

Marsh Lane King's Lynn Norfolk



Archaeological
Watching Brief Report



April 2015

Client: King's Lynn and West Norfolk
Borough Council

OA East Report No: 1755
OASIS No: oxfordar3-209932
NGR: TF 6349 2177

Marsh Lane, King's Lynn, Norfolk

Watching Brief

Site Code: XNFM114
CHER No. ENF135847
Report No: 1755
Excavator: Michael Webster
Client: King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
Report Date: March 2015

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Summary

During December 2014 and January 2015, OA East carried out an archaeological watching brief at Marsh Lane, King's Lynn, Norfolk (TF 6331 2163). The monitoring was carried out during the removal of concrete rafts, walls and floors, associated with a 1960's farm, in advance of the construction of a new residential development.

A possible mound made up of late 18th to early 19th century bricks was exposed beneath the north end of one of the concrete rafts (Area B). Its limits were unknown during this phase of work. There was no evidence of a saltern structure, as mentioned in the Historic Environment Desk-based Assessment (July 2014) beyond the generally raised area of land on which the concrete rafts were positioned, that roughly conforms with that mapped as an 'earthwork' from NMP and HER data (see Figure 2 for extent).

Evidence for bricks dating from the 17th to 18th centuries were recovered from a rubble spread below the concrete pad in Area D. This may be the result of demolition material being brought into the site from somewhere in the town centre or maybe even evidence for a short lived structure.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 An archaeological monitoring exercise was conducted at Marsh Lane, King's Lynn, Norfolk (Fig. 1) prior to the submission of a planning application for the construction of a residential development on the site.
- 1.1.2 The archaeological monitoring was undertaken in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) prepared by Mott MacDonald (Adams 2014a).
- 1.1.3 The work was designed to assist in defining the character and extent of any archaeological remains within the proposed redevelopment area, in accordance with the guidelines set out in *National Planning Policy Framework* (Department for Communities and Local Government March 2012). The results will enable decisions to be made by Norfolk County council, on behalf of the Local Planning Authority along with English Heritage, with regard to the treatment of any archaeological remains found.
- 1.1.4 The site archive is currently held by OA East and will be deposited with the appropriate county stores in due course.

1.2 Geology and Topography

- 1.2.1 The underlying geology of the site comprises Jurassic Kimmeridge Clay Formation mudstone overlain by layers of clay and silt, which were deposited by tidal action during the Quaternary period. Borehole data from the site revealed a peat formation at a depth of 2m to 3m (Norfolk Partnership Laboratory 2014).
- 1.2.2 British Geological Survey borehole data from approximately 300m to the south-east of the site suggests that this peat is overlain by layers of sand and gravel and silty clay, derived from marine transgressions, which is typical of a fen-edge location.
- 1.2.3 The site is situated on a flat area of ground at approximately 4m OD and 2.2km to the east of The River Great Ouse.

1.3 Archaeological Background

- 1.3.1 The following section draws on the findings of the Desk-Based Assessment (Adams 2014b).
- 1.3.2 Very few prehistoric finds have been recorded from the vicinity of the site probably due to the fact that during this period this area was a salt marsh lying close to the boundary between saltwater and freshwater. The area to the east of the site may have been dryer and as such this is from where most of the finds, including two Palaeolithic handaxes, derive. A Neolithic axehead was found during ploughing in the vicinity of Marsh Lane and Neolithic to Bronze Age flints and pottery have been found 0.5km to the north-east of the site. There is a possible burnt-mound 0.8km to the east of Marsh Lane, although evidence for this consists of only a collection of burnt flints. The absence of Iron Age finds from the area suggests that it was inundated during this period.
- 1.3.3 The almost complete absence of Roman finds from the immediate environs of the site suggests that it was still too wet to settle during this period as well. The exceptions to this are three coins and a piece of metalwork, although even these may represent secondary deposition. Salterns are characteristic of the fen-edge during this period and these and other signs of Roman industry, such as pottery kilns, are to be found in the wider landscape.

- 1.3.4 The earliest medieval find from the environs of the site are fragments of a Saxon spearhead from 0.5km to its south-east. A medieval pottery scatter runs into the south-west of the site (MM019) and it is noted in the Norfolk HER that briquetage was found beneath this at an unspecified location. It may well be the case, therefore, that this briquetage represents the remains of Saxon or earlier salt-making activities. The location of the Saxon defences of King's Lynn suggests that the settlement during this period was to the south-west of the development area.
- 1.3.5 There is believed to be a medieval saltern mound (MM030) in the western part of the site with a number of associated banks and ditches to the south side of Marsh Lane. It is likely that these represent the traces of tanks and ponds and that there exists other structural remains, such as pits and postholes, associated with the salt-making industry. A bank 0.2km to the south of the development area has been identified with the course of the Gaywood River which was diverted during the medieval period.
- 1.3.6 The salt making industry declined during the post-medieval period, however, several of the saltern mounds were put to other uses during this time, often associated with the siege of King's Lynn during the Civil War. One of these (MM047), 0.4km to the north, was used as a fort during the Civil War or possibly even earlier during the Spanish Armada. A further mound (MM049) to the east of MM047, was used as a bastion as part of the 1643 siege works. The saltern mounds to the north of Edward Benefer Way were used as a fort during the later Civil War. Saltern mounds to the south of the development area were reused as dry locations for hay stacks.
- 1.3.7 The drainage of the Fens during the 17th century exposed a large area of land in the environs of the site and made it available for cultivation. Remains associated with this include ditches, lazybeds and ridge and furrow.
- 1.3.8 Constructed in 1862, the Lynn to Hunstanton branch line runs immediately to the west of the development area and the 1864 King's Lynn to Sutton Bridge line runs to its south.
- 1.3.9 The earliest maps of the development area is that of Faden's Map of 1787 and the 18th century Gaywood Bawsey Drainage map. The former of these shows the site divided between Gaywood Common and Wootton Green. The Gaywood Enclosure map of 1810 shows the development area as two fields.
- 1.3.10 The 1884 and 1904 OS maps show the development area as farmland divided by a drain, with the earlier map also showing a sheepfold in its southern part. The 1927 map shows the eastern part of the area as an orchard with buildings in the south eastern corner, as do the 1938, 1951 and 1958 maps. The latter two of these maps also show a small building in the western part of the site, adjacent to the railway line. A redevelopment of the site seems to have taken place by the time of 1977 map with a number of large buildings being constructed in its western part. The 1984 map shows that these structures had been removed and, with the exception of some buildings in its southern part, that the site was open land again.

2 AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 The objective of this watching brief was to determine as far as reasonably possible the presence/absence, location, nature, extent, date, quality, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits within the development area.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The WSI required that suitably qualified archaeologist be present during the removal of all concrete rafts across the site.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features and deposits were recorded using OA East's *pro-forma* sheets. Trench locations, plans and sections were recorded at appropriate scales digital photographs were taken of all relevant features and deposits.
- 2.2.3 Site conditions were very cold and wet, rutting had occurred along the northern edge of the western field, during the transportation of the broken concrete slabs to a compound area in the eastern field.

2.3 Acknowledgements

- 2.3.1 The author would like to thank Lovell who commissioned and funded the archaeological work, in particular Darren King who helped with on-site set up. The project was managed by Paul Spoerry. The on-site watching brief was carried out by the author and Mary Andrews, Tom Phillips and John Diffey.
- 2.3.2 The WSI for archaeological works was written by Mott MacDonald, on behalf of the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk. The site was visited and monitored by James Albone, the Planning Archaeologist for Norfolk County Council.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The first stage of archaeological works involved a watching brief taking place during the exposing and removal of concrete pads/rafts and associated walls. This work was located across most of the western field and in the south-east corner of the eastern field (Fig 2).
- 3.1.2 A series of trenches were excavated in order to locate the presence of existing services which ran across the western field. Boreholes were also excavated within the development area to ascertain the depths of natural and peat deposits.
- 3.1.3 A borehole excavated along the western side of Area D located a peat deposit at a depth of 4.4-5.5m (1.1m thick), natural gravel at 6m and the natural boulder clays at a depth of 6.8m.

3.2 Concrete removal

- 3.2.1 A total of 5000sqm (across Areas A-E) of concrete slabs/rafts were exposed and removed. The main areas of coverage were located in the western field. The concrete slabs in Area C appeared to sit on a raised area that roughly conforms with that mapped as an 'earthwork' from NMP and HER data (Figure 2), however, it was not possible to confirm the function or date for the low mound from the limited depth of deposits seen following demolition and slab removal.
- 3.2.2 During the removal of concrete and walls in Area C (Plate 1), a spread of bricks (07) were partially exposed at the northern end of bays 1 and 2. These bricks were recorded in plan and section (Fig. 3, Plate 2). The bricks were of a late 18th to early 19th century in date (R. Atkins pers. comm).
- 3.2.3 The earliest deposit identified was a mid brown clay silt (12), which formed part of the fen silts. This was overlain by an area of burning (13) and brick rubble spread 07. At the southern end of the section (Fig. 3, S.1), also overlying deposit 12 was the remnant of a possible chalk path or surface (14).
- 3.2.4 All these deposits were sealed by a layer of brick and rubble (11). This was followed by a mixed brown and yellow layer of blinding material (09), which in turn was sealed by a modern deposit (08) and the topsoil (10).
- 3.2.5 Two drains were also identified (16 and 17). Drain 16, recorded in the west facing section served bay 2, whilst drain 17 ran north-south along the base of bay 1 (Plate 3).
- 3.2.6 During the removal of concrete along the south side of Area D, it was seen that part of the raft was sat on a layer of brick rubble (15) and sand binding material (Plate 4). Some of the bricks were of a late 17th to mid 18th century date (R. Atkins pers. comm.)
- 3.2.7 Excavation at the southern end of Area D uncovered evidence of a sunken surface which allowed vehicle access into the area (Plate 5). A small area of concrete was also located in the extreme south-east corner of Area E (Plate 6).

3.3 Trenches

- 3.3.1 A total of four trenches (Fig. 2) were excavated across the site in order to confirm the presence of existing services. No archaeological remains were identified, services were located in all but one of the trenches (Trench 1), thus this trench was recorded and described below (Plate 7).

- 3.3.2 Trench 1 measured 6m long, 2m wide and was 1.1m deep. The lowest layers encountered were 06, 05 and 04, which represent natural fen silts. These were sealed by the subsoil (02) which in turn was sealed by a mixed rubble and hoggin layer (03) 0.25m thick. The uppermost layer in the trench was the modern topsoil (01) at 0.20m thick. Layer 03 possibly represents the remains of a yard surface associated with the former farm.

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1.1 Vast areas of concrete slabs were removed from five areas of the site, totalling just over 5000sqm. The concrete slabs had formed part of a recent pig farm complex, expanded during the late 1960's and abandoned by the 1980's.
- 4.1.2 The presence of brick rubble dating back to the late 17th century located beneath the concrete raft in Area D is of particular interest. Whilst the earliest cartographic evidence (1787 Faden's Map) shows the site to be arable land, it is reasonable to say that the presence of these bricks could imply the that a building or other structure stood in this location during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. There is a possibility that there may here be a link to documented episodes associated with the 1643 siege during the English Civil War, when it is believed that salterns in the vicinity were remodelled as siege works. It is also possible however that this material has been introduced into the site specifically for the purpose of providing hardcore, at a date after the late 17th century. This probably also explains the later, 18th to 19th century deposit of bricks lying towards the northern end of Area C, although the associated evidence for burning is not yet explained.

APPENDIX A. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, P. 2014a *Marsh Lane, King's Lynn, Written Scheme of Investigation for Archaeological Monitoring*. Mott MacDonald. Unpublished
- Adams, P. 2014b *Marsh Lane, King's Lynn, Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment*. Mott MacDonald. Unpublished
- British Geological Survey n.d. Available:
<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html?mode=boreholes>
- Norfolk Partnership Laboratory 2014 Borehole and Window Sample Log. Unpublished

APPENDIX B. OASIS REPORT FORM

All fields are required unless they are not applicable.

Project Details

OASIS Number	oxfordar3-209932		
Project Name	Archaeological Monitoring at Marsh Lane King's Lynn		
Project Dates (fieldwork) Start	15-12-2014	Finish	28-01-2015
Previous Work (by OA East)	No	Future Work	Yes

Project Reference Codes

Site Code	ENF 135847	Planning App. No.	
HER No.		Related HER/OASIS No.	

Type of Project/Techniques Used

Prompt

Please select all techniques used:

<input type="checkbox"/> Field Observation (periodic visits)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Record
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Excavation (100%)	<input type="checkbox"/> Part Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Field Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Full Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Recorded Observation	<input type="checkbox"/> Systematic Metal Detector Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Geophysical Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote Operated Vehicle Survey	<input type="checkbox"/> Test Pit Survey
<input type="checkbox"/> Open-Area Excavation	<input type="checkbox"/> Salvage Excavation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Watching Brief

Monument Types/Significant Finds & Their Periods

List feature types using the [NMR Monument Type Thesaurus](#) and significant finds using the [MDA Object type Thesaurus](#) together with their respective periods. If no features/finds were found, please state "none".

Monument	Period	Object	Period
Farm complex	Modern 1901 to Present	Bricks	Post Medieval 1540 to 1901
	Select period...	Bricks	Modern 1901 to Present
	Select period...		Select period...

Project Location

County	Norfolk	Site Address (including postcode if possible)	
District	Kings Lynn & West Norfolk	Marsh Lane King's Lynn Norfolk PE30 3AD	
Parish	King's Lynn		
HER	Norfolk museum		
Study Area	4.2 Hectares	National Grid Reference	TF 6349 2177

Project Originators

Organisation	OA EAST
Project Brief Originator	NCC
Project Design Originator	Phillippa Adams
Project Manager	Paul Spoerry
Supervisor	Michael Tam Webster

Project Archives

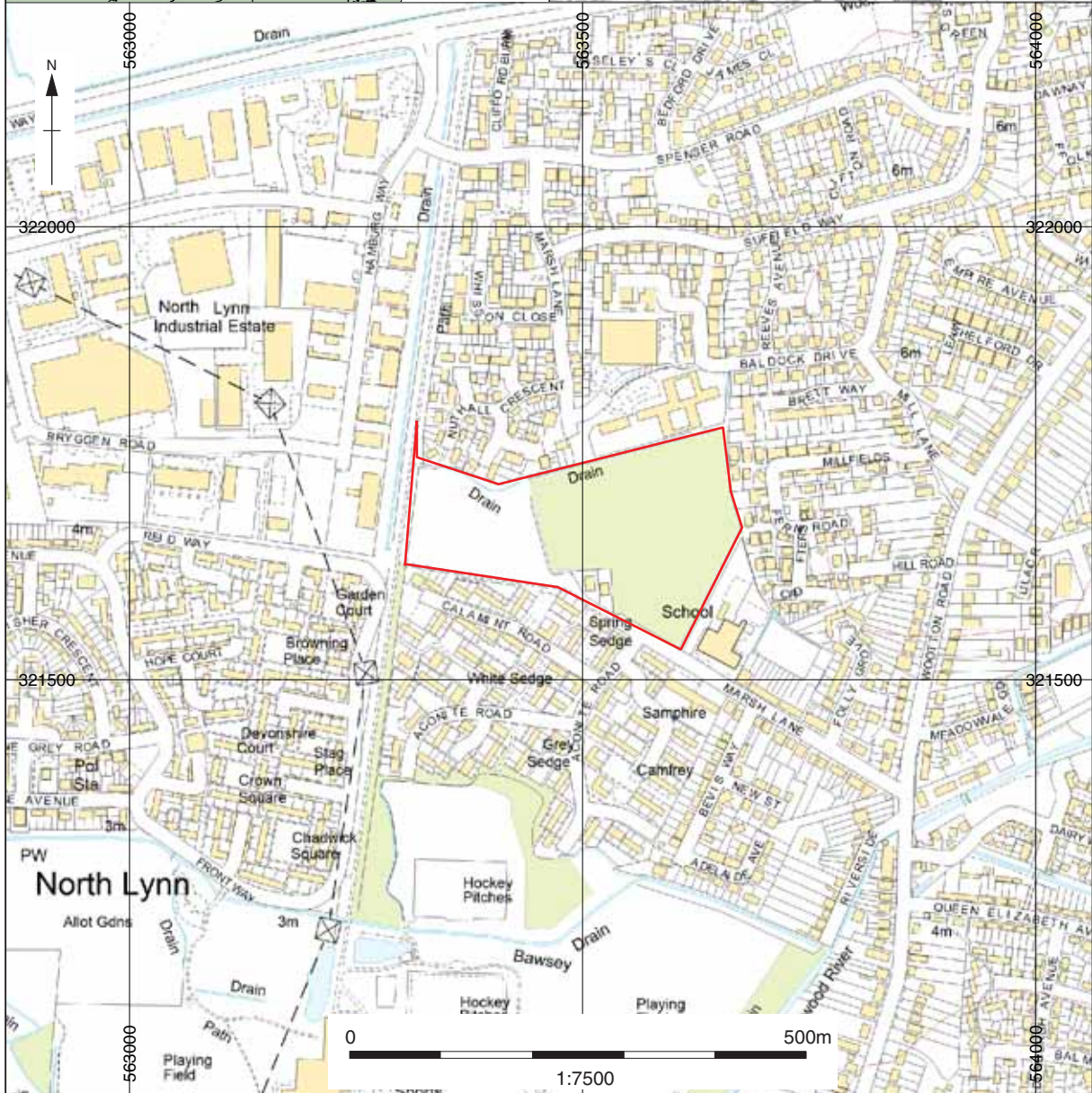
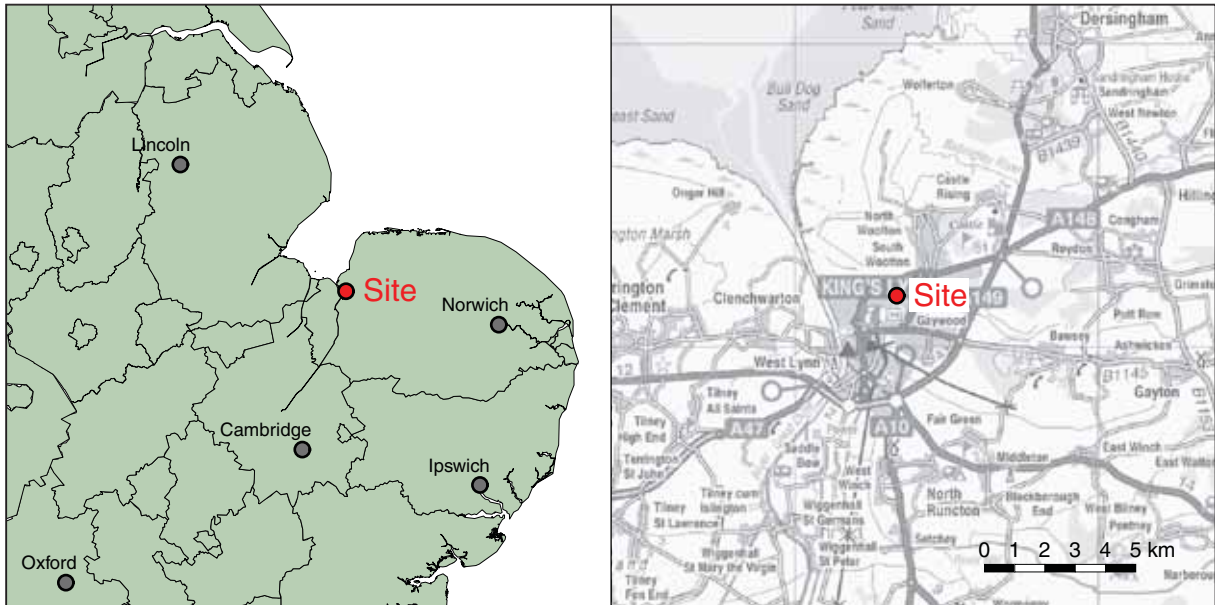
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Norfolk Museum	OA East	Norfolk Museum
ENF 135847	ENF 135847	ENF 135847

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Notes:



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Figure 1: Site location showing development area (red)

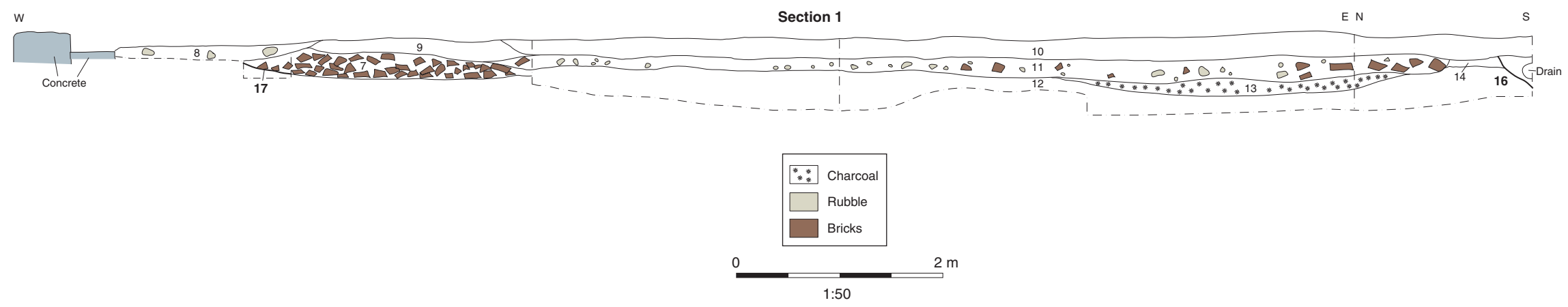
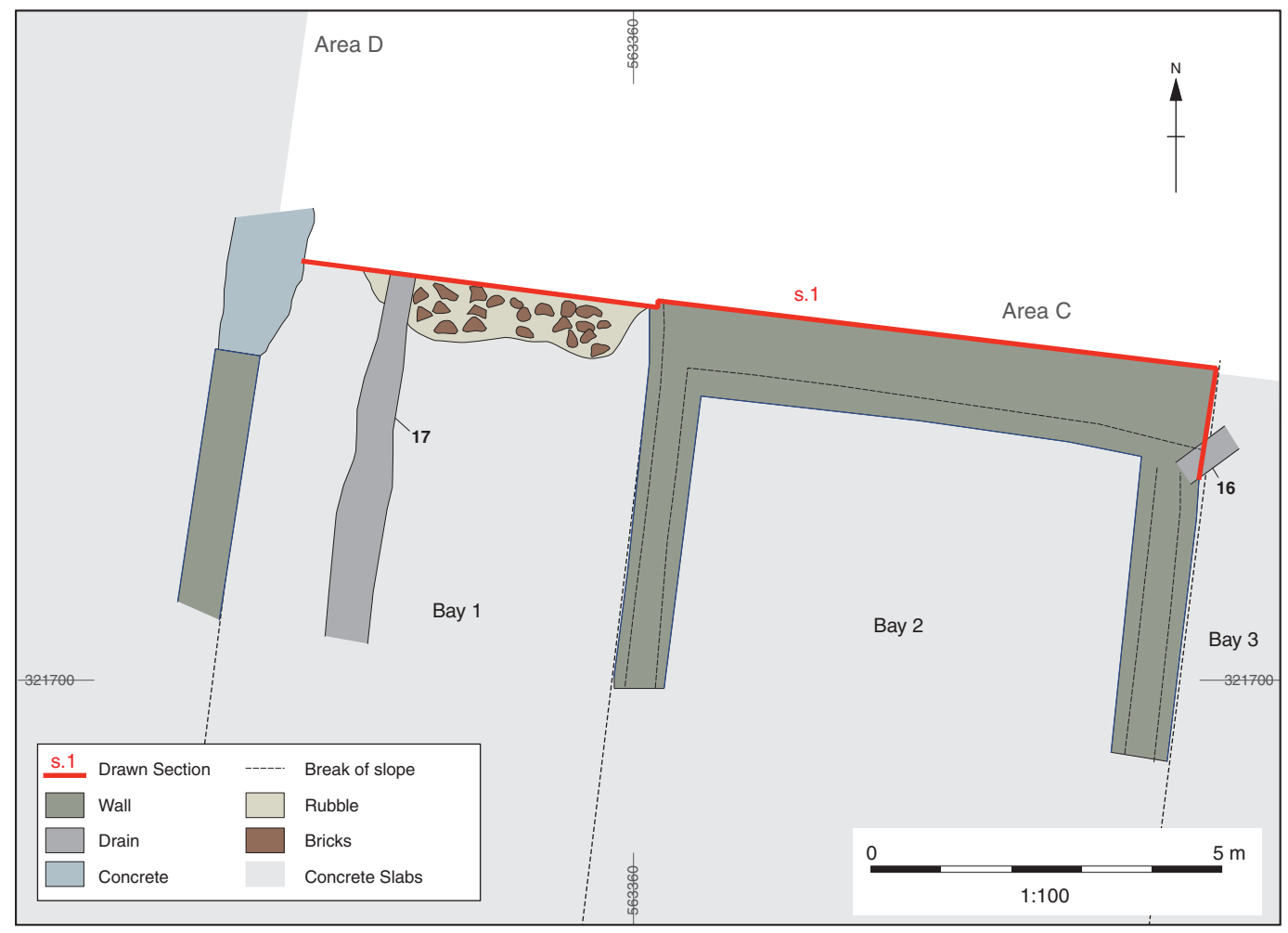


Figure 3: Detail plan and section



Plate 1: Concrete removed from bays 1, 2 and 4 in area C



Plate 2: Showing brick spread 7 and surface 14



Plate 3: Cleaned bay 1 showing drain 17, in area C



Plate 4: Brick rubble 15 below concrete slab, south end of area D



Plate 5: Possible vehicle access to south end of area D



Plate 6: Exposed concrete pad in area E



Plate 7: Detail of section in Trench 1



**Head Office/Registered Office/
OA South**

Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1GF

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



Director: Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MIFA
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