

Quantum Leap

Mardol Quay Gardens

Shrewsbury



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



April 2009

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Architecture**

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**“Quantum Leap”,
Mardol Quay Gardens, Shrewsbury, Shropshire**
NGR: SJ 489 127

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

On February 26th 2009, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Mardol Quay Gardens, Shrewsbury, Shropshire (NGR: SJ 489 127). The work was commissioned by Pearce and Lal in advance of the construction of a sculpture commemorating the bi-centennial of Darwin's birth. The watching brief revealed evidence of modern landscaping overlying 19th-century deposits including a brick path. No deposits, features or artefacts relating to the medieval wharf or bridge were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

1.1.1 On February 26th, 2009 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Mardol Quay Gardens, Shrewsbury, Shropshire (NGR: SJ 489 127). The work was commissioned by Pearce and Lal Ltd. in respect of a proposal to erect a sculpture commemorating the bi-centennial of Darwin's birth.

1.1.2 Shropshire's County Historic Environment Officer, Mike Watson, had prepared a *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Work* to be undertaken prior to the developments on this site. (SCC 2008) and OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (OA, 2008) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 The town of Shrewsbury is situated on the Welsh border (Fig. 1). The site is located *c* 350 m from the centre of Shrewsbury and is bounded by the River Severn to the north, Smithfield Road to the south and east and Welsh Bridge to the west.

1.2.2 Mardol Quay Gardens is an area of lawned gardens and pathways that run between Smithfield Road and the south bank of the River Severn. The underlying geology is terrace deposits of the River Severn overlying Westphalian and Stephanian (undivided of Barren Red) deposits (British Geological Survey Sheet 152). The site lies at approximately 52 m OD

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared for the WSI for the project (OA, 2008) and is reproduced below.

1.3.2 The development area includes within it the site of the southern abutments of the medieval Welsh Bridge, which was in existence by the 12th century and demolished in 1795. The medieval town is also known to have extended into this area. The line of the town wall crosses the southern part of the site.

- 1.3.3 In 1607 Mardol Quay was constructed and by the 18th century much of the area was substantially built up.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development. In particular any remains relating to the Saxon or early medieval origin of the locale.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains that the works may remove or damage within the area being investigated.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief consisted of a continuous archaeological presence on site during the works likely to impinge upon archaeological deposits. These works included the stripping of the topsoil throughout the site and ground reduction of approximately 0.25 m in order to construct hardstanding for the piling rig.
- 2.2.2 A plan of the excavations and any archaeological features was drawn at a scale of 1:100 (Fig. 2) and any recorded sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All sections and any excavated features were photographed using digital photography, colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (OAU, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The site comprised two distinct areas separated by a tarmac path, a small triangular area next to the quay wall and a second bigger area between Smithfield Road and the tarmac path (Fig. 2).

Area next to the quay wall

- 3.1.2 This area measured approximately 7 m by 6m. A layer of dark red-brown silt clay (11) was encountered at 0.18 m below the current ground level (Fig. 2, Section 1). This could be seen to be in excess of 0.25 m deep during the ground reduction. This deposit contained fragments of brick and concrete suggesting a 20th-century date. It was overlaid by a 0.18 m deep layer of dark brown silt loam (10), a modern landscaping layer of topsoil and turf.

Area next to Smithfield Road

- 3.1.3 This area measured approximately 20 m by 15 m. At the higher, southern edge of the area a layer of mid-brown silt clay (13) was encountered 0.15 m below the original ground level (Fig. 2, Section 2) containing angular brick fragments. This deposit sloped steeply down towards the river and could be seen to be in excess of 0.25 m deep during the ground reduction. At the northern edge of the area this deposit was overlaid by a dark purplish-brown clay silt (12). This deposit contained fragments of demolition debris including bricks bonded with lime mortar and shattered stone fragments and also produced a fragment of lead glazed pottery. Where deposit 13 bordered Smithfield Road a rough path composed of very dark blue machine made bricks and very dark blue brick pavers (14) had been laid on the surface of this layer. The path measured 3.5 m wide and ran perpendicular to Smithfield Road leading down towards the Severn. Overlying this path and deposits 12 and 13 was a 0.15 m deep continuation of the modern landscaping layer 10.

3.2 **Finds**

- 3.2.1 Numerous examples of a very dark blue/black brick paver stamped “Monk and Newell, Ruabon” were recovered from path 14, together with a large fragment of black glazed earthenware from layer 12. The presence of these artifacts was recorded but they were not retained.
- 3.2.2 Monk and Newell of Ruabon (near Wrexham) are recorded as making bricks and tiles between c1880 and 1920, while the fragment of pottery was spot-dated between the 18th and early 20th centuries.

3.3 **Palaeo-environmental remains**

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were encountered during the course of the watching brief.

4 **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 No structural evidence for any earlier riverside quays, wharves or piers was encountered nor was any evidence relating to the medieval Welsh bridge observed, during the course of the watching brief.
- 4.1.2 The deposits observed suggest that the development area has possibly been reclaimed from the river bank and deposits of post-medieval material have been brought in to backfill and landscape the area between the current riverside walls and Smithfield Road. There is a possibility that earlier deposits remain *in situ* but the depth of impact during this phase of work was insufficient to expose these deposits.
- 4.1.3 The rough construction of path 14 suggests that it did not form part of the modern landscaping of the area, but may have been constructed to aid access to the river, possibly to a mooring.

- 4.1.4 It is probable that the modern landscaping represented by layer 10 and the tarmac path has truncated some of the post-medieval deposits.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i> Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
10	Layer	0.12 m – 0.18 m	-	Modern landscaping, topsoil and turf	Brick	C20th
11	Layer	> 0.25 m	-	Made ground	Brick, concrete	C19th/ C20th
12	Layer	> 0.25 m	3 m	Made ground	Brick, pottery	C19th/ C20th
13	Layer	> 0.25 m	10 m	Made ground	Brick	C19th/ C20th
14	Surface	0.1 m	3.4 m	Brick pathway	Brick	C19th/ C20th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA 2001 *Standard and Guidance for archaeological watching briefs*

OA 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (1st edition, ed. D Wilkinson)

OA 2008 *Darwin Bicentennial Memorial Geo Garden, Mardol Quay, Shrewsbury: Desk Based Assessment*

OA 2008 *Mardol Quay Gardens, Shrewsbury: Archaeological Evaluation Report*

OA 2008 *Mardol Quay Gardens, Shrewsbury: Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

OA 2008 *Mardol Quay Gardens, Shrewsbury: Written scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

SCC 2008 *Brief for a Programme of Archaeological Work at Mardol Quay Gardens, Shrewsbury*

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Quantum Leap, Mardol Quay, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

Site code: SHMAQU 08

Grid reference: SJ 489 127

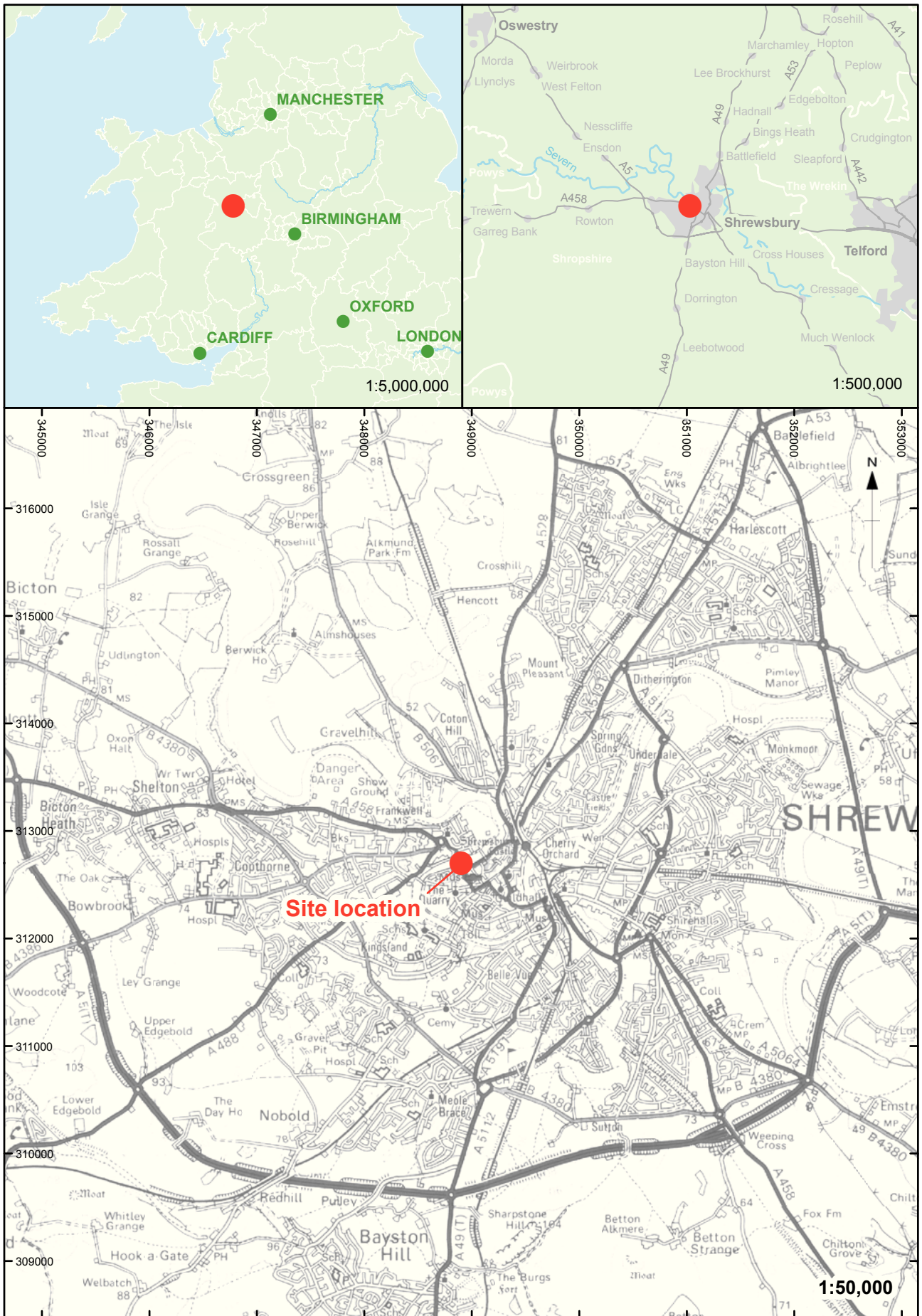
Type of watching brief: Topsoil strip and ground reduction for piling platforms

Date and duration of project: 27th February 2009, One day

Area of site: 0.13 hectare

Summary of results: Post-medieval made ground including a 19th century brick path.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Shrewsbury Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: SHYMS:A/2008/6101.



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Figure 1: Site location

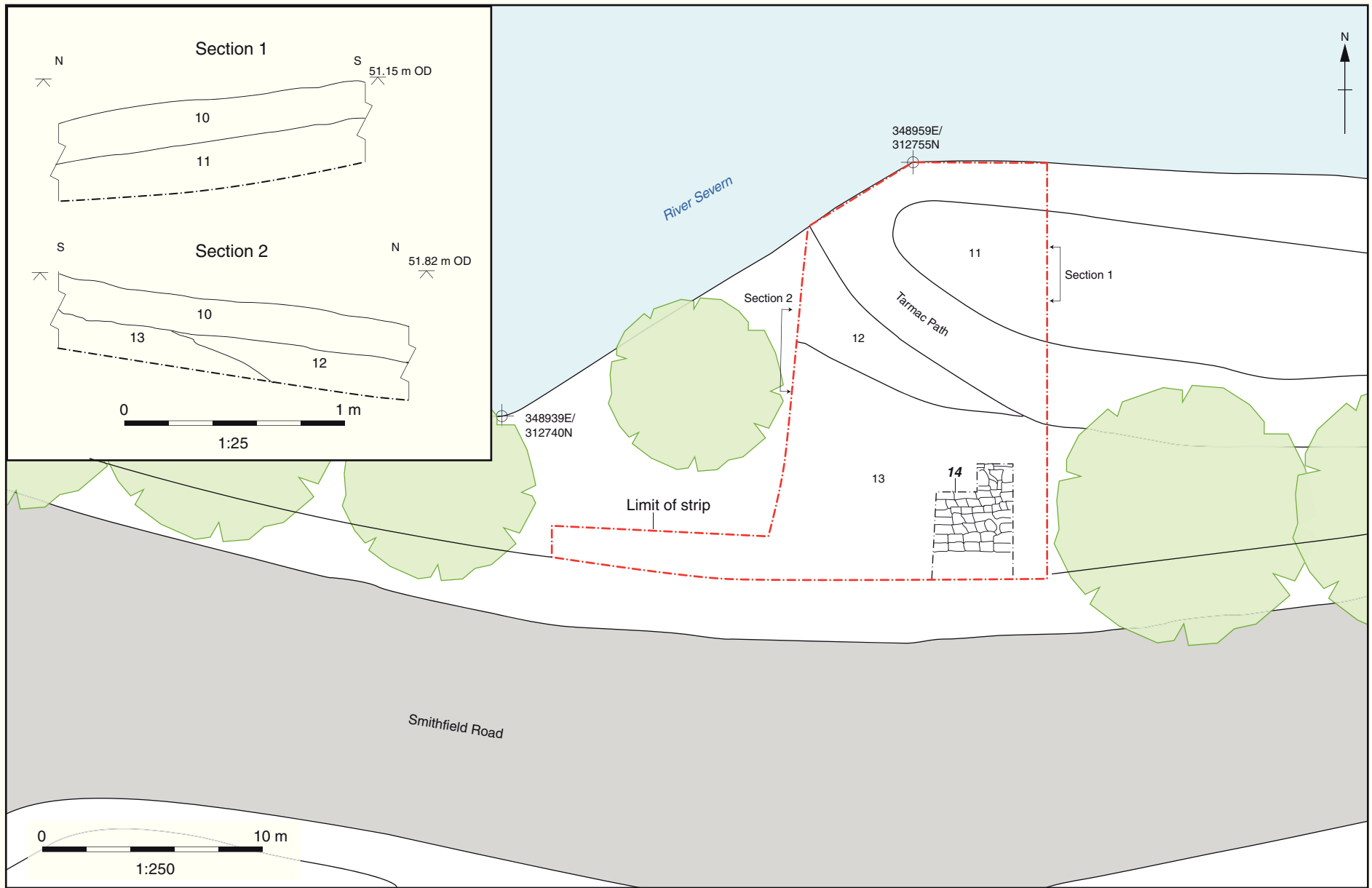


Figure 2: Site plan and sections



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