

# St Peter's College New Inn Hall Lane Oxford



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report



**Oxford Archaeology**

June 2003

**Client: Lee Fitzgerald Architects**

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**Prepared by:** James Mumford  
**Position:** Supervisor  
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**Checked by:** Jon Hiller  
**Position:** Senior Project Manager  
**Date:** 20th June 2003

**Approved by:** Nick Shepherd  
**Position:** Head of Fieldwork  
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**Illustrated by:** Amy Tiffany Hemingway

Signed.....



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Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ES  
t: (0044) 01865 263800  
f: (0044) 01865 793496

e: info@oxfordarch.co.uk  
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

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## St Peter's College, New Inn Hall Lane, Oxford

*ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT*

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## SUMMARY

*From April to June 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Peter's College, New Inn Hall Lane, Oxford (NGR SU 5105 0626). The work was commissioned by Lee Fitzgerald Architects in advance of the construction of a new seminar room. The watching brief revealed post-medieval garden soils cut and sealed by 19th century school construction and services.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 From April to June 2003 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at St Peter's College, New Inn Hall Lane, Oxford (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Lee Fitzgerald Architects in respect of a planning application for new seminar room (Planning Application No. 02/01599/FUL).
- 1.1.2 A project brief was set by Brian Durham, City Archaeologist for the Oxford City Council.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the western edge of the Summertown-Radley gravel terrace c 190 m east of the nearest river channel, the Castle Mill Stream. The underlying geology is Oxford Clay.

#### 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 2003) and is summarised below.

##### *Prehistoric Period (500,000 BP – 43 AD)*

- 1.3.2 No archaeological finds from the prehistoric period have been found within the immediate area of proposed development.

##### *Roman Period (43 AD – 410 AD)*

- 1.3.3 No archaeological finds or features have been recovered from the area of proposed development.

##### *Early Medieval Period (AD 410 – 1066)*

- 1.3.4 Within the wider Study Area no material dated earlier than the 9th century has been found. Evidence from the early Saxon period has been found at a number of locations across Oxford, including an early Saxon cremation urn (buckelurn) at Osney Abbey,

west of the area of proposed development, and barrow burials at the Radcliffe Infirmary in the north.

- 1.3.5 There has been debate over the location of the west side of the late Saxon defences. During excavations at 40 George Street in 1977-8, the opposite side of the City Wall from the Emily Morris Building, a large north-south ditch was found which predated the line of the medieval stone wall, which first appeared in the documentary record in 1226. It is thought that this ditch was the Saxon defensive ditch. In 1980 an excavation for St Peter's College at the south end of Bulwarks Lane found an area of turf stripping, which was attributed to the Saxon rampart and suggested a continuation of the north-south alignment of the defensive ditch. The line of the Saxon defences would therefore appear to run through St Peter's College and the ditch possibly extended into the east side of the area of proposed development.

#### *Later medieval period (AD 1066 - 1550)*

- 1.3.6 The area of proposed development lay within the historic parish of St Michael-at-the-Northgate. The boundary between this parish and that of St Peter-le-Bailey lay just to the south of the site. St Peter-le-Bailey church lay at the south end of New Inn Hall Street until the late 19th century. The site was bounded on the north side by the City Wall and on the west by Bulwark's Lane. According to Salter's Survey, it was on a strip of waste land stretching alongside the lane and belonging to the city. On the east of the area of proposed development was Elm Hall, a City Property, abutting the City Wall, and some Osney Abbey properties.

#### *Post-Medieval Period (AD 1550 onwards)*

- 1.3.7 By the later part of the 17th century a considerable amount of development had taken place across Oxford. Loggan's Map of 1675 clearly shows Bulwarks Lane on its modern alignment and its west side lined with houses on the edge of the castle ditch. On the outside of the City Wall, north of Elm Hall and the area of proposed development walled enclosures are shown. Elm Hall and its neighbouring properties are still mainly gardens, but in the north-west corner, within the area of proposed development, a building has been constructed up against the City Wall. The section of wall west of Bulwarks Lane appears to have been demolished.
- 1.3.8 On Taylor's 1751 Map the enclosures on the north side of the City wall had been demolished. Taylor's Map also shows that the last few metres of the wall itself on the corner of Bulwarks Lane have been demolished. This is the stretch that would form the boundary of the area of proposed development. The 17th century building in that corner has also disappeared. However, the map appears to show the section of City Wall west of Bulwarks Lane, which Loggan did not. The site was still part of a garden at that date, but the properties were more built up towards the New Inn Hall Street frontage.

- 1.3.9 A Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was constructed at the north of New Inn Hall Street in 1811. Behind it, on Bulwarks Lane, a school was built in 1830, when the room at the rear of the chapel proved too small (VCH IV, 456). This covered most of the area of proposed development and can be clearly seen on the OS 1:500 Map of 1876. Between the buildings is the graveyard and when St Peter's College built the Emily Morris Building, adjoining the site, in 1929 human remains were found. The walls shown on the earlier map can still be distinguished. The doors and windows from the school can still be seen in the Bulwarks Lane wall.
- 1.3.10 St Peter's College continued to expand during the 20th century. The Rowcroft Building was extended in 1955 and again in 1988, and the former College of Further Education was taken over. Canal House on the west side of Bulwarks Lane was acquired as the Master's Lodge and the former Probate Registry on New Road also became part of the college. The former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel was bought in 1932 and used until 1969, after which it was rebuilt (VCH IV, 420). Nuffield College was constructed on the former canal basin in the 1940s.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

### 2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 After the site was cleared and the wall rebuilt, three test holes were excavated to test the ground conditions prior to construction. The 18 holes for the pads were marked out and excavated by hand (Figs 2 and 3). These were then filled with concrete. A photographic recording action was also undertaken on the early masonry wall that faces Bulwarks Lane: this was carried out Lee Fitzgerald Architects (Fig. 6).
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed.D Wilkinson, 1992).

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits

#### *Test Pits*

- 3.1.1 Three test pits were first excavated to examine the ground prior to construction. These were 0.5 x 0.5 x 0.5 m deep in size. Two were north of a small terrace wall in the garden area and the third in the west corner (Fig. 3).

- 3.1.2 Test Pits 1 and 2 were excavated through well cultivated topsoil (6), with concrete exposed in the base of Test Pit 1. Test Pit 3 cut through concrete floor (1), which sealed dark grey brown silty clay (5) ground make up. This had been cut by a service trench and an internal wall for the 19th century school building (Fig 4, section 1).

#### *Pad Holes*

- 3.1.3 The pad holes measured 0.8 m x 0.8 m x 0.6 - 1 m deep, and were square in shape. They were cut into a well cultivated topsoil of very dark grey brown silty sand loam (9). This was sealed below a 0.8 m thick layer of dark grey brown silty clay (5), probably early 19th century ground make up. Overlying this was a 0.10 m thick layer of ash (4), below a 0.08-12 m thick dark grey silty clay make up layer (3). This had been cut by a number of services for the old school built in mid-19th century (Figs 3 and 4, section 2).
- 3.1.4 In the area north of the terrace wall (Holes 17 and 18), well cultivated topsoil of very dark grey brown silty sand loam (9) had been cut by a rough stone and brick wall (8) from the school building and sealed below a 0.3 m rubble demolition layer (7) from 20th century construction works. This was sealed by a 0.5 m thick layer of dark grey brown silty sand (6) topsoil, which had been deposited to build up garden flower bed (Figs 3 and 4, section 3).

#### **3.2 Finds**

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered during the watching brief.

#### **3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains**

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

#### **4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1.1 The watching brief had revealed that the pads only just cut into the top of post medieval garden soil. This had been sealed below 19th century ground make up for construction of the Wesleyan school in 1830 (Fig. 5). A series of contemporary and later services were cut through a sealed below a concrete floor for the building.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Length	Comments	Finds
1	Layer	0.10 m			Concrete floor	
2	Layer	0.10 m			Sand make up	
3	Layer	0.08-12 m			Ground make up	
4	Layer	0.10 m			Ash/cinder layer	
5	Layer	0.80 m			Ground make up	
6	Layer	0.50 m			Modern Topsoil	
7	Layer	0.30 m			Demolition layer	
8	Wall	0.40 m		0.80 m	19th wall	
9	Layer				Post Medieval topsoil	

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Crossley A (ed), 1979, *Victoria History of the County of Oxford, Vol IV*

Salter H E, 1926, *Oxford City Properties*

Salter H E, 1929, *Cartulary of Osney Abbey Vol I*

Smith E H F, 1978, St Peter's, The Founding of an Oxford College

OA 1992 Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson, first edition August 1992)

OA 2003, *St Peter's College Development, Oxford Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment*

## APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

**Site name:** St Peter's College, New Hall Inn Lane, Oxford

**Site code:** OXNIPC 03

**Grid reference:** NGR SU 5105 0626

**Type of watching brief:** Excavation of holes for pads to support building.

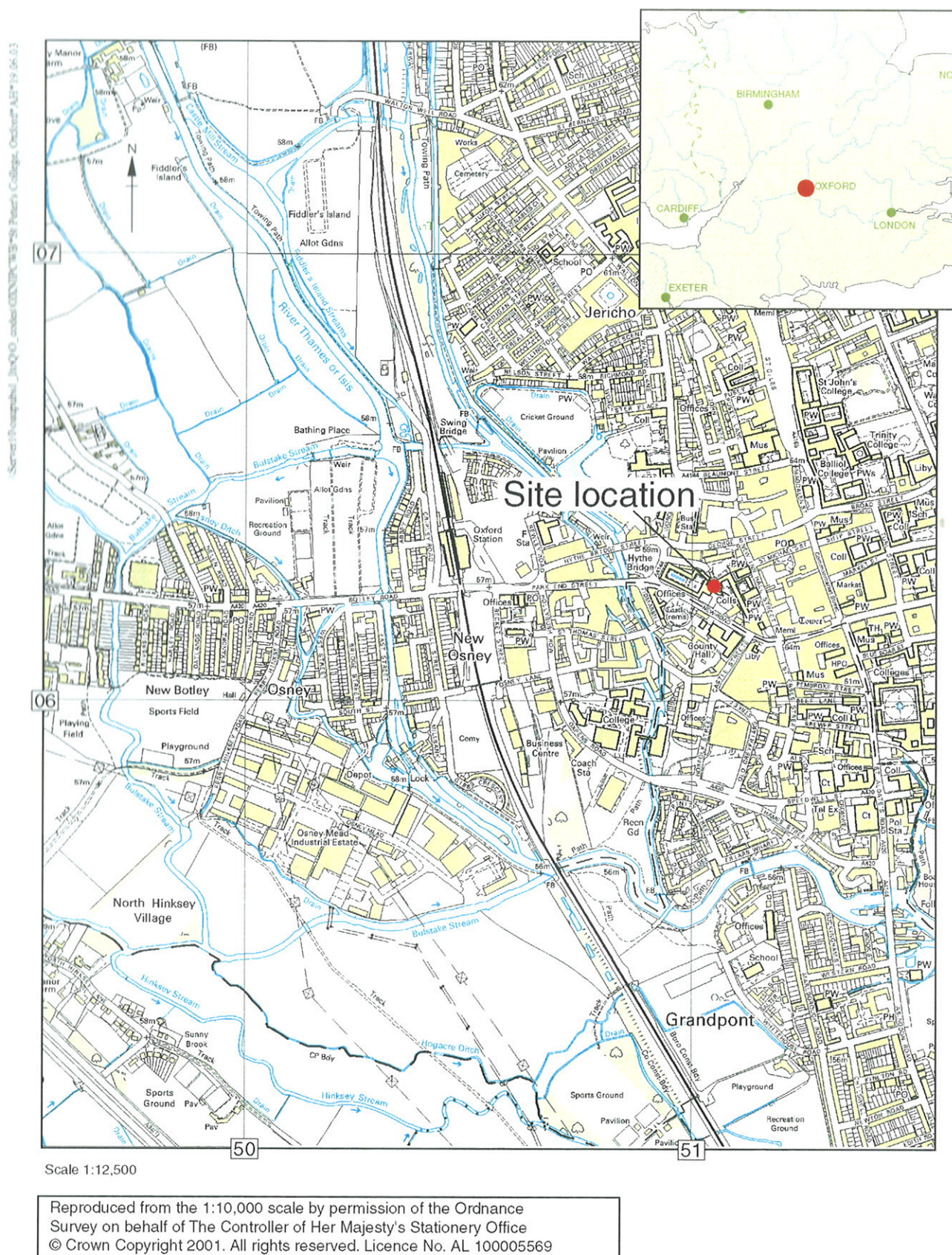
**Date and duration of project:** A total of seven visits from the 24/4/03 to 17/6/03.

**Area of site:** 15 m x 11 m

**Summary of results:** Post-medieval garden soils cut and sealed by 19th century school construction and services.

**Location of archive:** The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire County Museums Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS:2003.50







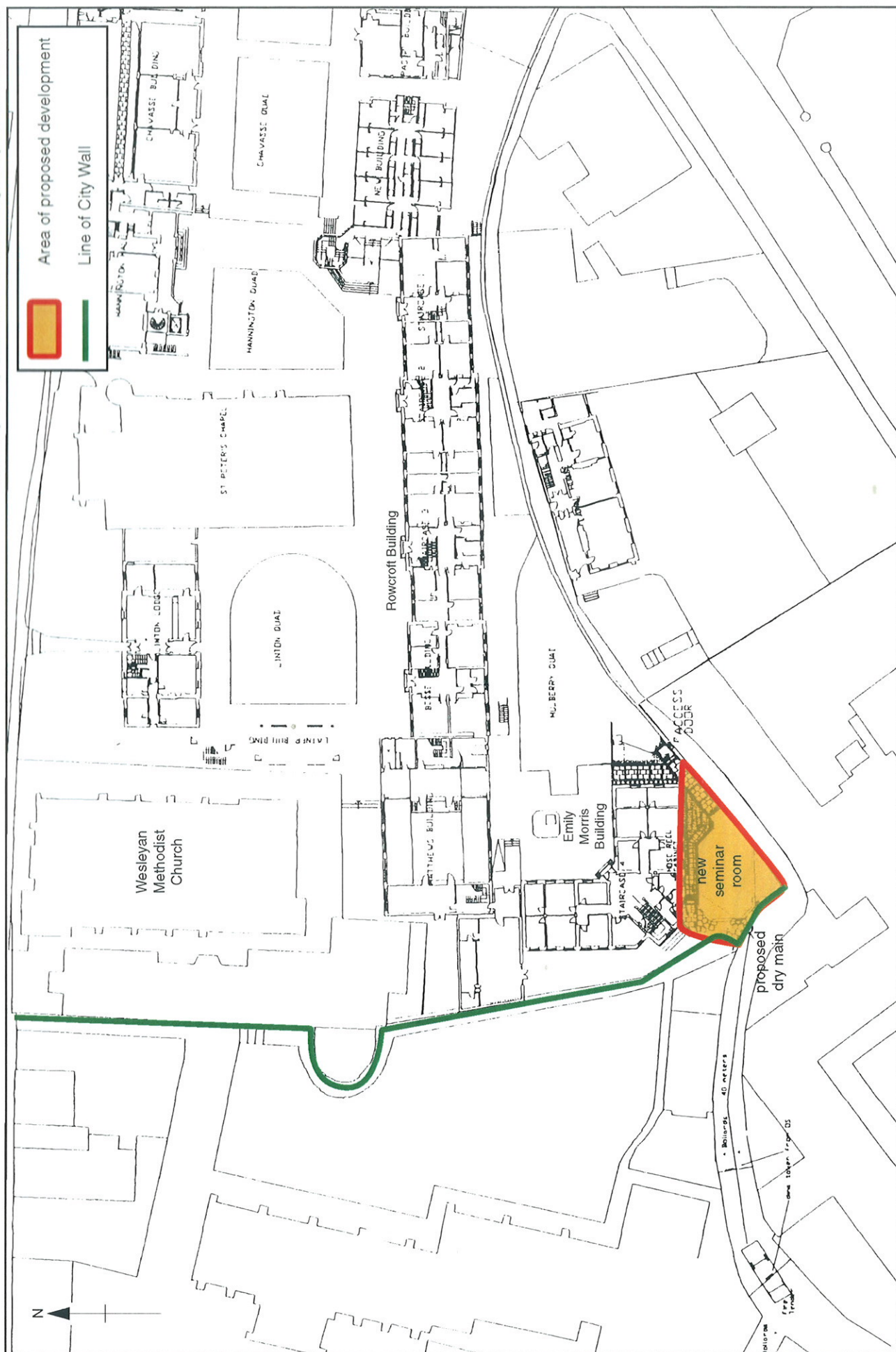


Figure 2: Detailed site location

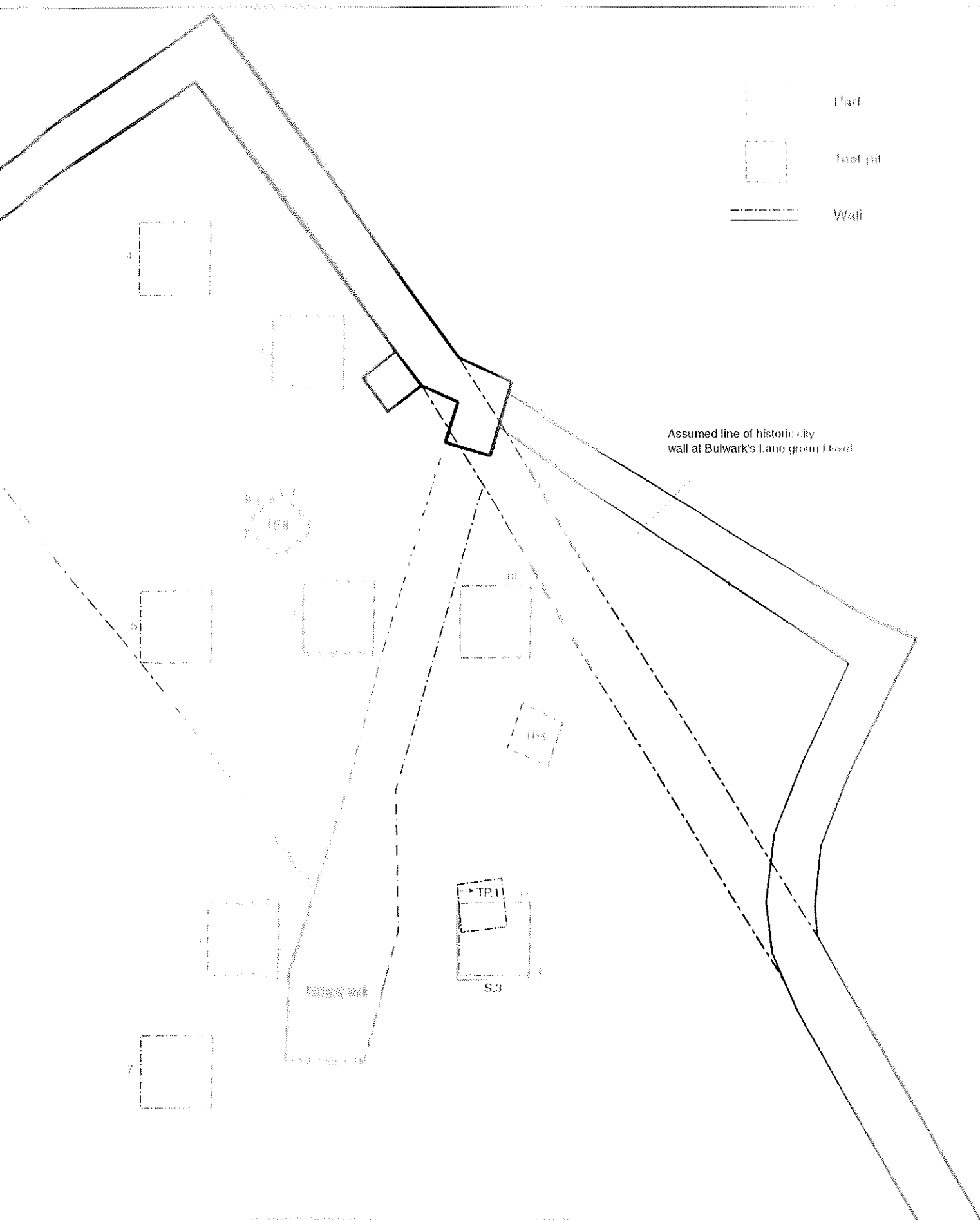


Figure 3: Plan showing path and walls and location of sections and test pits

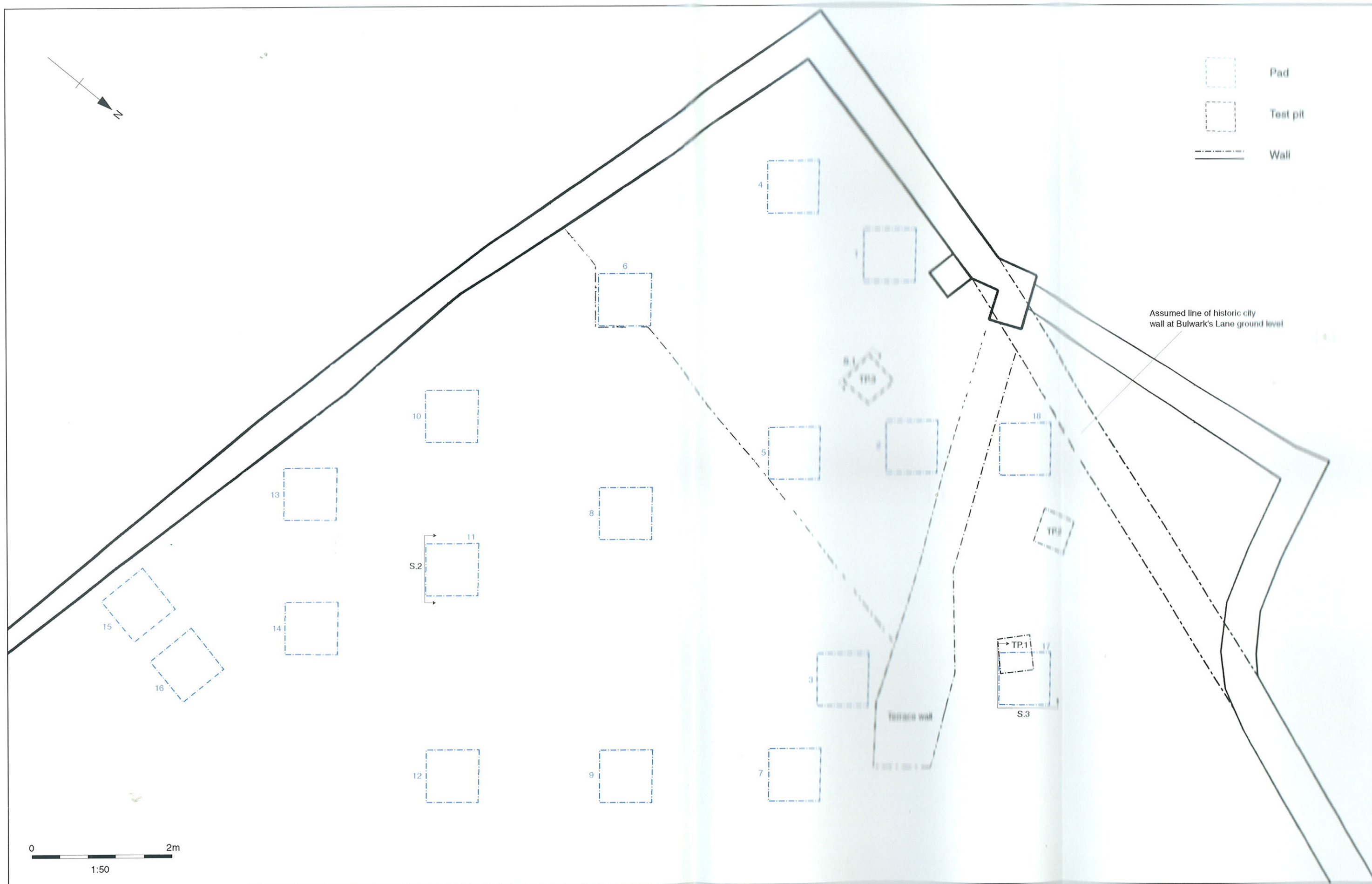
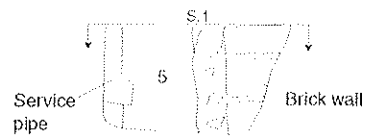
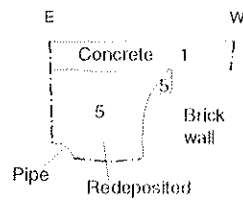


Figure 3: Plan showing pads and walls and location of sections and test pits

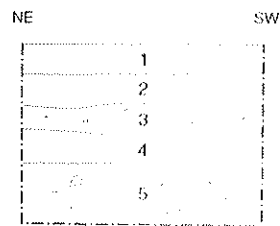
Plan of test pit 3



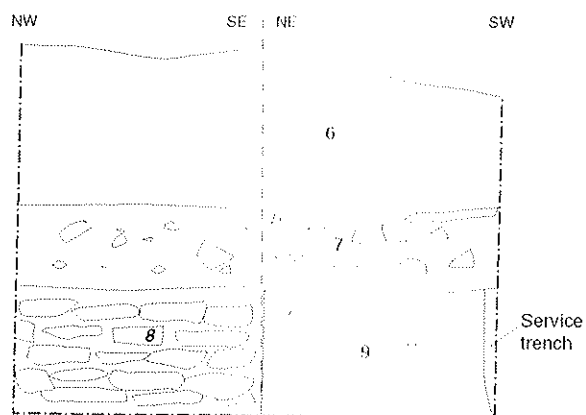
Test Pit 3  
Section 1



Pad hole 11  
Section 2



Pad hole 17  
Section 3



1m

Figure 4: Sections and plan of test pit 3



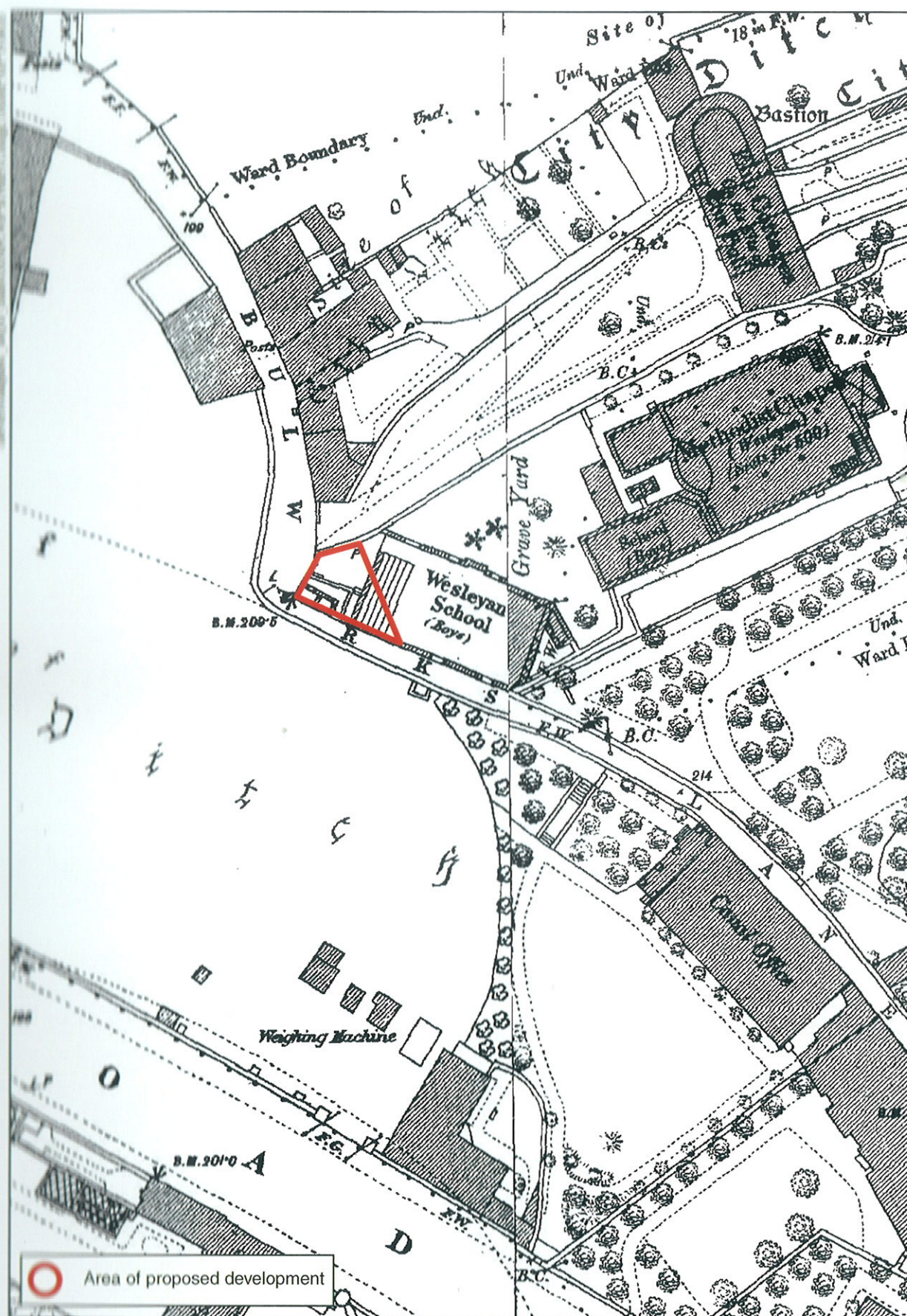


Figure 5: 1st Edition OS Map 1:500 (1876)





Plate 1: View of wall corner in Bulwark lane

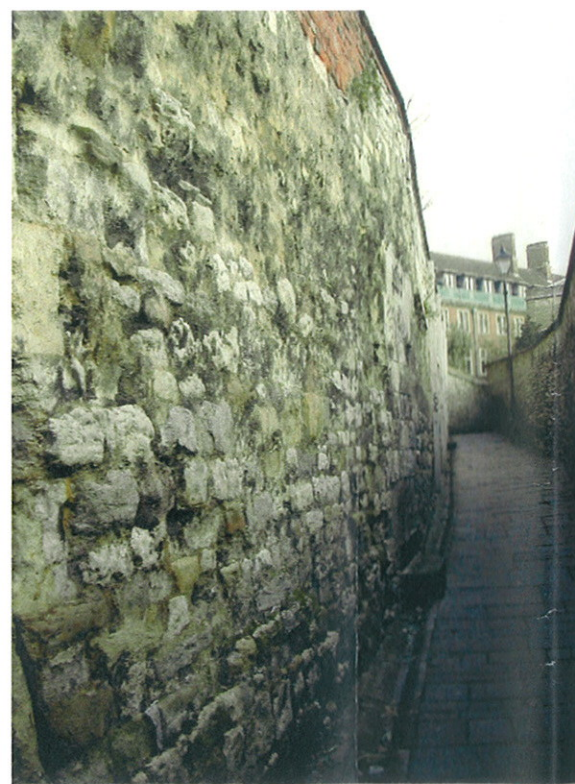


Plate 2: View of wall along Bulwark Lane



Plate 3: View showing black windows of Wesleyan Boys school



Plate 4: View of wall south-east along Bulwark Lane



Plate 5: View showing different wall construction



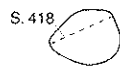
Plate 6: View of wall looking back along Bulwark Lane

Figure 6: Plates of wall





Section line and number



Interior section line and number



Limit of excavation



Sondage / Interior limit of excavation



Fill line and number



Cut line and number



Structure number



Unclear boundary



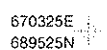
Stones



Hachures indicate inclination of slope inside excavated feature



Levels



Grid point





#### **Oxford Archaeology**

Janus House  
Osney Mead  
Oxford OX2 0ES

t: (0044) 01865 263800  
f: (0044) 01865 793496  
e: [info@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:info@oxfordarch.co.uk)  
w: [www.oxfordarch.co.uk](http://www.oxfordarch.co.uk)



#### **Oxford Archaeology North**

Storey Institute  
Meeting House Lane  
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 541000  
f: (0044) 01524 848606  
e: [lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk](mailto:lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk)  
w: [www.oxfordarch.co.uk](http://www.oxfordarch.co.uk)



**Director:** David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA

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