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Burke-Collis and Partners

**1/5 and 11/12 West Smithfield
London EC1**

NGR TQ 3175 8165

**Archaeological Watching Brief Report on
Geotechnical Test Pits**

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Date: 30 September 1999

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Date: 4th October 1999.

Approved by: R. Williams HEAD OF FIELDWORK

Date: 5/10/1999

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**Archaeological Watching Brief Report on
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Summary

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) undertook an archaeological watching brief at Nos. 1/5 and 11/12 West Smithfield, London, in September 1999, during the excavation of 6 geo-technical test pits. Burke-Collis and Partners of Reading commissioned the watching brief, which was carried out prior to the redevelopment of the building basements. One of the test pits produced an assemblage of pottery dating to the late 17th-early 18th century, together with clay pipe pieces of contemporary date. The remainder of the test pits produced construction evidence for the basements that date to the end of the 19th century.

1 Introduction

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) was commissioned by Burke-Collis and Partners of Reading to undertake an archaeological watching brief during the excavation of six geo-technical test pits during September 1999. The test pits were excavated by contractors (Constructive Evaluation Limited, Chichester) within the basements of Nos. 1/5 and 11/12 in West Smithfield Road, London (Figs 1-3). The work was undertaken prior to the redevelopment of the buildings here, which will involve lowering of basement floors, by 0.5 m – 1 m and installation of new services. The watching brief followed a desk-based assessment prepared by OAU for Burke-Collis and Partners, which outlined the archaeological potential of the site and discussed the potential impact of the development on any archaeological deposits (OAU 1999).

2 Geology and Topography

West Smithfield is situated on the south-west edge of the Hackney Gravel Terrace; to the immediate west is an area of London Clay and alluvium. West Smithfield is located on the west of the two hills upon which London was built and which form part of the Thames River Terraces. The site lies within the administration area of the City of London, north of the Roman and medieval city walls, and is within the ancient parish of St. Sepulchre.

3 Archaeological and Historical Background

The archaeological and historical background has been extensively covered in the desk-based study, so the following is a summary of that information. Palaeolithic handaxes are reported from Hosier Lane and late Bronze Age pottery has been found

south of the development site, which is located c.200 m north-west of the north wall of *Londinium*. Roman finds locally comprise burials (both inhumation and cremations) spanning all four centuries of the Roman period; little Saxon material has been recovered from the area.

In medieval times the site was within the south-western corner of the open fields of Smithfield, or 'Smoothfield'. This was renowned in the Middle Ages for its markets, jousting, tournaments and festivals. The area was also used as a place of execution. The first detailed map of the area is Ogilby and Morgan's Survey of London (1676) which depicts properties with yards on the development site. Later maps, such as Rocque's of 1746, show broadly the same development pattern. The current properties on the site are around 100 years old.

4 Project Aims

The project aims were in accordance with standard OAU working practices for projects of this nature, principally the preservation of any archaeological information from the site by a written, drawn and photographic record, and the recovery of dating evidence to assist interpretation of the records. The final aim was to make available the results of the investigation in the form of a report, at the end of the fieldwork.

5 Strategy and Methodology

The watching brief was undertaken by an OAU archaeological supervisor during the excavation of the test pits. All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers and context recording was in accordance with established OAU procedures (OAU Field Manual, 1992). A photographic record of the work was made comprising colour transparency and black-and-white negative photographs. Site plans were drawn 1:100 and section drawings made at a scale of 1:20. The excavated material and spoil heaps were scanned for the retrieval of artifacts. The test pit results are described below; the numbering sequence of the pits is in accordance with that used by the contractors. General levels related to ordnance datum are available from the site plans drawn up by Constructive Evaluation Ltd.

6 Results

Test Pit 4 (Fig. 4)

Test Pit 4 measured 1.4 m by 0.4 m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.05 m. Natural sand and gravel (113) was reached at the base of the pit. Above the gravel lay a 0.2 m thick layer of grey-brown silty clay with gravel inclusions (117). No finds were recovered from the deposit, which was cut by the construction trench (116) for a north-south aligned brick foundation (114). This foundation supported the east wall of the building. The backfill (115) of the construction trench and layer 117 were overlain by a layer of concrete (103), in turn sealed by a cement surface (102) that was 0.3 m thick. This surface lay below another concrete layer (101) that acted as bedding for the present concrete floor (100) of the basement.

Test Pit 5 (Fig. 4)

Test Pit 5 measured 1.0 m by 1.0 m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.4 m. The natural gravel (113) was overlain by a 0.03 m thick deposit of organic material including decayed vegetation and charcoal (123). Eight pieces of post-medieval clay pipe were recovered from the deposit together with forty three sherds of glazed post-medieval pottery of late 17th – early 18th century date (see finds report below). Above this deposit was a 0.05 m thick layer of light blue-grey clay (122) that contained no finds, which was in turn overlain by a 0.2 m thick layer of very dark brown silt (121). A single sherd of glazed cream coloured white-ware was recovered from this context, of probable 17th or 18th century date. The layer also contained mortar, charcoal, wood fragments, oyster shells and fragments of brick, suggesting either a small midden or debris left by the builders during the construction of the buildings. This layer was truncated by construction cut (125) for a concrete footing (119) that supported a plinth of cemented limestone blocks (118) for a column. The plinth and layer 121 were then covered by a 0.28 m thick layer of grey-brown sandy clay (124) containing 19th century finds. Above layer 124 followed the same sequence of concrete surfaces (100-103) as recorded in test pit 4.

Test Pit 6 (Fig. 4)

Test Pit 6 measured 1.1 m by 1.5 m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.3 m. In the south facing section of the test pit the natural gravel (113) was cut by a steep sided feature (112) that was 0.5 m deep and at least 0.7 m wide. The feature, perhaps a pit was filled with a compact dark grey-brown silty clay (111) that contained no dating evidence. The west extent of the feature was truncated by the construction trench (107) for the west wall footing (104) of the building. In the north facing section of the test pit the natural gravel was cut by the construction trench (109) for a wall footing (110) below a brick-built foundation (105). The back-fills of both construction trenches were sealed by concrete surface 103, succeeded by layers 102-100 as seen elsewhere.

Test Pit 7 (Fig. 5)

Test Pit 7 measured 0.7 m by 1.4 m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.08 m. At the base of the pit the natural gravel (113) was cut by the construction trench (136) for the footing (135) of the south wall of the building. The backfill (134) of the construction trench was overlain by concrete layers 103 followed by 102. Layer 102 was sealed beneath a thin layer of concrete that contained a service cable (133). This lay below an insulating layer of cork (127), itself sealed by the present concrete surface (126).

Test Pit 10 (Fig. 5)

Test Pit 10 measured 1.6 m by 1.6 m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.6 m. Natural gravel (113) was cut by the foundation trench (132) for the concrete footing (131) and brick foundation (130) for the west wall of the building. The backfill (129) of the foundation trench was sealed beneath a 0.1 m thick layer of brown silty clay, probably construction trample. The remainder of the deposits above layer 129 (deposits 103, 102, 133, 127,126) were as recorded in test pit 7.

Test Pit 12 (Fig. 5)

Test Pit 12 measured 0.8 m by 0.5 m and was excavated to a maximum depth of 0.68 m. At the base of the pit was a layer of greenish-grey clay (140) containing sand and flints, which was interpreted on site as a variation of the natural geology. The layer was sealed by a 0.15 m thick layer of silty clay (139) that contained brick fragments and flints. Above was a layer of crushed bricks and gravel (138) that acted as bedding material for the present concrete floor surface here (137).

7 The Finds

The Pottery

Forty-four sherds of pottery were recovered from two contexts in test pit 5. Layer 121 contained a single sherd of glazed white-ware typical of the late 17th early 18th century. Layer 123 produced forty-three sherds of pottery from a maximum of 6 pottery vessels. The vessels comprise a red earthenware pot with internal glazing; a red earthenware jug with internal glazing; a plain tin glazed blue and white patterned plate; a glazed hard-fired white-ware jug; a simple white-ware glazed pot and a single sherd of glazed pottery. The assemblage is typical of London wares of the late 17th – early 18th century.

The Clay Pipes

Eight pieces of clay pipe were recovered from context 123. These comprise parts of eight individual pipes, one of which was burnt. There were no bowls, by which precise dating of the assemblage can be made, though the bores are quite wide. The pieces are typical of types in use at the end of the 17th century.

8 Discussion and Conclusions

Natural deposits were exposed in each of the test pits. On the basis of the deposits observed, none were dated earlier than the 17th century. The small group of late 17th – early 18th century pottery, perhaps a midden, is consistent with the fact that there were properties in the area at the time of Ogilby and Morgan's late 17th century map. There was limited evidence for an earlier soil horizon in test pit 4, though this was undated, and the only noteworthy feature, the pit in test pit 6, was likewise not dated. It is possible that the site was cleared prior to the construction of the buildings here in the 19th century.

Despite the lack of archaeological deposits from the test pits, it should be noted that the investigation areas were small, and the archaeological potential of the site as a whole should be borne in mind during any further construction work.

J Hiller
Oxford Archaeological Unit
October 1999

Bibliography

- OAU 1992 Fieldwork Manual (ed. D Wilkinson).
OAU 1999 *1/5 & 11/12 West Smithfield, London EC1*. Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (unpublished). Oxford Archaeological Unit.

Table of Context Information

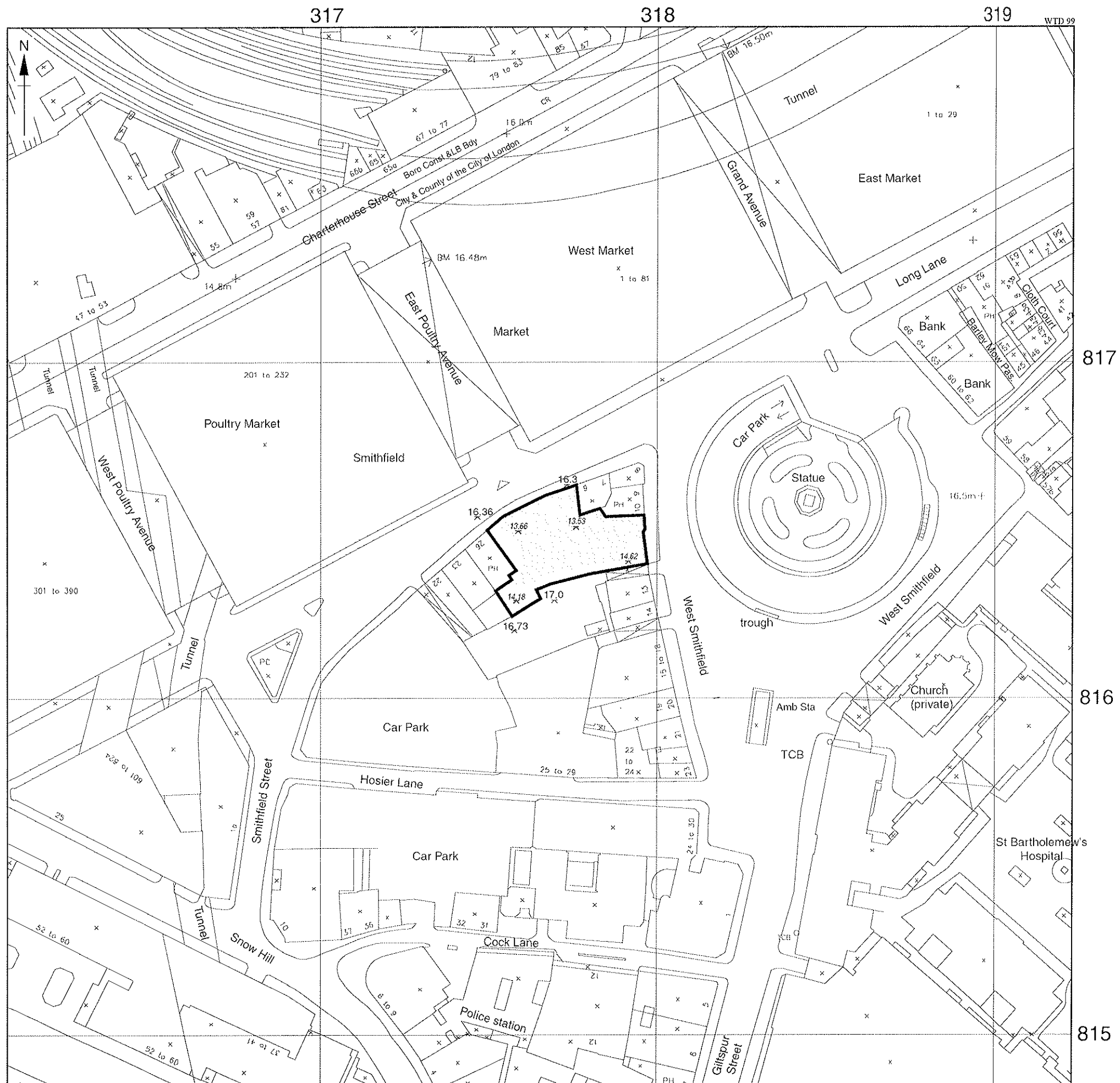
Test Pit No.	Context No.	Type	Depth (m)	Width (m)	Comments
4,5,6	100	Layer	0.01	-	Concrete surface, modern
4,5,6	101	Layer	0.1	-	Concrete make-up
4,5,6,7,10	102	Layer	0.03	-	Former concrete surface
4,5,6,7,10	103	Layer	0.22		
6	104	Structure	1.0	-	Concrete footing under west wall
6	105	Structure	1.0	-	Brick wall foundation above 110
6	106	Fill	1.0	-	Fill of 107
6	107	Cut	1.0	0.15	Construction cut filled by 104, 106
6	108	Fill	0.6	-	Fill of construction cut 109
6	109	Cut	0.6	0.9+	Construction cut filled by 110, 105, 108
6	110	Structure	0.55	0.6	Concrete footing below 105
6	111	Fill	0.46	-	Fill of feature 112
6	112	Cut	0.5	0.7	Possible pit, may be contemporary with construction phase of buildings
All	113	Layer	0.8+	-	Natural gravel
4	114	Structure	0.3	0.4	Brick foundation for east wall in 116
4	115	Fill	0.4+	0.2	Fill of cut 116
4	116	Cut	0.4+	0.3+	Construction cut for 114
4	117	Layer	0.2	-	?Site consolidation layer
5	118	Structure	0.12	-	Limestone and cement plinth for column base
5	119	Structure	0.52	-	Concrete footing for 118
5	120	Layer	0.28	-	Levelling deposit
5	121	Layer	0.2	-	Layer with finds - ?midden
5	122	Layer	0.05	-	Clay lens
5	123	Layer	0.03	-	Organic lens, pottery, clay pipe late 17 th century midden?
5	124	Fill	0.77	-	Backfill of 125
5	125	Cut	0.8	0.1	Cut for footing 119 and plinth 118
7,10	126	Layer	0.03	-	Concrete surface = 100
7,10	127	Layer	0.03	-	Cork over cable 133
10	128	Layer	0.1	-	Levelling/trample layer
10	129	Fill	0.4	1.3	Fill of 132
10	130	Structure	-	-	Same as 105
10	131	Structure	-	-	Same as 110
10	132	Cut	0.4	1.3	Construction cut filled by 129, 130, 131, 132
7,10	133	Layer	0.05	-	Cable and concrete
7	134	Fill	0.5	-	Fill of construction cut 135
7	135	Structure	0.6	-	Wall foundation
7	136	Cut	0.5	-	Construction cut filled by 135, 134
12	137	Layer	0.2	-	Concrete layer
12	138	Layer	0.1	-	Brick layer
12	139	Layer	0.1	-	Clay levelling layer
12	140	Layer	0.3+	-	Natural clay with flints



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scale 1: 25000

Figure 1: site location



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Figure 2 : site location detail

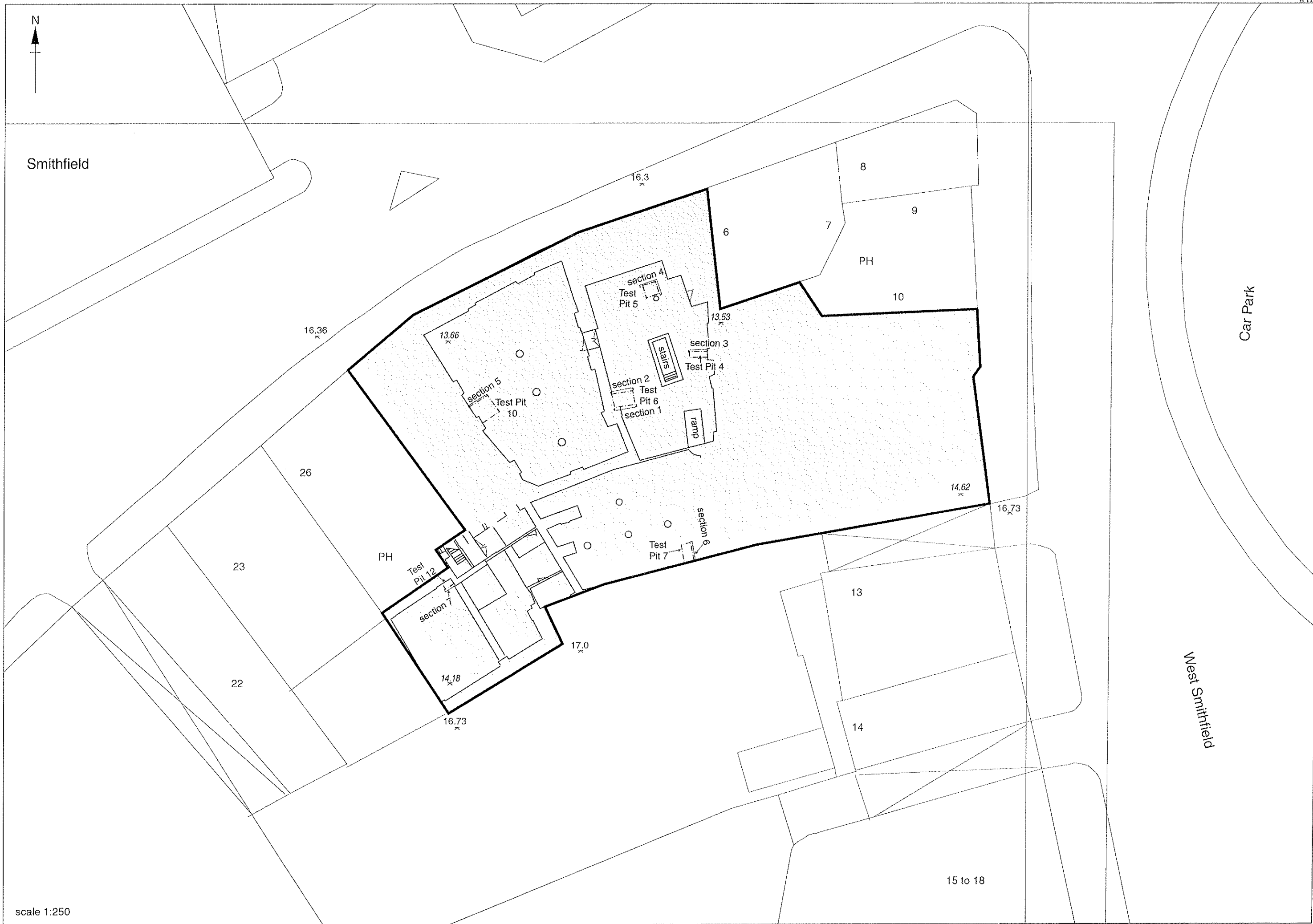
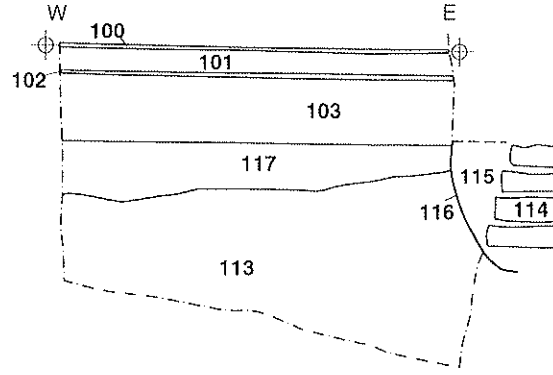
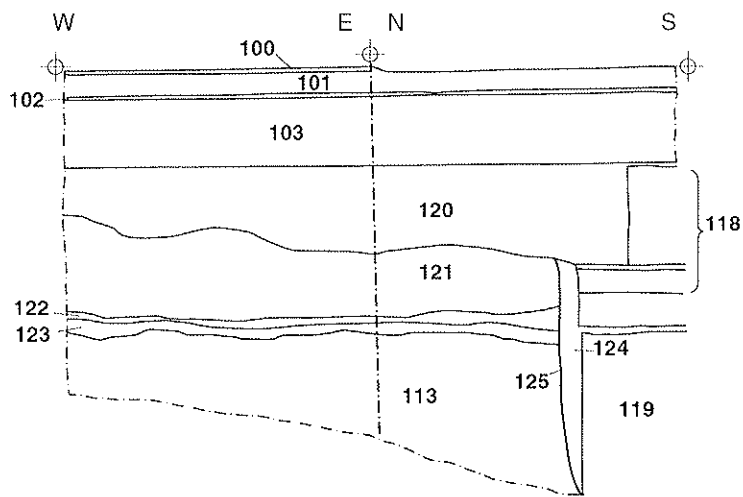


Figure 3: plan of basements and test pits

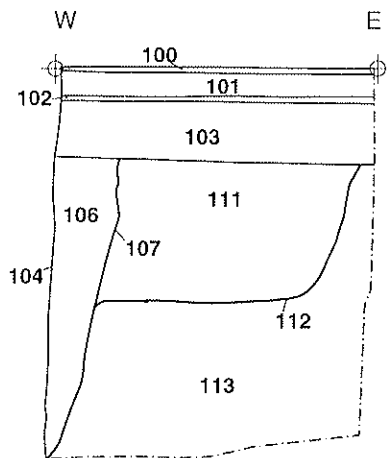
Test Pit 4
Section 3



Test Pit 5
Section 4



Test Pit 6
Section 2



Test Pit 6
Section 1

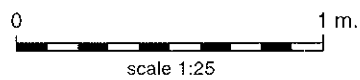
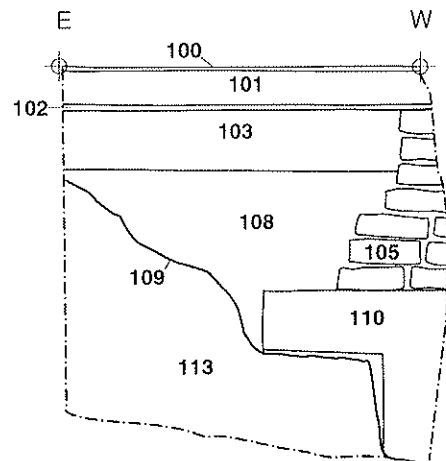
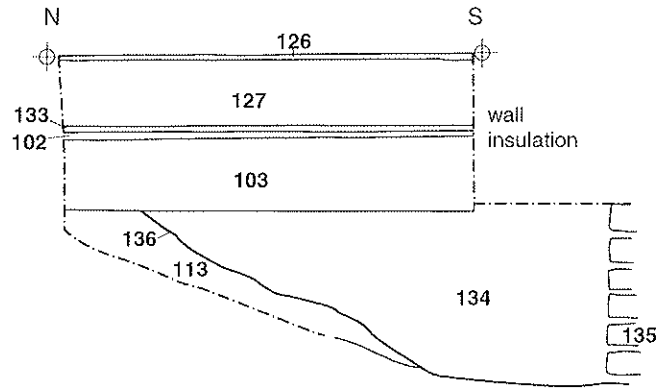
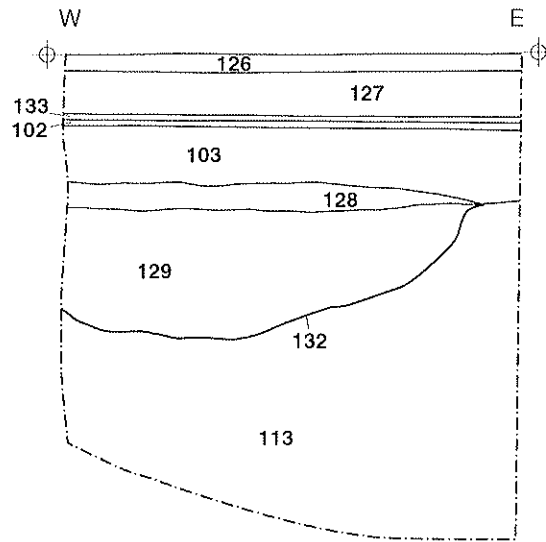


Figure 4: test-pits 4, 5 and 6. Sections

Test Pit 7
Section 6



Test Pit 10
Section 5



Test Pit 12
Section 7

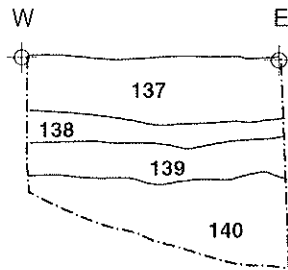


Figure 5: Test Pits 7, 10, 12. Sections



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