


# Kitchen Lift Keble College Parks Road Oxford



## Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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## Kitchen Lift, Keble College, Oxford

*Archaeological Watching Brief Report*

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## Summary

*In August 2016, Oxford Archaeology (OA) were commissioned by Keble College to undertake an archaeological watching brief during enabling works associated with the refurbishment of the college kitchens. The watching brief focussed on the excavation of a trench for a new lift pit in the SCR pantry.*

*The watching brief revealed the top of the second terrace gravel overlain by a layer of post-glacial brickearth. There was some evidence for a feature in the northern half of the trench. The shape of the feature in plan was uncertain, although it is possible that it was linear. The fills of the feature were predominantly composed of re-deposited brickearth, which elsewhere in the city has been indicative of prehistoric or late Saxon features.*

*The location of the site lies within the projected area enclosed by the henge identified during recent works undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services (TVAS) within the Kendrew Quadrangle of St John's College. Consequently, it was considered whether the possible linear feature within the lift pit trench may have also been associated with the henge, particularly given the composition of the main fill. However, the projected eastern continuation of the ditch identified by TVAS runs to the south of the SCR, and consequently it seems unlikely that the southern edge of the feature is part of the same ditch.*

*It is possible that it represents a feature within the area encircled by the henge, either an inner ditch or a later barrow within the henge itself. The Big Rings henge monument at Dorchester-on-Thames was formed of two concentric ditches, and also displayed some evidence for 'internal' features where a possible round barrow was identified within the annulus of the ditches. However, given that the character and date of the feature observed during the watching brief are unclear, this interpretation can be no more than conjectural.*

*The gravel, brickearth and probable feature had been heavily truncated during the construction of the south range of the Liddon Quad in the 19th century.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was requested by Keble College to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Keble College, Parks Road, Oxford (SP 5132 0692, Figs 1 and 2).
- 1.1.2 The watching brief was required at Keble College in response to Condition 6 of the Listed Building Consent granted by Oxford City Council (OCC, Planning Reference: 16/00612/LBC), and in accordance with a request by David Radford (Planning Archaeologist for OCC) for a targeted watching brief to investigate the base of the trench for a new lift pit in the SCR pantry. The primary aim of the investigation was to mitigate the impact of the development on archaeological remains.
- 1.1.3 A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced which outlined how OA would implement the requirements of the brief and local and national planning policies. This was subject to approval from David Radford.

- 1.1.4 All work was carried out in full accordance with the appropriate sections of the Institute for Archaeologists (IFA) Code of Conduct, the IFA Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangements in Field Archaeology, the IFA Standards and Guidance for excavation, the IFA Standards and Guidance for an Archaeological Watching Brief, and the British Archaeologists and Developers Liaison Group Code of Practice.

## 1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The area of proposed development lies on the north side of Oxford, about 750 m from the city's central point at Carfax, 250 m outside the medieval city wall. It is bounded on the east side by Parks Road and on the west by Blackhall Road. The area lies within the historic parish of St Giles.
- 1.2.2 The Rivers Thames and Cherwell both run within 1 km of the area of proposed development, which is situated on the Summertown-Radley gravel terrace. The underlying geology is Oxford Clay.

## 1.3 Archaeological and historical background

### *Prehistoric period (500,000 BP - 43 AD)*

- 1.3.1 A number of Bronze Age barrow ditches have been identified in central Oxford and it has been suggested that there was an extensive barrow cemetery dating to this period. Within the University Parks, 270 m to the north-east of the area of proposed development, aerial photographs show a concentration of cropmarks including a number of ring ditches. A further double ring ditch was identified at the Rex Richards Building c 500 m to the south-east of the area of proposed development. In 2002 a ring ditch with four inhumations was excavated at the new Gene Function Centre, c 400 m to the east of the development site. Other ring ditches have also been found in excavations at the Sackler Library around 300 m to the south-west of the site. The recent discovery of a probable Neolithic henge monument immediately to the west of the site, between Blackhall Road and St Giles (<http://www.tvas.co.uk/news/oxford-2.html>) may well have provided a focus for the later barrows.
- 1.3.2 Prehistoric ditches and Neolithic and Bronze Age pits were found at the Institute for American Studies site, 350 m south-east of the area of proposed development (Booth and Hayden 2000), and at the New Chemistry Laboratory, 300 m to the south-east (OA 2002).
- 1.3.3 The aerial photographs also show evidence for settlement activity. The results of excavations in the Science Area to the south-east of the area of proposed development have shown that there was activity from the early Iron Age. At the Rex Richards and Rodney Porter buildings, 500 m from the site, excavations found ditches, pits and pottery. Prehistoric ditches were also excavated at the Earth Science building and the Radcliffe Science Library, both c 200 m east of the area of proposed development (OA 2007). The Iron Age settlement may extend westwards into the area of proposed development.

### *Romano-British period (AD 43-410)*

- 1.3.4 No archaeological finds or sites have been identified within the area of proposed development.

- 1.3.5 Finds evidence and the results of archaeological excavations have identified a Romano-British settlement, which extends across a substantial area to the south-east of the area of proposed development and may extend into it. There is substantial overlap with the Iron Age settlement and it is likely that this continued to be occupied into the Roman period.
- 1.3.6 The clearest evidence for settlement came from the archaeological excavations to the west of Mansfield Road. Around 350m south-east of the area of proposed development, at the Institute for American Studies site, two phases of ditched enclosure were found, the later containing remains of a timber structure (Booth and Hayden 2000, 291). The New Chemistry Laboratory site, 300m to the south-east, contained ditches, gullies and roof tiles. An inhumation burial was also found (OA 2002).
- 1.3.7 Roman ditches together with pottery and some human remains (OA 2007) have been recovered from the area around the University Museum and Radcliffe Science Library c 200m east of the area of proposed development. Finds of pottery, coins and jewellery have been recorded within a 500m radius of the site from the 19th century onwards (OA 2007). In 1862-71, material including quern and mortarium fragments were recovered from the garden of No 2 South Parks Road, 300m east of the site.

### **Medieval period (AD 410-1550)**

#### *Anglo-Saxon period*

- 1.3.8 A defended *burh* was laid out at Oxford from the 9th century onwards. After this a substantial town developed, but this did not extend as far north as the area of proposed development. At that period the land belonged probably to the manor of Walton, with which it was associated until the 16th century (VCH IV, 381-2). It is probable that during the early medieval period the area of proposed development was a mixture of arable land and meadow, the situation known to have existed in the northern part of St Giles parish during the later medieval and post-medieval periods.
- 1.3.9 A mass grave dating to the early 11th century was revealed during the recent works immediately to the west of the site, and may have represented a Danish raiding party killed during a reprisal attack associated with the St Brice's Day massacre of 1002 (<http://www.tvas.co.uk/news/oxford-2.html>).

#### *Later medieval period*

- 1.3.10 St Giles church and parish were established in the early 12th century. The church is c 80 m north of the area of proposed development. It was initially granted the tithes from Walton, suggesting that the land around it formed part of Walton manor. The fields in the north of the parish were known as Walton fields in the 14th and 15th centuries. It was a mixture of arable and meadow, with common pasture rights recorded in the 14th century (VCH IV, 276-7).

### **Post-medieval Period (1550 – 1900)**

- 1.3.11 A contemporary plan of the Civil War defences around Oxford by Bernard de Gomme (1644) shows a rampart on a roughly north-west/south-east alignment running through the centre of Liddon Quad before returning to the north-east and crossing what is now Parks Road (Lattey *et al* 1936, fig. 26, 165). To the south-east of the Quad lies a less substantial inner line of defence.
- 1.3.12 Keble College was founded in 1870 and the architect was William Butterfield. Prior to the OS 1st edition map of 1876, the area now occupied by the college is invariably

shown on earlier cartographic sources as open ground to the rear of properties fronting onto St Giles, with the boundary to the rear of these properties being marked by the line of Blackhall Road. David Loggan's plan of 1675 shows the remnant of the Civil War earthwork in the approximate location of the later college buildings.

## 2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Aims

### 2.2 General

2.2.1 The general aims of the work were to:

- determine the character of any remains present;
- ensure that deposits are removed (where appropriate and practicable) by proper controlled archaeological methods;
- determine or estimate the date range of any remains from artefacts or otherwise;
- determine the potential of the deposits for significant palaeo-ecological information.

### 2.3 Specific aims and objectives

2.3.1 The specific aims and objectives of the trial trenches were to:

- identify any evidence for features or deposits associated with the probable henge monument discovered to the west of the site.
- identify any evidence for the features or deposits associated with the Civil War defences which are known to been present in the immediate vicinity of the site.

### 2.4 Methodology

2.4.1 A summary of OA's general approach to excavation and recording can be found in Appendix A of the WSI. Standard methodologies for geomatics and survey, environmental evidence, artefactual evidence and burials can also be found in that document (Appendices B, C, D and E respectively).

2.4.2 The watching brief focussed on the excavation of a trench for a new lift pit in the SCR pantry. The trench measured 2.6m x 2.5m and was 1.6m below the former floor level in the pantry. As the remaining ground works did not impact below the 19th-century construction rubble overlying the first archaeological horizon, the watching brief was discontinued once the lift pit excavation was complete.

## 3 RESULTS

### 3.1 Description of deposits (*Fig. 3*)

3.1.1 Natural gravel (1) was encountered at c 0.9m below ground level, and was overlain by 0.2m of reddish brown brickearth (14). In the northern half of the trench, the gravel had been truncated by the southern edge of a feature (13) on a roughly north-east/south-west alignment, filled by a mid-dark grey silty clay layer (2) which was overlain by a thin layer of gravel (3). The upper fill was predominantly re-deposited brickearth (4). The base of the feature within the trench was 1.5m below ground level.



3.1.2 The upper fill of the feature and the brickearth had been truncated by the construction cuts (5, 7, 15) for the foundations of the standing walls of the SCR (10, 11, 12), and was overlain by a 0.6m thick layer of 19th century debris also associated with the construction of the SCR, and previously overlain by the recently removed floor surface.

### 3.2 Finds

#### **Glass**

*Identified by Ian Scott*

Context	Description	Date
9	1 bottle top/neck, 124g	Very late 18 <sup>th</sup> century to very early 19 <sup>th</sup> century

#### **Discussion and recommendations**

3.2.1 The glass assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

#### **Clay tobacco pipe**

*Identified by Leigh Allen*

Context	Description	Date
9	1 bowl and short stem fragment, 19g	17 <sup>th</sup> century

#### **Discussion and recommendations**

3.2.2 The clay tobacco pipe assemblage is of low potential and requires no further work.

#### **Animal Bone by Rebecca Nicholson**

3.2.3 Nine fragments of animal bone were recovered weighing 91g in total. These comprise, from context 4, a cattle proximal metacarpal, left side, with a pronounced exostosis on the posterior aspect, lateral side, probably caused by a localised inflammatory non-infectious periosteal injury. Eight other fragments of large mammal bone from this context include two conjoining fragments of the same bone, with recent breaks, and fragments of large mammal bone long bone shaft. A fragment of a medium mammal, probably sheep or goat, metapodial proximal end and shaft (7g) came from context 9.

## 4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 The location of the site lies within the projected area enclosed by the henge identified during the works within the Kendrew Quadrangle of St John's College (TVAS 2008). Consequently, it was considered whether the possible linear feature within the lift pit trench may have also been associated with the henge, particularly given the composition of the main fill. However, the projected eastern continuation of the ditch identified by TVAS runs to the south of the SCR (Fig. 1), and consequently it seems unlikely that the southern edge of feature 13 is part of the same ditch.

4.1.2 It is possible that it represents a feature within the area encircled by the henge, either an inner ditch or a later barrow within the henge itself. The Big Rings henge monument at Dorchester-on-Thames was formed of two concentric ditches, and also displayed some evidence for 'internal' features where "[o]ther circles, apparently showing the ditches of levelled round barrows lie near the great rings, one inside their annulus..." (Allen 1938, 169 and plate XV). However, given that the character and date of the



feature observed during the watching brief are unclear, this interpretation can be no more than conjectural.

**APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY**

<b>Context</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Soil description</b>
1	Layer	Natural geology	Terrace gravel
2	Fill	Fill of possible linear feature 13	Mid-dark grey silty clay
3	Fill	Fill of possible linear feature 13	Sandy gravel
4	Fill	Fill of possible linear feature 13	Predominantly mid reddish-brown silty clay
5	Cut	Construction cut for 19thC wall 11	
6	Fill	Backfill of construction cut 5	Mixed
7	Cut	Construction cut for 19thC wall 10	
8	Fill	Backfill of construction cut 7	Mixed
9	Deposit	19thC construction debris/levelling	Mixed
10	Structure	Internal wall in SCR pantry	
11	Structure	East wall of SCR pantry	
12	Structure	South wall of SCR pantry	
13	Cut	Possible ENE-WSW aligned ditch	
14	Deposit	Brickearth	Mid reddish brown silty clay
15	Cut	Construction cut for 19thC wall 12	



## APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- |   |      |  |
|---|------|--|
| Allen, GWG  | 1938 | Marks seen from the air in the crops near Dorchester, Oxon. <i>Oxoniensia III</i> , 169-71 |
| Booth, P and Hayden, C  | 2002 | A Roman Settlement at Mansfield College, Oxford <i>Oxoniensia LXV</i> , 292-332.           |
| Crossley, A (ed)  | 1979 | <i>Victoria History of the County of Oxford, Vol IV</i>                                    |
| Lathey, RT<br>and Parsons, EJS et al.   | 1936 | A Contemporary Map of the Defences of Oxford in 1644. <i>Oxoniensia, Vol. I</i> , 161-72   |
| OA  | 2002 | New Chemistry Laboratory, Oxford<br>Post-Excavation Assessment and Research Design         |
| OA  | 2007 | Queen Elizabeth House, St Giles, Oxford. Desk-top<br>assessment                            |
| OA<br>(Ed. Wilkinson, D)  | 1992 | <i>Fieldwork Manual</i>  |
| OARARA<br>( <a href="http://consultation.oxford.gov.uk/consult.ti/OARAAAC/consultationHome">http://consultation.oxford.gov.uk/consult.ti/OARAAAC/consultationHome</a> ) | 2012 | Oxford Archaeological Resource Assessments and<br>Research Agendas                         |
| TVAS<br>( <a href="http://www.tvas.co.uk/downloads/1A-Summary.pdf">http://www.tvas.co.uk/downloads/1A-Summary.pdf</a> )   | 2008 | Kendrew Quadrangle: Monuments, Murder and<br>Farming                                       |

## APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Kitchen Lift, Keble College, Oxford

Site code: OXKEKL16

Grid reference: Centred at NGR SP 5132 0692

Summary of results: In August 2016, Oxford Archaeology (OA) were commissioned by Keble College to undertake an archaeological watching brief during enabling works associated with the refurbishment of the college kitchens. The watching brief focussed on the excavation of a trench for a new lift pit in the SCR pantry.

The watching brief revealed the top of the second terrace gravel overlain by a layer of post-glacial brickearth. There was some evidence for a feature in the northern half of the trench. The shape of the feature in plan was uncertain, although it is possible that it was linear. The fills of the feature were predominantly composed of re-deposited brickearth, which elsewhere in the city has been indicative of prehistoric or late Saxon features.

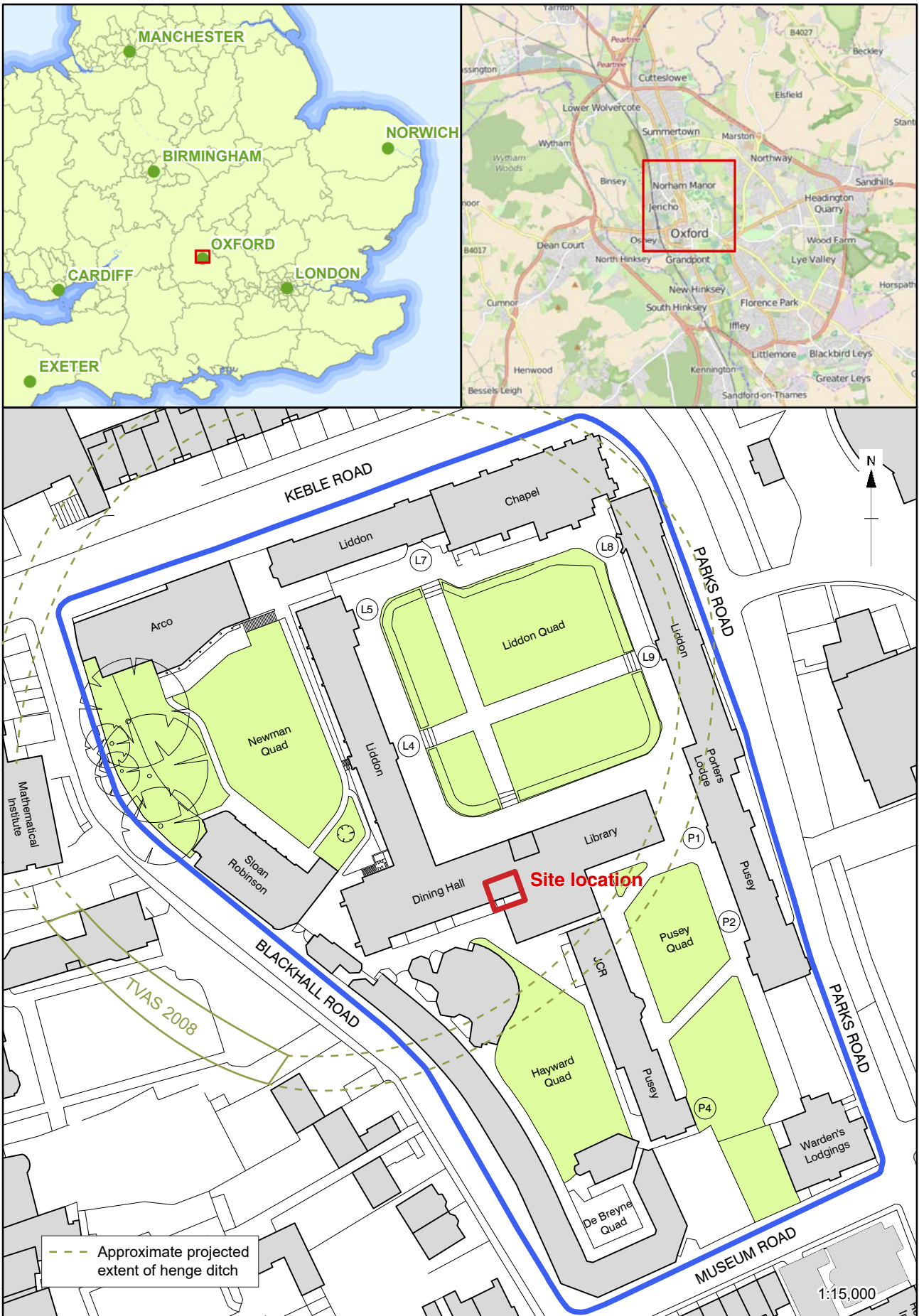
The location of the site lies within the projected area enclosed by the henge identified during recent works undertaken by Thames Valley Archaeological Services (TVAS) within the Kendrew Quadrangle of St John's College. Consequently, it was considered whether the possible linear feature within the lift pit trench may have also been associated with the henge, particularly given the composition of the main fill. However, the projected eastern continuation of the ditch identified by TVAS runs to the south of the SCR, and consequently it seems unlikely that the southern edge of the feature is part of the same ditch.

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The gravel, brickearth and probable feature had been heavily truncated during the construction of the south range of the Liddon Quad in the 19th century.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Oxfordshire County Museum Service in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2016.122

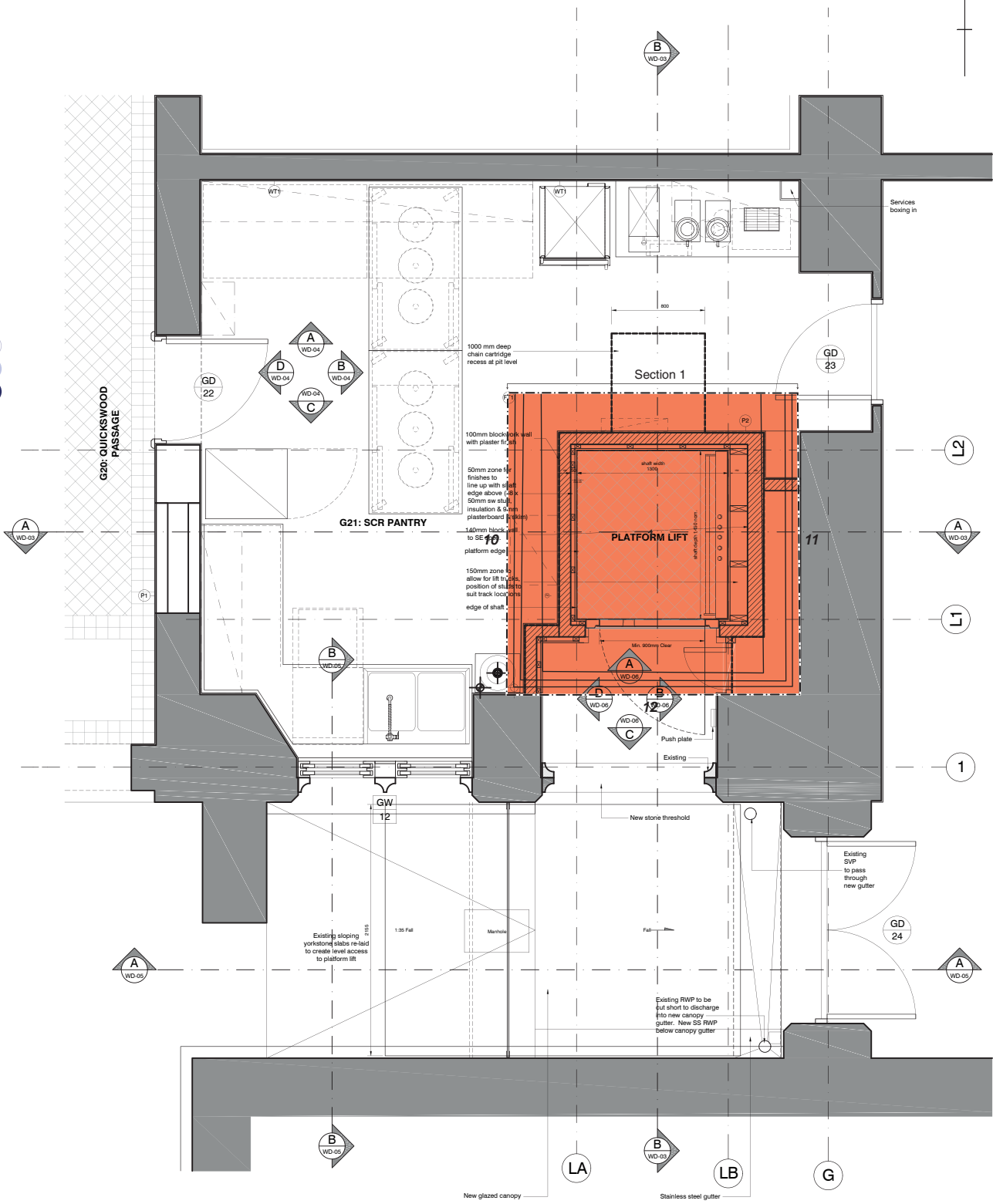




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Figure 1: Site location



1 PROPOSED : GROUND FLOOR PLAN

Area monitored by watching Brief



Figure 2: Area monitored by watching Brief



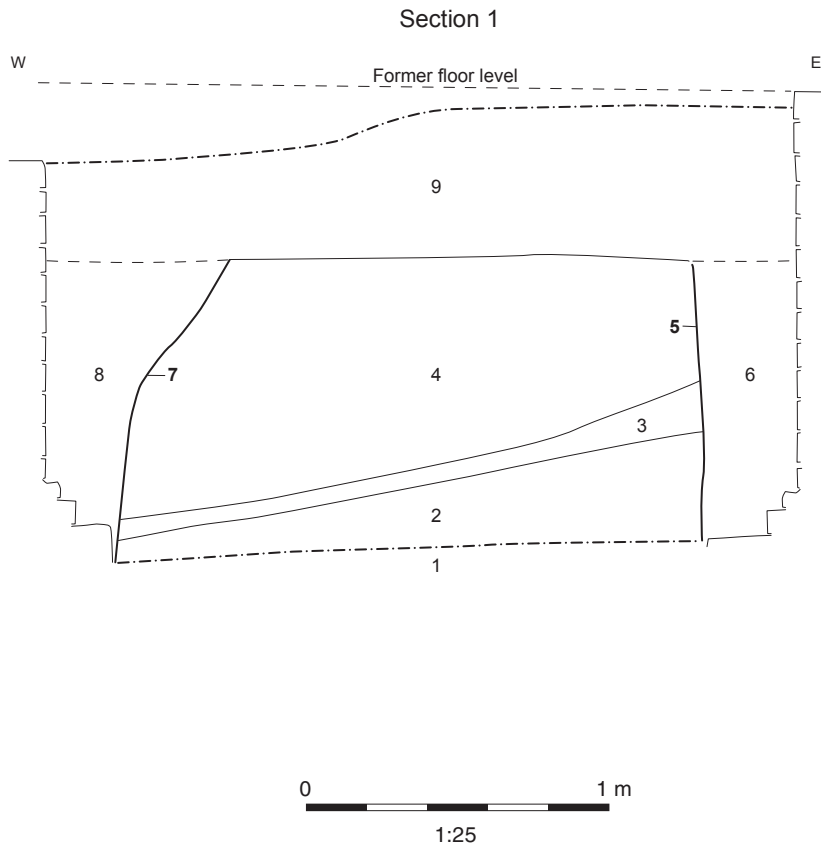
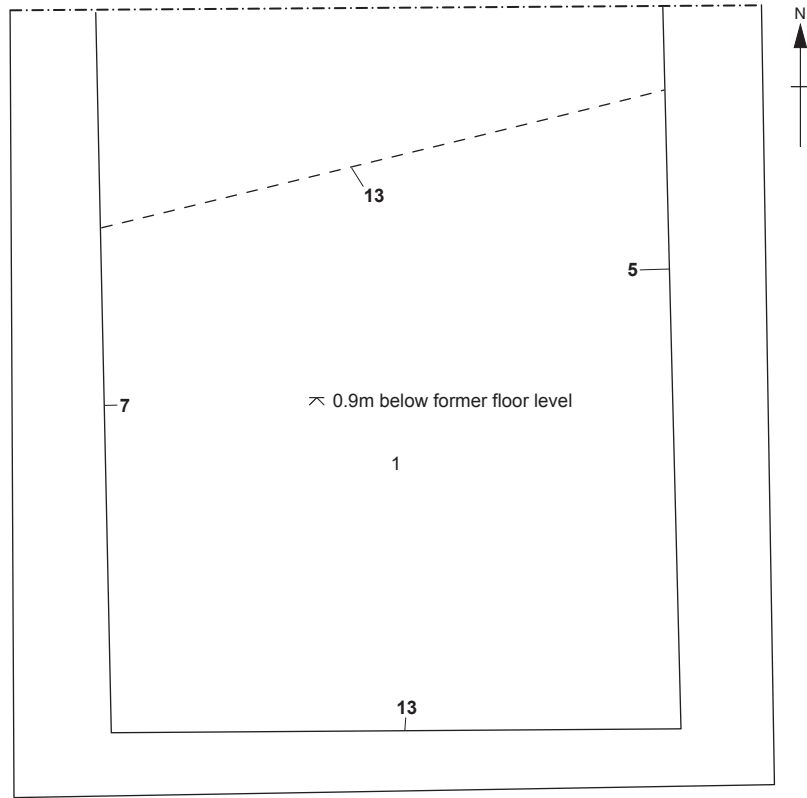


Figure 3: Plan at 0.9m below former floor level and Section 1



Plate 1: Section 1





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