

81 Clapham Common North Side Wandsworth



Archaeological Evaluation Report

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81 Clapham Common North Side, Wandsworth

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Table of Contents

Summary.....	4
1 Introduction.....	5
1.1 Location and scope of work.....	5
1.2 Geology and topography.....	5
1.3 Archaeological and historical background.....	5
1.4 Acknowledgements.....	7
2 Evaluation Aims and Methodology.....	8
2.1 Aims.....	8
2.2 Methodology.....	8
3 Results.....	9
3.1 Introduction and presentation of results.....	9
3.2 General soils and ground conditions.....	9
3.3 Trench 1.....	9
3.4 Finds summary.....	10
4 Discussion.....	11
4.1 Reliability of field investigation.....	11
4.2 Evaluation objectives and results.....	11
4.3 Interpretation.....	11
Appendix A. Trench Description and Context Inventory.....	12
Appendix B. Finds Reports.....	13
B.1 Pottery.....	13
B.2 Clay tobacco pipe.....	13
B.3 Ceramic building material.....	13



B.4 Animal bone.....	14
B.5 Iron.....	14
Appendix C. Bibliography and References.....	15
Appendix D. Summary of Site Details.....	16

List of Figures

- | | |
|--------|-------------------|
| Fig. 1 | Site location map |
| Fig. 2 | Trench location |
| Fig. 3 | Trench plan |
| Fig. 4 | Section |

List of Plates

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Plate 1 | General shot of section |
| Plate 2 | General shot of trench, view to north-west |



Summary

During October 2014 Oxford Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation to the rear of 81 Clapham Common North Side, ahead of the construction of a new basement and single storey extension. The evaluation revealed a series of deposits which were, where dated, more recent than the construction of the current house in the 1750s. These deposits overlay what is likely to represent the natural geology at c. 1.4m below current ground level. The sequence of deposits are interpreted as representing successive garden soils and dump deposits containing construction debris from subsequent modifications to the house. The presence towards the base of the sequence of the possible original eighteenth century garden soil may indicate that the gravels below have not suffered any recent truncation.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 On 27th of October 2014 Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook a trial trench evaluation to the rear of 81 Clapham Common Northside, Wandsworth. The site was centred on NGR TQ 28315 75230 (Fig. 1).
- 1.1.2 Oxford Archaeology, was commissioned by A&A Architects on behalf of Mr Edoardo Polli ahead of the construction of a new basement and single storey side extensions.
- 1.1.3 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (Planning Application 2014/1228), and a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the evaluation was agreed between Oxford Archaeology and Mark Stevenson, Greater London Archaeological Advisor (OA 2014b).
- 1.1.4 The evaluation comprised a single trench measuring 5m long and 1.5m wide which was located within the footprint of the proposed new basement (Fig. 2).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The geology of the area is London Clay Formation overlain by sand and gravel that forms part of the Hackney Gravel Member (BGS).
- 1.2.2 The site occupies the rear yard area of an 18th-century house, and is bounded to the east and north by a school, with Forthbridge Road to the west, and Clapham Common North Side to the south.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been subject to a Desk Based Assessment (OA 2014a). The following is a brief summary of the findings of that document.

The prehistoric period

- 1.3.2 Evidence for human occupation during the Palaeolithic is extremely rare, especially so in Greater London where only a few stray finds have been recorded. The Hackney Gravels are generally seen as having a low potential for Palaeolithic artefacts. However one or more Palaeolithic flint implements were found at Lavender Hill c. 470m to the north-west of the site, and a flint waste flake found c. 400m also to the north-west of the site.
- 1.3.3 The location of Mesolithic sites are mainly confined to the west and south of the Greater London Region. A flint and flint core fragment were recorded during an archaeological evaluation c. 320m to the north-east of the site.
- 1.3.4 The gravel terraces of the Thames are known to have been extensively settled during the Neolithic. The site is located on an area of local high ground on one of these terraces. A discoidal flint knife with ground edges was found c. 300m to the south-west of the site. A flaked and partially ground flint adze and rolled axe were found at Lavender Hill c. 470m to the north-west of the site.
- 1.3.5 During the Bronze age and Iron Age Clapham Common became an area of marshland. Investigations across the Greater London area have shown that settlement on the Thames gravel terraces expanded considerably during the later prehistoric period. No

heritage assets of Bronze Age or Iron Age dates have been recovered from within the vicinity of the site.

The Roman period

- 1.3.6 In the Roman period *Londinium* (London) developed as an urban centre, and later the provincial capital at the centre of Roman Britain's communication system. The main urban area was located to the north of the River Thames, c. 4km to the north-east of the site.
- 1.3.7 Present day Clapham High Street, located c 670m to the east of the site, is thought to follow the route of a Roman military road known as Stane Street. Roman pottery and a coin of *Victorianus* (AD 268-271) was found in the front garden of a house in Freke Road 360m to the north-east of the site.

The Anglo-Saxon period

- 1.3.8 Clapham appears to have been settled in the Saxon period, and originally named *Cloppham* from *ham* (village) and *clopp* (short hill). Between 871 and 889 it is recorded that Alfred bequeathed 30 hides at Clapham to his wife. No information on the site at this time is available, and no heritage assets recorded in the vicinity.

The medieval period

- 1.3.9 The Domesday survey of 1068 list Geoffrey de Mandeville as holding *Clopeham* which was valued at 3 hides, 6 ploughs and 5 acres of meadow. The manor was held by a number of families up until the Reformation in the 1550s. Clapham appears to have remained a fairly small settlement throughout the medieval period. In 1332 eighteen inhabitants of the borough paid local taxes, and two centuries later eleven parishoners had goods or wages rated above 20 shillings.
- 1.3.10 Clapham Common appears to have been common land throughout the late medieval period. Common land was often of poor quality and was used for livestock grazing rather than cultivation. Residents had rights to use the Common for grazing, gathering fruits, wood and furze, and access to the spring and windmill.
- 1.3.11 Wix Lane located c 290m to the east of the site is potentially of medieval origin, as the lane follows the boundary between Clapham and Battersea. No other medieval heritage assets have been recorded in the vicinity of the site.

The post medieval period

- 1.3.12 Two of the marker stones forming the parish boundary between Clapham and Battersea still survive and are a Grade II listed structure. However the parish boundary was not always universally accepted, and was subject to a dispute in the early 18th century. In 1716 the people of Battersea enclosed the western part of the common by digging a ditch around it. The ditch was then back-filled by the people of Clapham, and the lord of the manor of Clapham brought an action of trespass against the residents of Battersea. The Common was described at that time as little more than a morass, and in 1760 the land was drained. As recently as 1830 the common was described as 'quite a wild place'.
- 1.3.13 With the advent of road infrastructure in the 18th century, and the railway in the 19th century, Clapham became easier to access, and the population expanded.
- 1.3.14 The current 81 Clapham Common appears to have its origins in the 1750s, and was pre-dated by a smaller building that dates from c. 1728, and is shown on Roques map



of 1760. The Common is depicted as rough pasture, with open strip fields defining three of its sides. One of these strip fields is located immediately to the south of the site.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA would like to thank Aaron Brookes of A&A Architects who commissioned the work, and also Mark Stevenson of the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service. The fieldwork was facilitated by Lukasz Kisiel, and overseen by OA Supervisor Ben Attfield. The project was managed for OA by Gerry Thacker.

2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The project aims were:

- (i) To determine the presence or absence of any archaeological remains which may survive.
- (ii) To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any surviving remains
- (iii) To determine the date range of any surviving remains by artefactual or other means.
- (iv) To determine the condition and state of preservation of any remains.
- (v) To determine the degree of complexity of any surviving horizontal or vertical stratigraphy.
- (vi) To assess the associations and implications of any remains encountered with reference to the historic landscape.
- (vii) To determine the potential of the site to provide palaeoenvironmental and/or economic evidence, and the forms in which such evidence may survive.
- (viii) To determine the implications of any remains with reference to economy, status, utility and social activity.
- (ix) To determine or confirm the likely range, quality and quantity of the artifactual evidence present.
- (x) To make available the results of the investigation to inform the planning process and the potential for any further mitigation strategy.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The trench was located as indicated in the agreed WSI, and was hand excavated under archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.2 All deposits encountered were recorded on OA pro forma context sheets, and a scale plan and section drawing completed.
- 2.2.3 A photographic record, both film and digital was maintained.
- 2.2.4 Finds were recovered and bagged by context.
- 2.2.5 All recording methods and materials used were compliant with Museum of London archiving requirements, as updated in 2013.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 The results of the evaluation are described in the section below, followed by an assessment of the reliability of the evaluation, and the interpretation of the results. The dimensions, depths and dating information for all deposits are tabulated in Appendix A, with a Harris matrix illustrating the sequence of deposits. Finds reports form the content of Appendix B.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 Once the overlying topsoil had been removed the underlying deposits mainly consisted of horizontal layers of former garden soils, to a depth of around 1.4m below current ground level (c. 22.1m above OD). A service pipe was located to the western side of the trench, and this was not further disturbed. At the base of the investigated sequence a clean loose mid greyish yellow clay rich sand was noted. Although only partially investigated this deposit was devoid of any finds or inclusions and may represent the natural geology of the Hackney Gravel Member.
- 3.2.2 Ground conditions remained good throughout the evaluation, and no ground water was encountered.

3.3 Trench 1

- 3.3.1 The trench measured 5m long by 1.5m wide, and was excavated to a depth of 1m below current ground level (Figs 2, 3 and 4; Plates 1 and 2). An additional sondage was hand excavated within the centre of the trench in order to safely examine deeper deposits, and to try to locate the depth of the natural geology. The sondage measured 1.5m by 0.7m and was 0.46m in depth.
- 3.3.2 Topsoil (100) sealed a thin compacted sandy layer comprising lime mortar and small tile fragments and charcoal flecks (106). This deposit was interpreted as a layer of trample, possibly associated with an episode of construction. The layer, at 30mm thick, appeared too insubstantial to be described as a formal garden path or surface.
- 3.3.3 Sealed by 106 was a thicker layer of friable very dark brownish grey clay rich sand (101). Two clay pipe stems, dating to the late 18th or early 19th century, were recovered from this deposit (Appendix B). At the eastern end of the trench layer 101 sealed a dump of orange coloured clay rich sand (107) which contained pottery sherds, ceramic building material (CBM) and clay pipe of 19th century date.
- 3.3.4 Layer 102 was sealed by 107, a light greyish brown silty sand containing frequent fragments of brick, tile, slate and charcoal flecks. A pottery sherd was retained and dated to the late 18th or 19th century (Appendix B).
- 3.3.5 Beneath 102, there was a layer of light grey brown silty sand that contained patches of light yellow brown clay (103). The deposit contained charcoal flecks and fragments of slate, but no datable material.
- 3.3.6 Layer 103 sealed 104, a mid brown sand containing frequent sub rounded pebbles. No cultural material was recovered from this deposit, which was only examined within the sondage (Figs 3 and 4). It is possible that this deposit represents the original garden soil relating to the current house, or the preceding building of c. 1728 (OA 2014a).



- 3.3.7 At the base of the sequence within the sondage, a loose mid greyish yellow sand was observed (105), which contained frequent patches of manganese. Although only slightly over 1m² of this deposit was examined, it contained no cultural material and is thought to represent the natural geology.

3.4 Finds summary

- 3.4.1 Finds were recovered from deposits 100, 101, 102 and 107, and comprised pottery, CBM, clay pipe stems, animal bone and a single iron nail. All of the finds were of later post-medieval or modern date.
- 3.4.2 It is not thought likely that any additional information would have been gained from environmental analysis of the deposits encountered.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 4.1.1 The evaluation made an accurate record of the deposits encountered and their relative dates. However only a small area of what was identified as the natural geology could be safely examined given the depth of made ground present.

4.2 Evaluation objectives and results

- 4.2.1 The evaluation determined the date range and likely formation processes of the range of deposits encountered. The degree of complexity of the stratigraphy was determined and recorded. The potential for environmental data was assessed. The results of the evaluation are made available through this document.

4.3 Interpretation

- 4.3.1 The grassed area through which the evaluation trench was excavated is noticeably higher than the adjacent patio area, and is likely to have been built up over time. The horizontal interfaces between the successive layers is suggestive of gradual build up, as opposed to the infilling of a cut feature.
- 4.3.2 All the deposits that contained datable material appear to post-date the construction of the current house, which is reported to have been built around 1750 (OA 2014a). As such they may represent successive layers of garden soils containing construction debris from later alterations to the house (including the patio), with roof and floor tile, slate and brick all present. At least one deposit (107) may indicate an episode of more rapid dumping of material.
- 4.3.3 It is therefore possible that the natural gravel (105) has not suffered much truncation during the lifetime of the current building.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTION AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1							
General description					Orientation		W-E
Trench contained a number of layers of made ground sealed by topsoil and a compacted trample layer. At the base of the sequence a clean loose mid yellow grey sandy clay which may have represented the natural geology.					Avg. depth (m)		1.04
					Width (m)		1.5
					Length (m)		5
Contexts							
Context no	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	Finds	Date	
100	Layer	-	0.3	Topsoil	Iron, Pottery, CBM	20th century	
101	Layer	-	0.28	Made ground/garden soil	Clay pipe	L18th-E19th century	
102	Layer	-	0.29	Made ground/garden soil	Pottery	L18th-19th century	
103	Layer	-	0.15	Made ground/garden soil	Slate	-	
104	Layer	-	0.35	Former topsoil?	-	-	
105	Layer	-	-	Natural geology	-	-	
106	Layer	-	0.03	Trample	-	-	
107	Layer	-	0.15	Made ground / dump deposit	Pottery, CBM, Clay pipe	19th century	

Matrix

100

|

106

|

101

|

107

|

102

|

103

|

104

|

105

APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

Identified by John Cotter

compiled by Geraldine Crann

Context	Description	Date
100	1 flower pot sherd (PMR FLP) in fresh condition, 1 sherd post medieval redware (PMR), 1 refined white ware sherd (REFW), 145g	1850 - 1900
102	1 sherd post medieval red ware (PMR), 11g	Late 18th – 19th century
107	1 sherd post medieval red ware (PMR), 7g	18th – 19th century

B.2 Clay tobacco pipe

Identified by John Cotter

compiled by Geraldine Crann

Context	Description	Date
101	2 stems, 8g	Late 18th – early 19th century
107	1 stem, 7g	19th century

B.3 Ceramic building material

Identified by John Cotter

compiled by Geraldine Crann

Context	Description	Date
100	1 Victorian encaustic floor tile which retains the letters 'MINT' of MINTON on the underside, 1 decorative garden edging tile, 1 pantile, 432g	1850 - 1900
107	1 pantile, 1 Victorian yellow stock brick corner fragment, 235g	1800 - 1900



B.4 Animal bone

Identified by Lena Strid

Context	Description
100	1 cattle radius, 84g

B.5 Iron

Identified by Ian Scott

Context	Description	Date
100	1 5" pulled wire nail, 25g	20th century



APPENDIX C. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- BGS. <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html>. British Geological Survey
- OA, 2014a. 81 Clapham Common North Side, London Borough of Wandsworth. Cultural Heritage Desk Based Assessment. Oxford Archaeology. Unpublished client report. Oxford Archaeology
- OA, 2014b. 81 Clapham Common North Side, Wandsworth. Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Evaluation. Oxford Archaeology.



APPENDIX D. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: 81 Clapham Common North Side, Wandsworth

Site code: CCN14

Grid reference: TQ 28315 75230

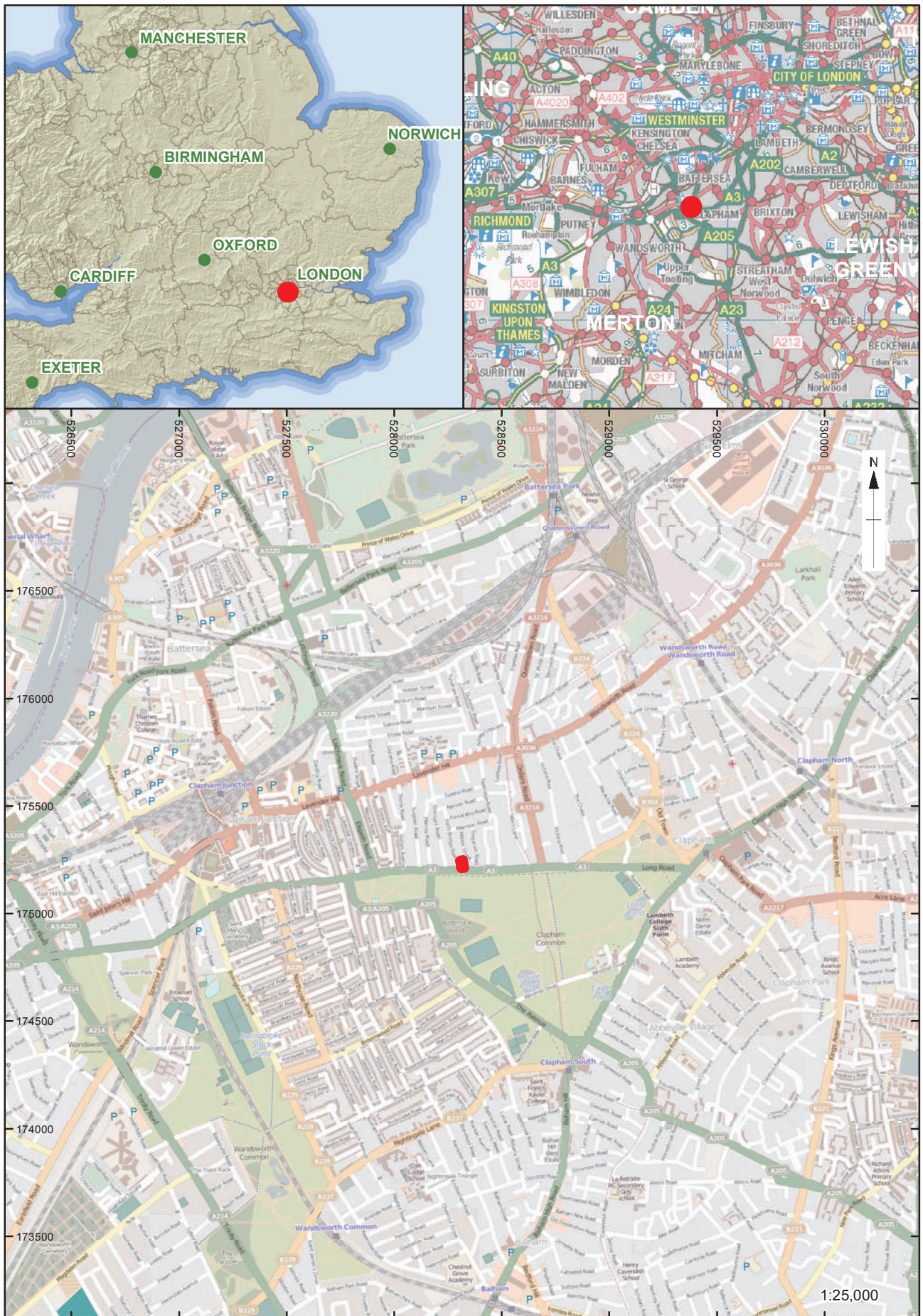
Type: Evaluation

Date and duration: 27th October 2014

Area of site: 45m²

Summary of results: During October 2014 Oxford Archaeology undertook a trial trench evaluation to the rear of 81 Clapham Common North Side, ahead of the construction of a new basement and single storey extension. The evaluation revealed a series of deposits which were, where dated, more recent than the construction of the current house in the 1750s. These deposits overlay what is likely to represent the natural geology at 1.4m below current ground level. The layers are seen as representing successive garden soils and dump deposits containing construction debris from subsequent modifications to the house. The presence towards the base of the sequence of the potential original eighteenth century garden soil may indicate that the gravels below have not suffered any recent truncation.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Museum of London in due course.

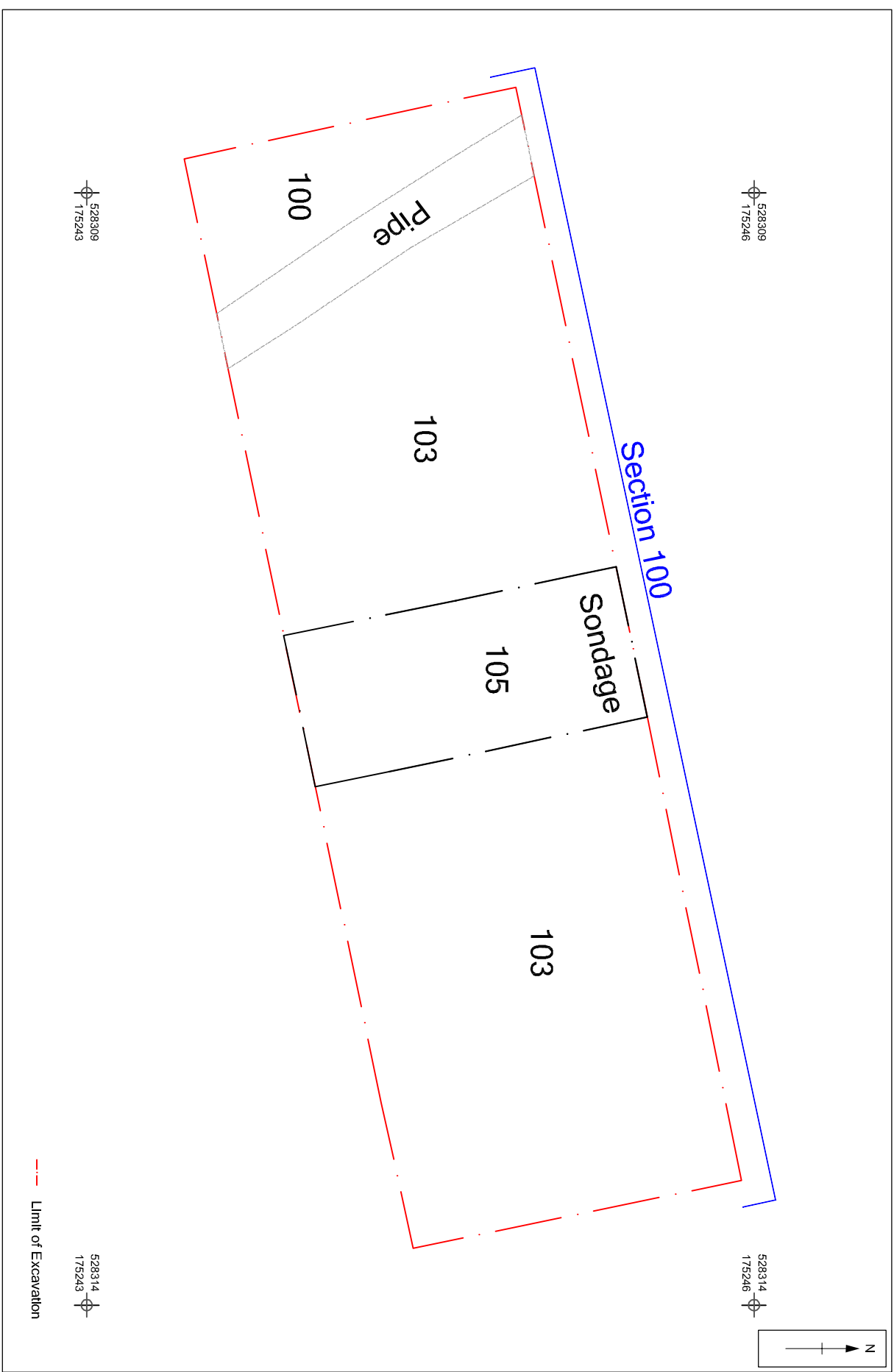


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Figure 1: Site location



Figure 2: Trench Location



CHECKED BY:

Figure 3: Trench plan

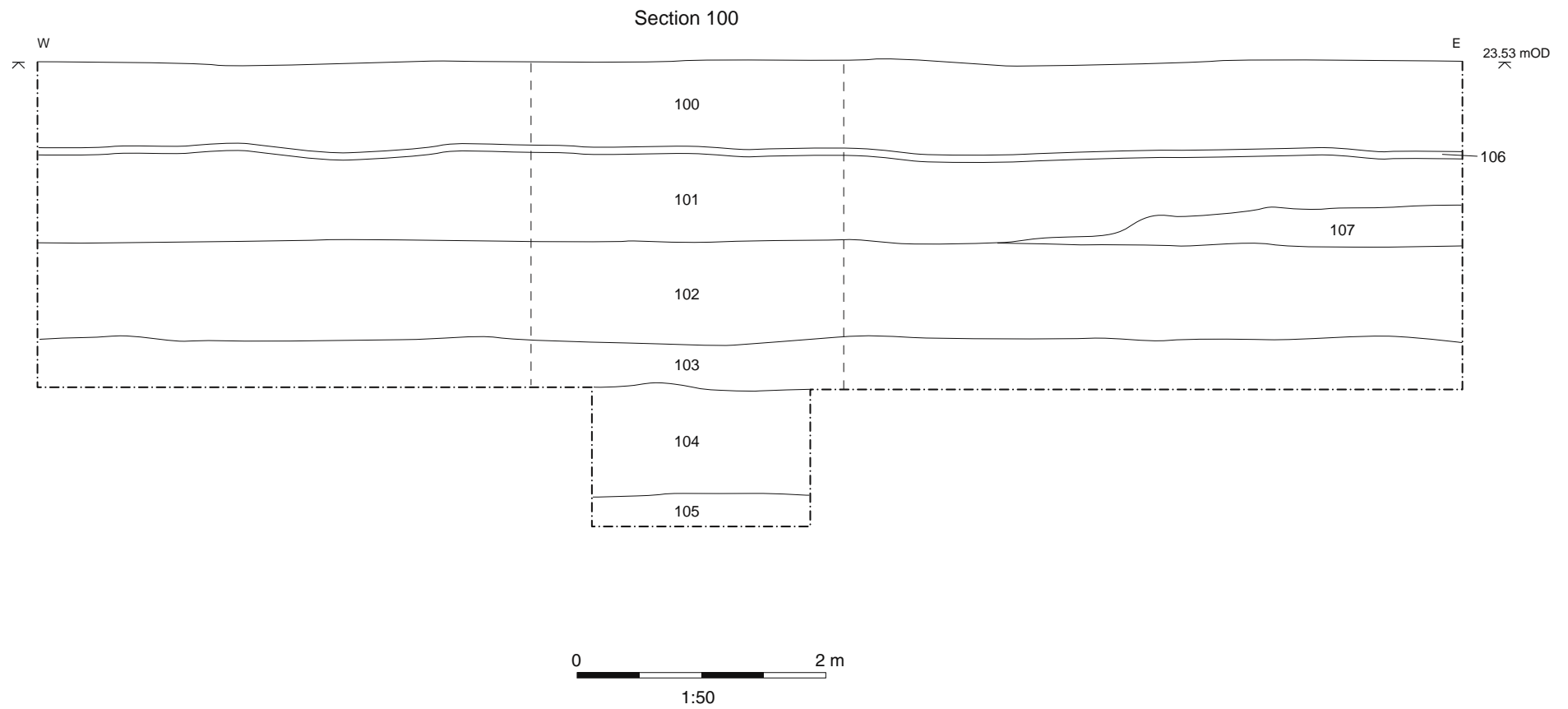


Figure 4: Section



Plate 1: General shot of section



Plate 2: General shot of trench, view to north-west



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