

Marlborough House Westminster London



Archaeological Watching Brief



Oxford Archaeology

25th June 2002

Client Name: Royal Household

Issue N^o: 1

OA Job N^o: 1219

NGR: TQ 2950 8020

**Marlborough House
Westminster
London**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

1	Introduction	2
1.1	Location and scope of work	2
1.2	Geology and topography	2
1.3	Historical background	2
1.4	Acknowledgements	2
2	Project Aims and Methodology.....	3
2.1	Aims	3
2.2	Methodology.....	3
3	Results	3
3.1	Description of deposits (Fig. 3).....	3
3.2	Finds	4
4	Discussion and Conclusions.....	4
4.1	Discussion.....	4
4.2	Conclusions	4
Appendix 1	Archaeological Context Inventory	5
Appendix 2	Bibliography and References	5
Appendix 3	Summary of Site Details.....	5

LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 OS Site location map
 Fig. 2 Site plan showing location of test pits
 Fig. 3 Sections of Test Pits 1, 7, 8 and 58 and Plan of Test Pit 3.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 From the 18th to the 22nd February 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Marlborough House (NGR TQ 2950 8020) (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by the Royal Household in respect of listed building clearance for the installation of up to 60 flagstaffs (Application No. 18/84)
- 1.1.2 A brief for the work was provided by Dr Michael Turner, Inspector of Ancient Monuments and Historic Buildings, English Heritage (EH), in a letter dated 4-2-02. The brief advised that evaluation trenching would be required, but following clarification that the impact of the scheme would be considerably less than originally predicted, a watching brief was subsequently agreed as an appropriate response (letter D Wilkinson, OA, to Dr M Turner, 11-2-02).
- 1.1.3 Dr Turner carried out a monitoring visit to the works on Tuesday 19th February 2002.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The proposed line of flagstaffs was located on top of the south garden terrace (*c* 7.5 m above OD) at Marlborough House (Fig. 2). The site comprised a linear area of *c* 108 m². The geology is Langley Silt (brickearth) on top of London Clay (British Geological Survey, Sheet 270). The land was part of St James's palace prior to its current use as the formal gardens of Marlborough House.

1.3 Historical background

- 1.3.1 Dr Michael Turner, Inspector of Ancient Monuments and Historic buildings, provided historical information specifically relating to this site.
- 1.3.2 The site lies in an area of known archaeological potential. The land was part of the Royal Garden of St James's Palace until the late 17th-century. The Duchess of Marlborough obtained a lease of the land and commissioned Sir Christopher Wren to build Marlborough House in 1709-11. The south garden terrace is likely to have been constructed in the early 18th-century as part of the formal garden that complimented Wren's building. The presence of the bank is confirmed on plans of 1760 and 1765. The western boundary of the gardens was extended in 1856 as part of Pennethorne's scheme for Marlborough Road.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Oxford Archaeology would like to thank Richard Mole (Royal Household Property Section), John Saddington (Commonwealth Secretariat), Dr Michael Turner (English Heritage) and the staff of Harrison Flagpoles for their help during the archaeological works.

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 The watching brief consisted of the monitoring of 58 hand dug test pits each measuring 0.5 m x 0.5 m x (up to) 1 m deep and *c* 1.8 m apart. They were positioned in a line on the top of a NE - SW aligned bank that formed the southern edge of the gardens (Fig. 2). The test pits were numbered sequentially with TP 1 at the south-west of the bank and TP 58 at the south-east.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:20 and significant sections were drawn at a scale 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 (Fig. 3)

- 3.1.1 The earliest structure (exposed in Test Pit 7 at 7.15 m above OD) was a NW - SE aligned wall (3). Only two courses of this wall were visible and no bonding pattern could be established. The orange bricks were bonded with a soft, cream, sandy mortar.
- 3.1.2 To the north-east of wall 3 (Test Pits 8-58) five horizontal make-up deposits were identified forming the bank. The earliest was a friable, mid orange-brown, clayey sand with occasional small stones, brick fragments and flecks of charcoal (7); this deposit measured at least 0.32 m thick. Above deposit 7 was loose, dark orange-brown, clayey sand with occasional small rounded stones, charcoal flecks and a large piece of tile and mortar (6). The thickness of this context ranged from 0.14 m (Test Pit 8) to 0.42 m (Test Pit 58). Context 6 was overlain by loose, dark brown, clayey sand, 0.08 m thick with occasional flecks of mortar, brick and charcoal (5). All of the test pits were sealed with a levelling layer of sand (1) and gravels (4) totalling 0.3 m thick. A cut (8) and fill (9) were identified in Test Pit 10 cutting the sandy deposit (1) - the function of this is not known. Modern services were observed in Test Pits 12, 16, 20 and 24, cutting the gravels (4). No datable finds were recovered from any of these layers.
- 3.1.3 The bank south-west of wall 3 (Test Pits 1-7) contained three horizontal make-up deposits. The most substantial was a layer of 18th-century brick and mortar rubble within a matrix of loose, dark grey-brown, silty sand that measured at least 0.46 m thick. This was sealed by the same sand (1) and gravels (4) observed in the test pits

north-east of the wall. In Test Pit 1 a modern service trench was exposed cutting the gravel layer (4).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 A brick sample was taken from wall 3 which has been provisionally dated to the 17th or 18th-century. Other finds included tile rubble from deposit 6 and roof tile and 18th-century brick from deposit 2.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Discussion

- 4.1.1 Wall 3 (found in Test Pit 7) was probably part of the original garden wall surrounding the royal garden at St James's Palace as depicted in the earliest plans (Knyff 1708). In 1709-11 during Wren's construction of Marlborough House this wall marked the south-west boundary of the Marlborough House formal gardens. The earliest three make-up layers (7, 6 and 5) in the terrace north-east of wall 3 (Test Pits 8-58), represent the original south garden terrace constructed in the early 18th-century as part of the formal garden which complimented Wren's building. This terrace appears on plans from 1760 and 1765. In 1856 the original south-west boundary wall (3) was demolished and the gardens were extended up to the edge of the newly constructed Marlborough Road. The extension of the terrace westwards and along the west side of the new boundary wall was probably contemporary with the 1856 works. This is represented by the change in the make-up of the terrace south-west of wall 3, where a single deposit (2), rich in 18th-century demolition rubble, was exposed (Test Pits 1-7).

4.2 Conclusions

- 4.2.1 Despite the limitations of the small holes excavated for flagpoles, it was still possible to identify some archaeological evidence for the development of the gardens, and to interpret this evidence through comparison with the historic maps.

4.2.2 APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Height</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.1 m			Sand, levelling layer	
2	Layer	>0.46 m			Make-up layer	CBM=18thC
3	Structure		>0.3 m	>0.12 m	Wall	CBM=17thC
4	Layer	0.2 m			Gravel path	
5	Layer	0.08 m			Make-up layer	
6	Layer	0.14 m			Make-up layer	CBM
7	Layer	>0.32 m			Make-up layer	
8	Cut	0.42 m	>0.5 m		Cut, function unknown	
9	Fill	0.42 m			Fill of 8	

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Wilkinson, D (ed), 1992 *OAU Fieldwork Manual*

Knyff, 1708 *Britannia Illustrata*

Pevsner, N, 1957 *The Buildings of England, London, Volume one: The Cities of London and Westminster* (Third edition revised by Bridget Cherry, 1973), London

Thurley, S, 1993 *The Royal Palaces of Tudor England*, London

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Marlborough House, London

Site code: MARH 02

Grid reference: TQ 2950 8020

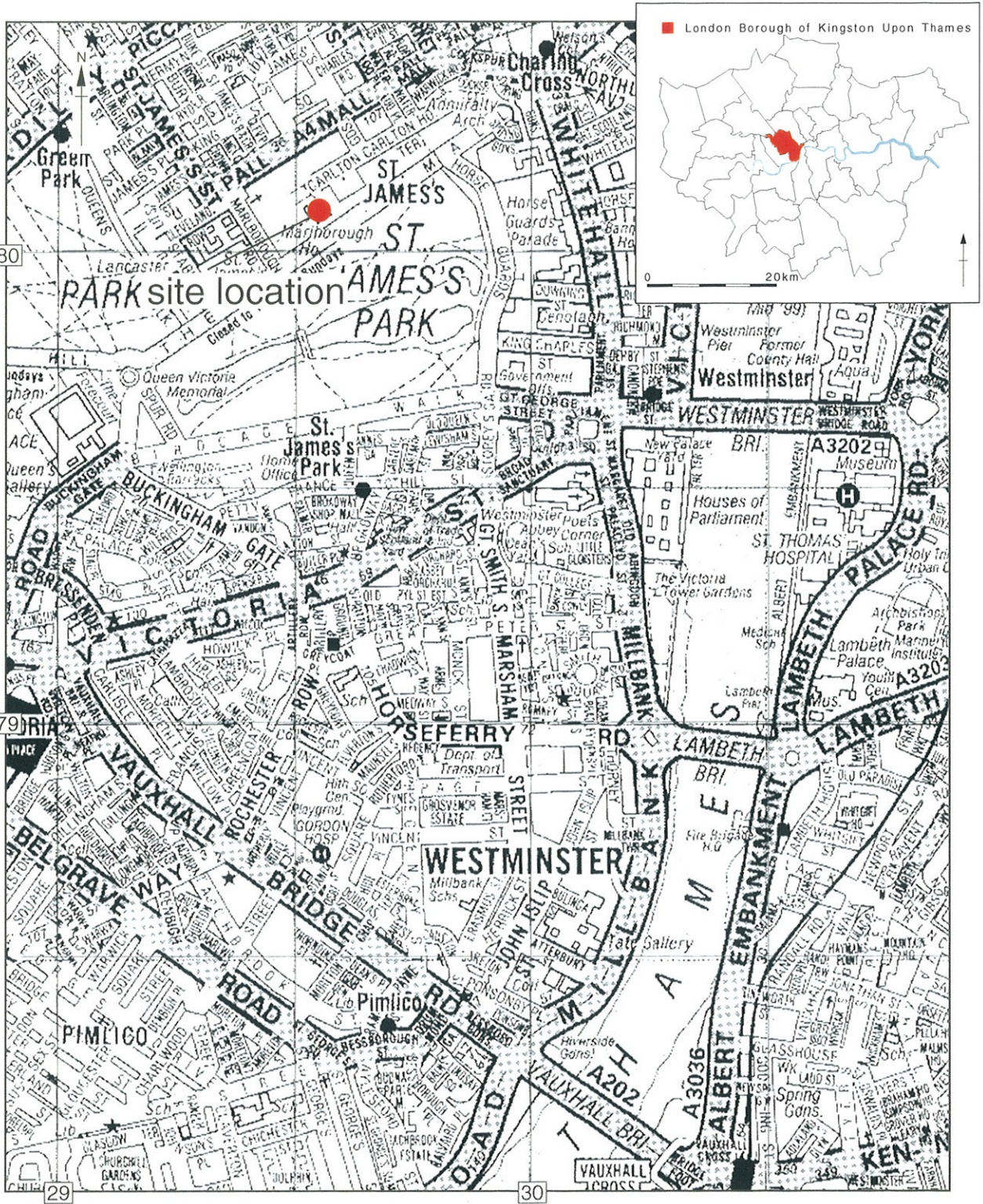
Type of watching brief: Monitoring 58 hand dug test pits

Date and duration of project: February 2002, 1 week

Area of site: 108 square meters

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed the boundary wall dating from the Wren construction of Marlborough House. This wall was demolished and the early 18th -century bank was extended westwards towards a new boundary wall constructed by Pennethorne in 1856.

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



Scale 1:12.500

Reproduced with the permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of
 The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown Copyright.1996
 All rights reserved.Licence No. AL 100005569

Figure 1 Site location.

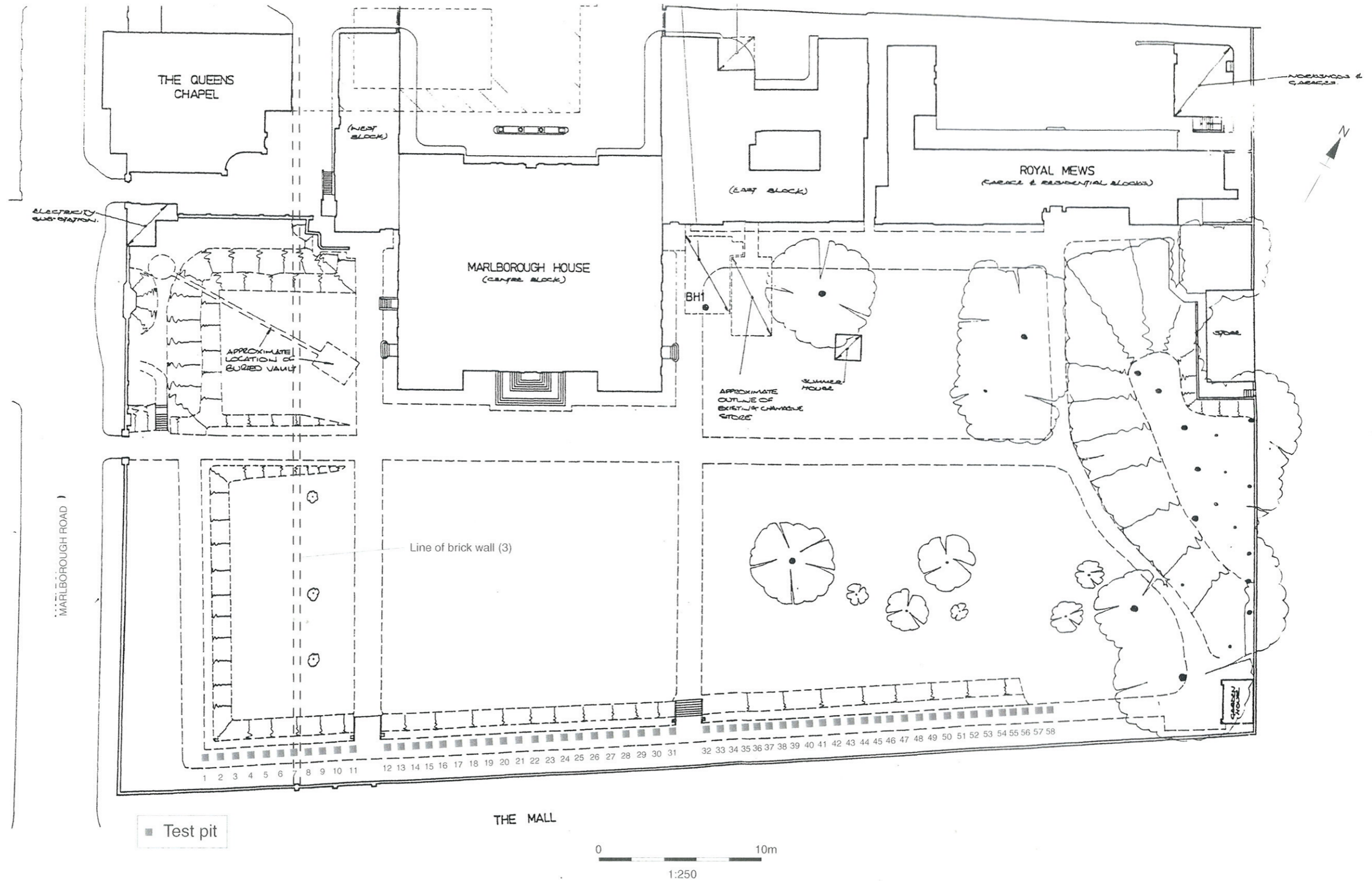


Figure 2 Site plan.

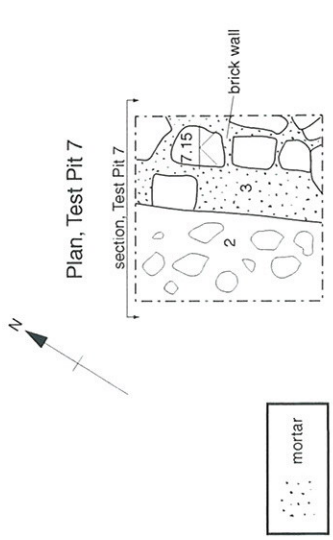
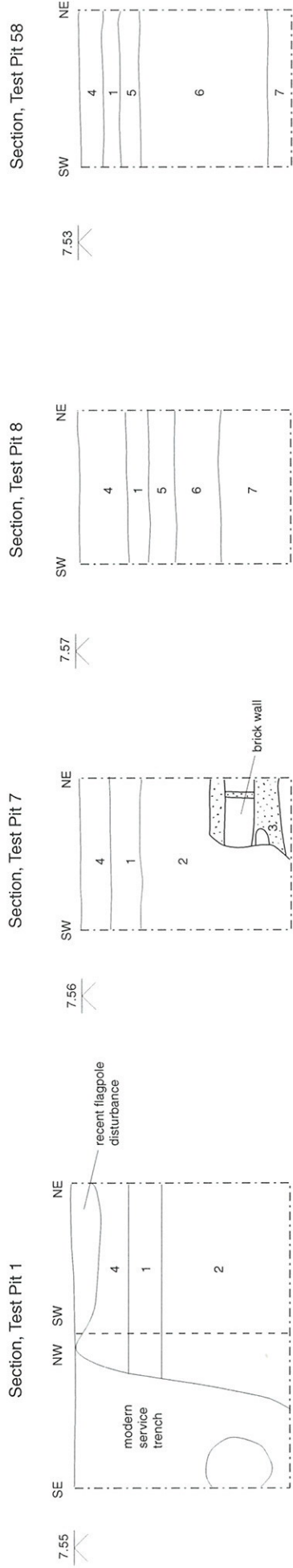


Figure 3 Sections of Test Pits 1, 7, 8, & 58 and Plan of Test Pit 7 .



Oxford Archaeology

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



Oxford Archaeology North

Storey Institute
Meeting House Lane
Lancaster LA1 1TF

t: (0044) 01524 848666
f: (0044) 01524 848606
e: lancinfo@oxfordarch.co.uk
w: www.oxfordarch.co.uk

Director: David Jennings, BA MIFA FSA



Oxford Archaeological Unit is a
Private Limited Company, N^o: 1618597
and a Registered Charity, N^o: 285627

Registered Office:

Oxford Archaeological Unit
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES