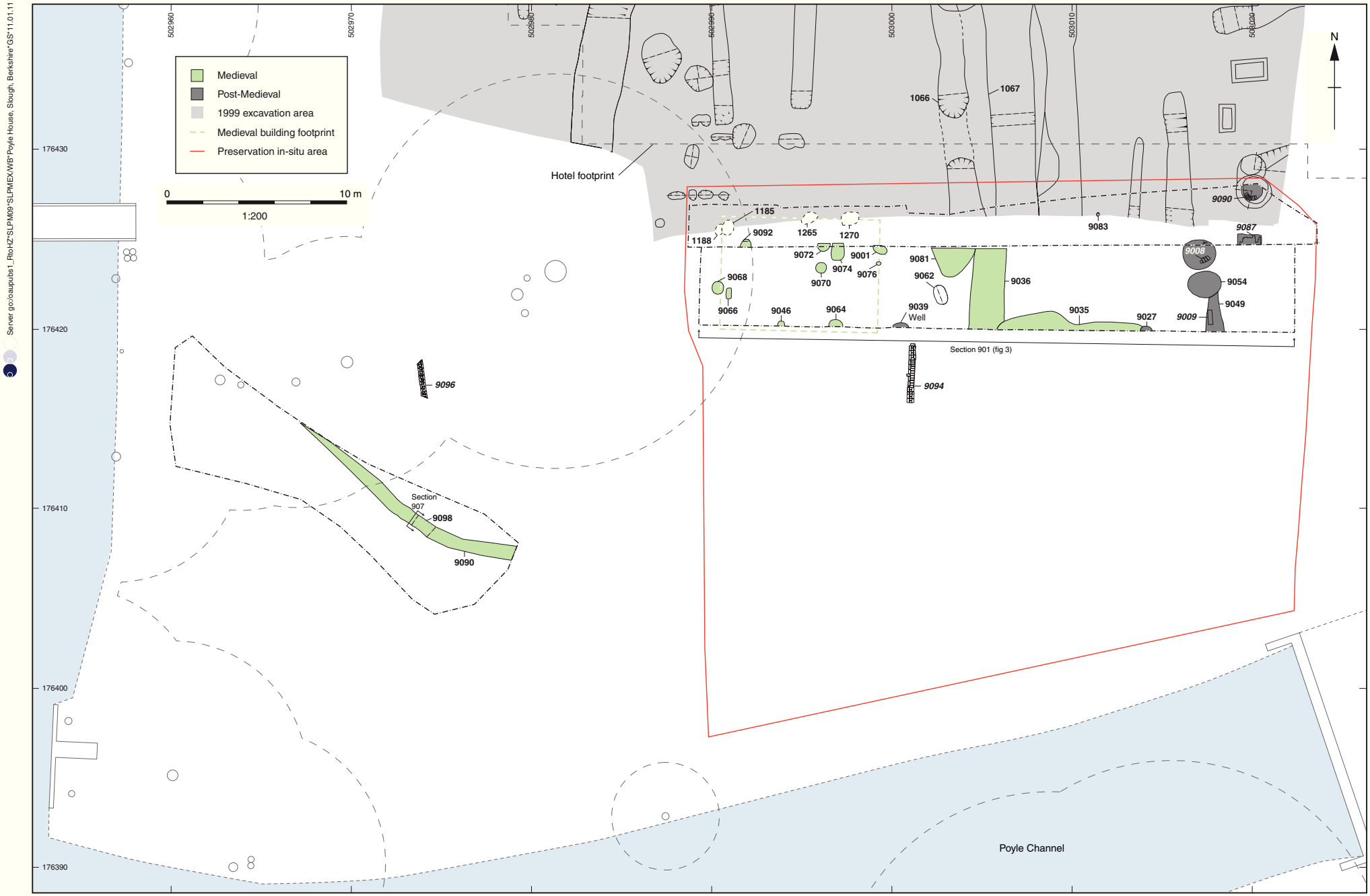

Figure 4: Plan of balancing pond and preservation in situ area

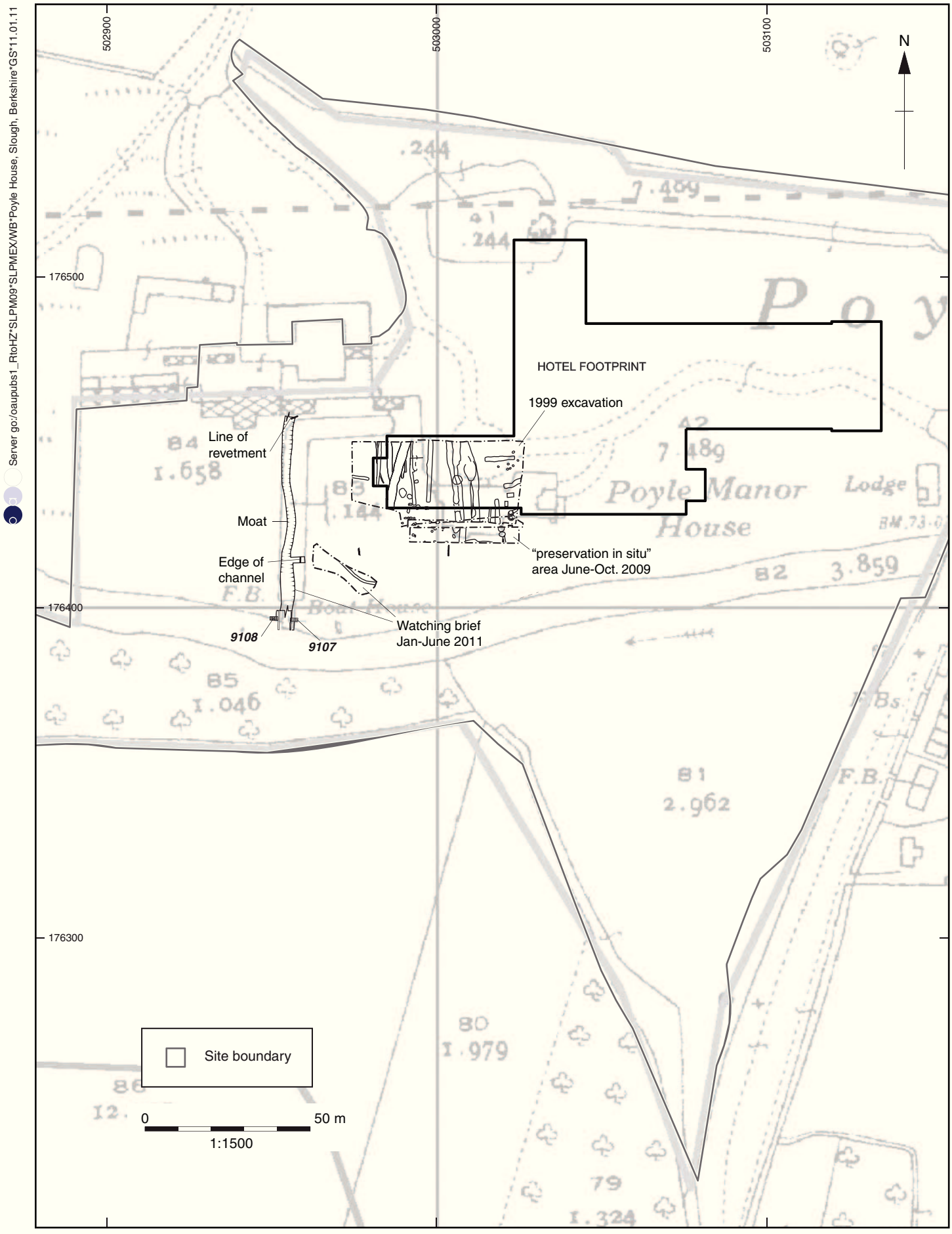

Figure 5: Detail from 1895 Ordnance Survey map showing archaeological features discovered during the 1999 and 2009-2011 watching briefs

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