

Historic Royal Palaces

*The Installation of Lights along Banqueting Hall Path,
Hampton Court Palace,
Surrey*

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

NGR: TQ 1560 6870

**Oxford Archaeological Unit
March 2001**

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Summary

On the 7th and 8th of September 2000, the Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief, on eight test pits, in advance of the installation of new path lights on Banqueting Hall path at Hampton Court Palace, Hampton Court Road, Twickenham, Greater London.

Brick wall foundations were found in a number of the test pits. These were interpreted as the remains of a single brick wall foundation. This structure ran south-east to north-west under the tail of the extant flat-topped grassed bank which runs parallel to, and on the Thames side of, the existing Banqueting Hall path. It is possible that these represent a foundation to a wall which originally retained the flat-topped grassed bank. An extant wall probably dating to the 1530s limits the raised flat grassed area to the south-west. The excavated remains were constructed of the same bricks, bonded by the same mortar and laid in the same English Garden Wall bond as this parallel wall. Together these standing and excavated elements possibly formed a raised walkway or mount. The possible original extent of this feature was from the south-west corner of the Palace to the River Gate. Early maps of the Palace indicate that this section may only have been part of a more extensive network of Mounts constructed by Henry VIII. These would have allowed access from the River Gate to different elements of the Palace and would have afforded a view of the formal gardens from an elevated position.

1 Introduction

Historic Royal Palaces are improving access to the Banqueting Hall by installing ground level lights to illuminate the path leading from the Vine House to the Banqueting Hall at Hampton Court Palace (Fig.1). In response to a request from Jonathan Foyle (Assistant Curator, HRP) the Oxford Archaeological Unit hand excavated a series of eight test pits at the proposed locations for these lights (Fig.2). The fieldwork took place on the 7th and 8th of September 2000.

2 Geology and topography

The site lies at a height of c.9 m above OD on the First Terrace drift geology of the River Thames. The site is situated within a loop of the River Thames on its northern bank (Fig. 1).

The Banqueting Hall path runs from the Vine House to the Banqueting Hall on the southern side of the Palace complex, parallel to the line of the River Thames. A flat topped grass bank runs parallel to the path on its south-west side (Fig. 2). The flat, grassed top to the bank is c.3 m wide, and c.1 m higher than the gardens to the north-east.

3 Historical background

The area between the main Palace complex and the River Thames fell between the southern extensions of the eastern and western elements of the Palace moat, constructed in c.1515-17 during the tenure of Thomas Wolsey (1514 - 1528). It was during the period of building works ordered by Henry VIII in 1529, and completed in 1540, that the first formal gardens were laid out in this area. The River Gate and Boathouse were constructed during these ambitious building programmes and the gardens would have provided the first opportunity to impress those arriving at the Palace by water. The River Gate and associated structures were demolished during William III's rebuilding programme, executed by Sir Christopher Wren from 1689-1702, to make way for the extension of the Privy Garden almost to the bank of the Thames. It was at this time that the Banqueting Hall was also constructed. Five historic maps (Fig.5), and two historic views (Fig. 4) illustrate the historical evolution of this part of Hampton Court Palace.

4 Aims

The aim of the watching brief was to record the character, extent and date of any archaeological remains encountered during the works.

5 Methodology

The test pits were positioned at the proposed locations of a set of new path lights and their associated electrical junction boxes. Each test pit was T shaped. The head of the 'T' was dug into the pathway to receive the junction boxes and the tail extended into the grass-covered bank (which runs south-west of and adjacent to, the path) to receive the light fittings (Fig. 2). The test pits were excavated to the depth of the natural gravel geology, or to the top of structural evidence where it was encountered.

6 Results

The nature of the evidence found in the small-scale test pits (Fig. 3) will be discussed as a whole, rather than on a test pit by test pit basis. No artefactual or ecofactual evidence was recovered, the results and the discussion will therefore explore the stratigraphic sequence only.

The undisturbed horizon of the sand and gravel geology was encountered in all the test pits at varying depths between 8.12m OD and 8.34m OD. In all pits, except test pit 1, the natural geology was overlain by a dark grey-brown silty loam with gravel inclusions which represented a buried soil, probably the original topsoil.

The buried soil had been cut by the construction trenches for at least two separate elements of a brick foundation/wall boundary. The south-eastern element is orientated south-east to north-west. This was observed in test pit 6, with its terminus in test pit 5. No remains of this wall were found in test pits 7 and 8. The north-western element was recorded in test pits 3, 2 and 1. This too was constructed on a south-east to north-west orientation and directly in line with the south-eastern element. In test pit 1, the foundation/wall returns to run northwards towards (and on the same alignment as) the main Palace buildings. The two separate foundation/wall elements shared construction techniques; they were both trench built, consisted only of bricks and mortar, did not have a stepped footing, and measured 0.45m wide (a stretcher and a header). The

foundations/walls were probably built in English bond but this was only observed in test pit 3. They were built of orange-red bricks measuring 0.055m by 0.10m by 0.23m and bonded by a buff coloured lime based mortar with chalk inclusions. A second brick type was observed in test pit 2. These had a purple hue, were of the same dimensions as the orange-red bricks, and were bonded by the same mortar. A patch of limewash covered by mortar on one of these bricks suggests that this second brick type was re-used.

Upper elements of the structure had been demolished leaving no more than five courses remaining, while in other places it had been completely removed. These remains were buried beneath an imported deposit, which was then overlain by the existing topsoil and turf.

7 Discussion

The similarities between the structural elements recorded in the test pits suggest a single phase foundation for a small wall, with at least one gateway (test pit 5). The construction bond, brick size and mortar of this foundation were the same as an adjacent and parallel brick wall. This extant wall separates a flat-topped grass bank to its north-east from the walled garden (which abuts the north-west face of the Banqueting Hall) to its south-west. It is thought to date to the 1530s (J Foyle *pers. comm.*), and can be seen on Wyngaerde's view dated 1558, (where it appears as the main outer wall to the Palace gardens) and Kipp's view dated 1705 of the Palace from the River Thames (highlighted on Fig. 4).

The extant wall is clearly represented by a solid line on a map dated c.1690-91 (Ref. PRO WKS 34/112). It is joined by a separate wall which is shown running northwards parallel to the inside line of the Palace Moat and up to the south-west corner of the main body of the Palace (Fig. 5). The alignment of the foundations located during the watching brief is represented on this map as a dotted line running inside and parallel to these solid lines. It is therefore possible that the excavated foundations are evidence of a contemporary wall running parallel to the extant wall. It is possible that such a small structural feature need not have been mapped. Even though the relationship between the body of the grassed bank and the excavated foundations was not revealed by the excavations, it is possible they are contemporary, and that its function was to retain the foot of the grass bank. Thus, both walls and the grass bank could be interpreted as forming a mount, i.e. a narrow raised walkway overlooking the inner Palace gardens.

Talman's map of 1698 shows two parallel solid lines at this location suggesting that this possible mount extended all the way to the River Gate, therefore providing access, on foot, to the Palace from this approach. Other parallel solid lines on this map indicate a possible network of mounts bordering the major formal garden elements of the Privy and Pond Gardens, and thus connecting them to various elements of the Palace complex on its southern side. The feature found in the watching brief may therefore have been part of this larger garden scheme (Fig.5). In addition it would have provided an elevated position from which to admire the gardens below.

The eastern extent of the suggested mount was truncated in c.1700 by the extension to the south of the Privy Garden, over the area formerly occupied by the now demolished

River Gate and associated structures (Fig. 5, Soane Mus. Folio II No. 40, 1710-13; and Rocque, 1736). During the contemporary construction of the Banqueting Hall, the elevated element of the possible mount was interrupted, providing the base for the flat paved area at the top of a set of steps installed into the edge of the bank for access to the door in its northern elevation.

The structural elements located in test pits 5 and 6 were demolished by at least 1897, but a short stretch from the corner of the Pond Garden remained extant (Fig. 5, OS Second edition 1897). At some time during the twentieth century this last remaining element was demolished and a new pathway installed running along the base of the possible former mount.

The remains of the possible mount now survive as a flat-topped grassed bank running from the western wall of the Privy Garden past the Banqueting Hall, having been levelled into an area of lawn at the north-western end near the Vine House.

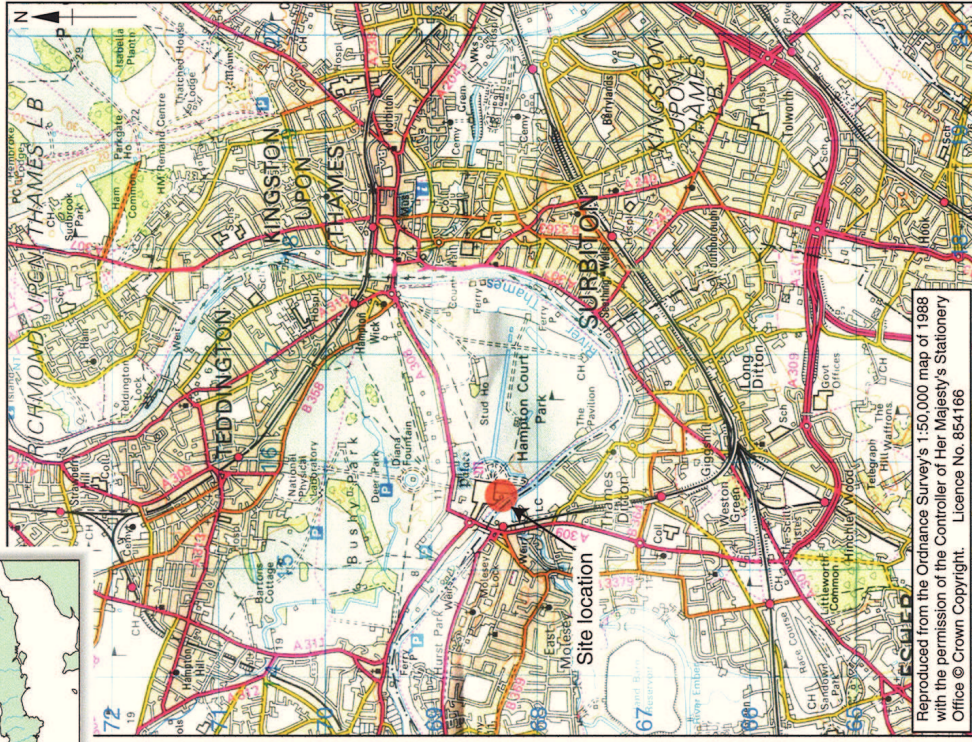
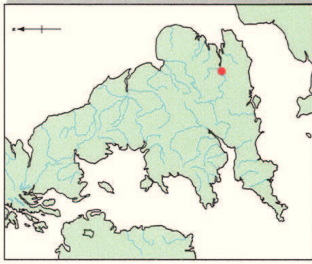
Acknowledgements

OAU would like to thank Jonathan Foyle and Adrian Philips of HRP for their advice and support during the project, and Franklins, the contractors, who provided attendance during the archaeological works.

8 Context Inventory

Trench	Context	Type	Dimensions T=thickness, H= height, W=width.	Description	Comment
1	101	Deposit	T=0.30m	grey-brown, silty loam	Current turf and topsoil
1	102	Structure	full dimensions not revealed	red bricks and lime mortar	Brick foundation
1	103	Deposit	T=0.06m	orangey- brown, sandy-silt	Re-dep brickearth
1	104	Deposit	T=0.08m	crushed bricks and mortar	Demolition layer
1	105	Deposit	-	sand and gravel	Natural
1	106	Cut	full dimensions not revealed	-	Construction cut for structure 102
1	107	Cut	full dimensions not revealed	-	Service trench for water pipe.
2	201	Deposit	T=0.12m	grey-brown, silty loam	Current turf and topsoil
2	202	Deposit	T=0.32m	grey-brown, silty-loam	Imported topsoil
2	203	Deposit	T=0.13m	mid-brown, silty loam	Buried soil
2	204	Deposit	-	sand and gravel	Natural
2	205	Structure	W=0.43m, H=0.28m	red bricks and lime mortar	Brick foundation
2	206	Deposit	T=0.20m	crushed bricks and mortar	Lens of demolition material
3	301	Deposit	T=0.23m	grey-brown, silty loam	Current turf and topsoil
3	302	Deposit	T=0.10m	grey-brown, silty-loam	Imported topsoil
3	303	Deposit	T=0.23m	crushed bricks and mortar	Demolition layer
3	304	Structure	W=0.44m H=0.30m	red bricks and lime mortar	Brick foundation
3	305	Deposit	T=0.07m	mid-brown, silty loam	Buried soil
3	306	Deposit	-	sand and gravel	Natural
4	401	Deposit	T=0.30m	grey-brown, silty loam	Current turf and topsoil

4	402	Deposit	T=0.10m	grey-brown, silty loam	Imported topsoil
4	403	Deposit	-	crushed bricks and mortar	Demolition layer
4	404	Deposit	T=0.25m	mid-brown, silty loam	Buried soil
4	405	Deposit	-	sand and gravel	Natural
5	501	Deposit	T=0.30m	grey-brown, silty loam	Current turf and topsoil
5	502	Deposit	T=0.30m	grey-brown, silty loam	Imported soil
5	503	Deposit	T=0.10m	hoggin	Current path surface
5	504	Deposit	T=0.30m	grey-brown, silty loam	Imported soil
5	505	Deposit	T=0.20m	mid-brown, silty loam	Buried soil
5	506	Deposit	-	sand and gravel	Natural
5	507	Structure	W=? H=0.38m	red bricks and lime mortar	Brick foundation
6	601	Deposit	T=0.30m	grey-brown, silty loam	Current turf and topsoil
6	602	Deposit	T=0.23	crushed brick and mortar	Demolition layer
6	603	Structure	W=0.36m H=0.13m	purpley bricks and lime mortar	Brick foundation
6	604	Structure	W=0.36m H=0.23m	red bricks and lime mortar	Brick foundation
6	605	Deposit	T=0.25m	mid-brown, silty loam	Buried soil
6	606	Deposit	-	sand and gravel	Natural
7	no contexts allocated	-	-	-	same sequence as test-pit 4
8	no contexts allocated	-	-	-	same sequence as test-pit 4



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Figure 1: Site location.

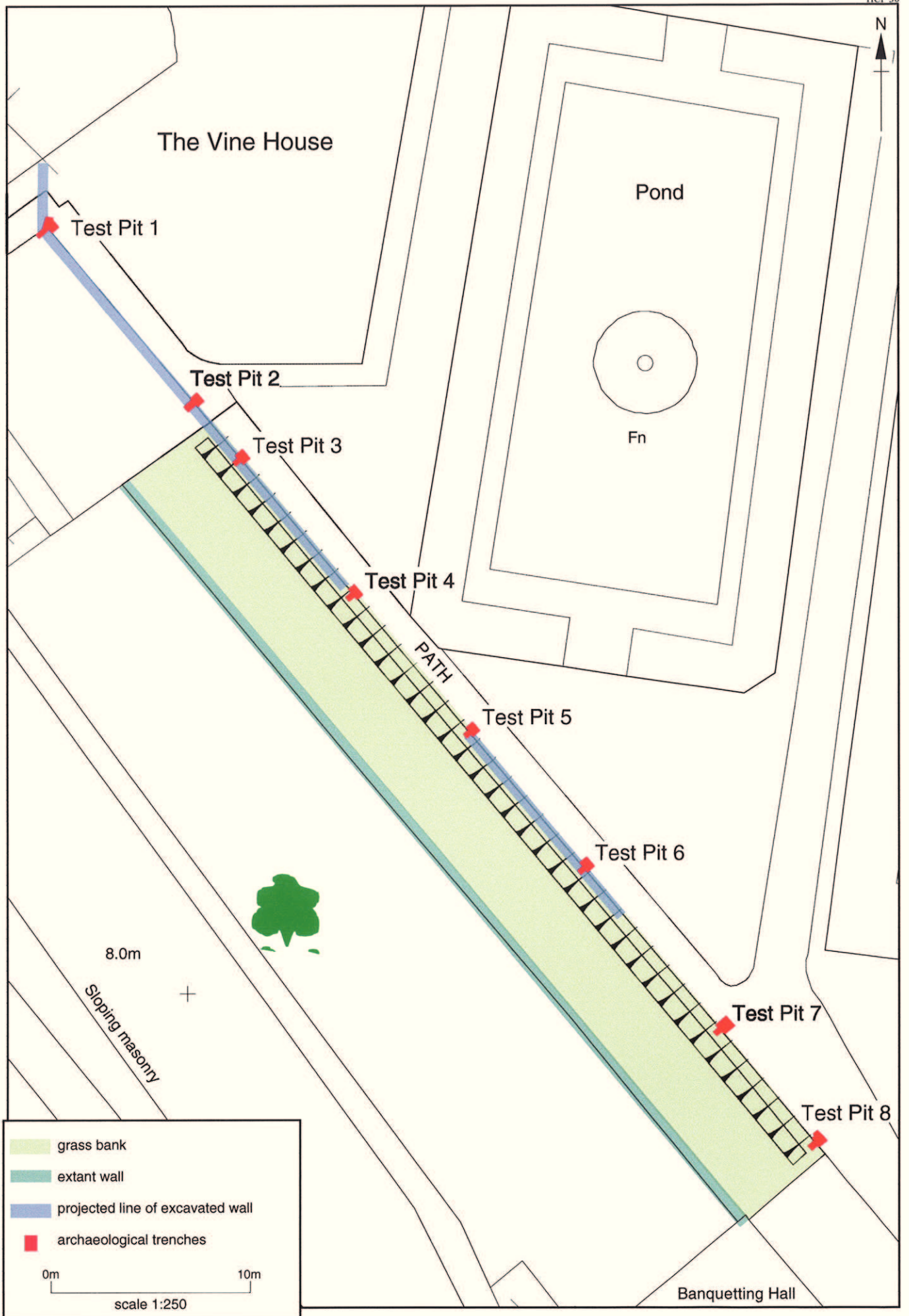


Figure 2: Trench location plan.

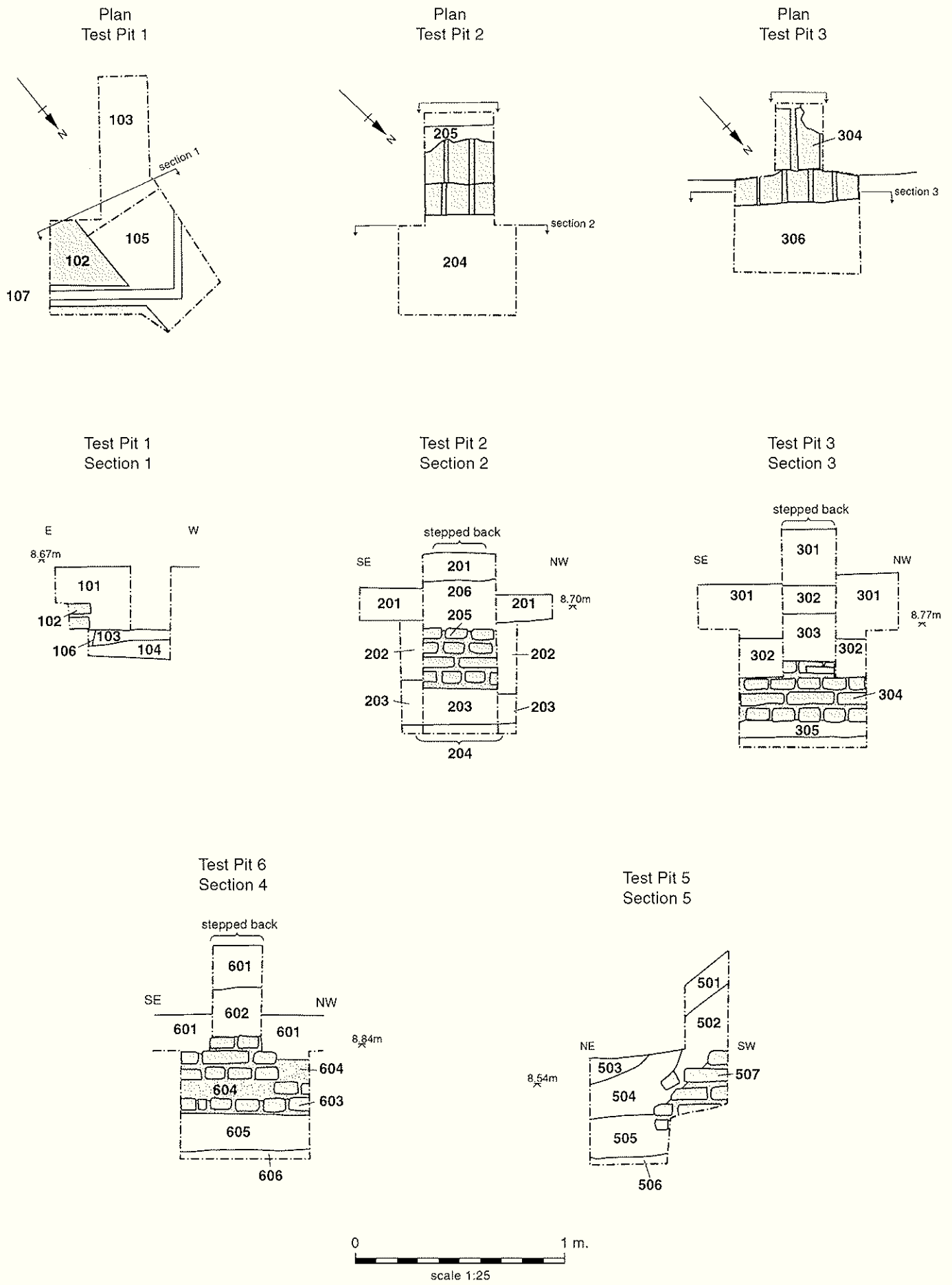
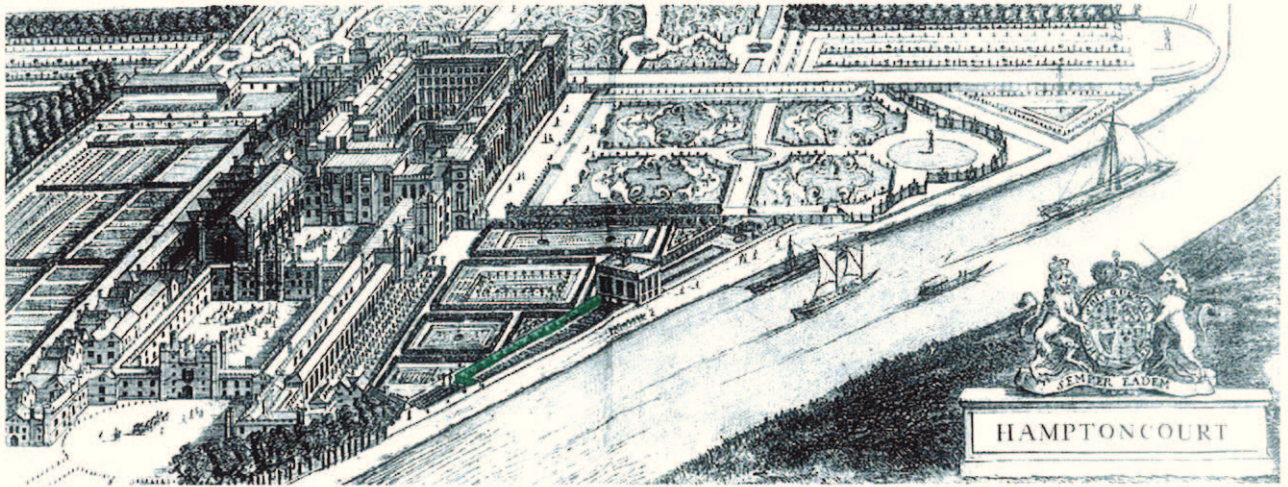
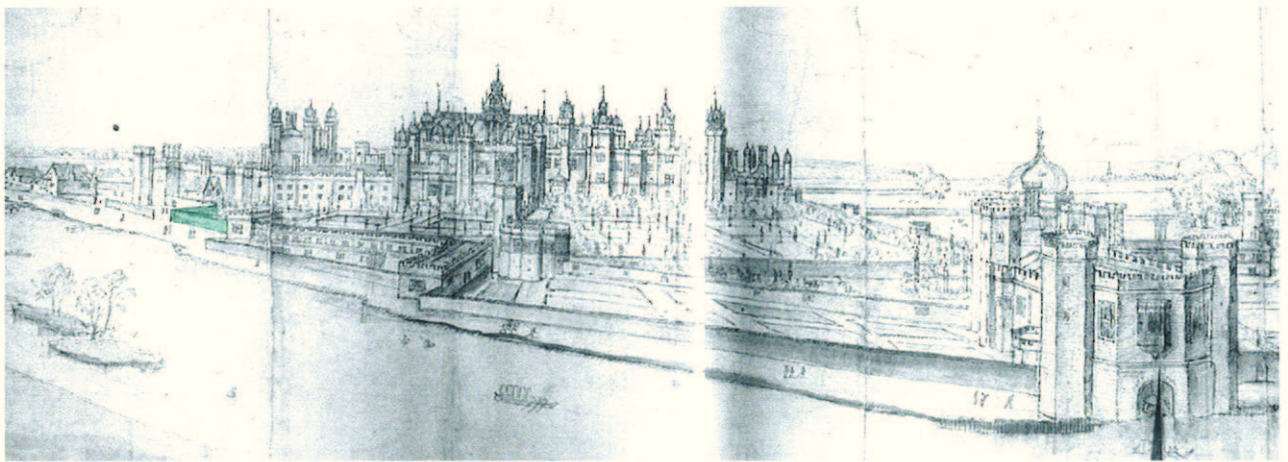


Figure 3: Trench plans and sections.



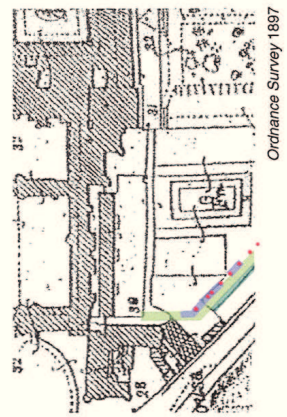
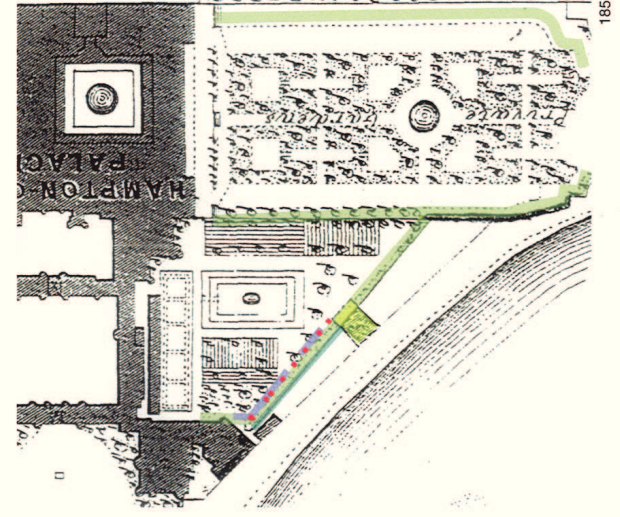
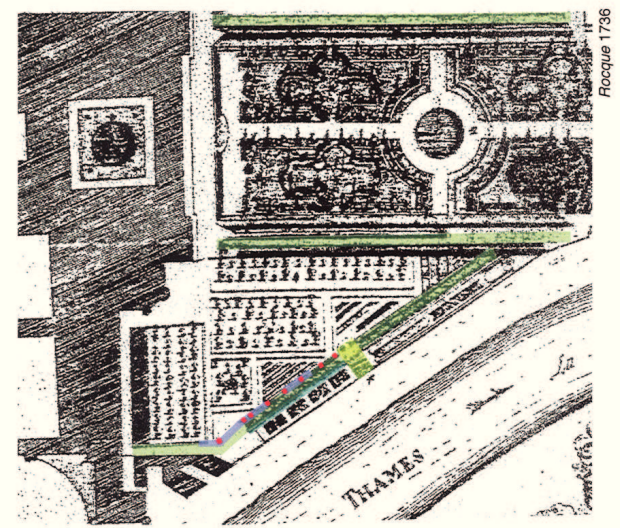
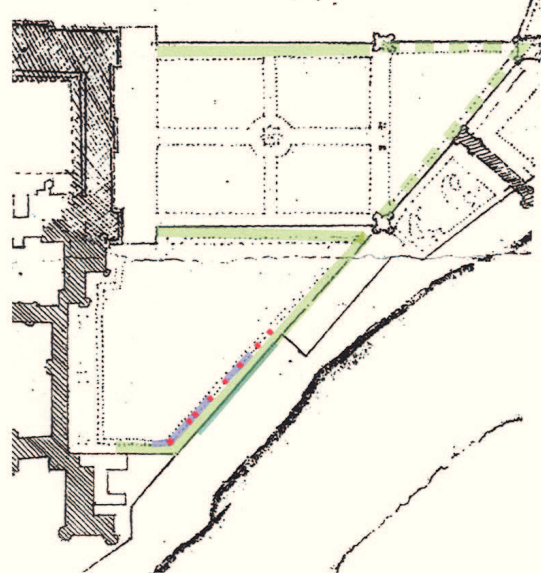
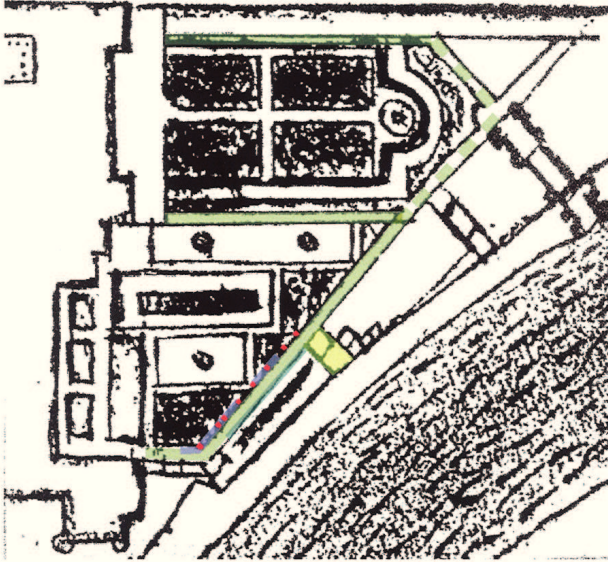
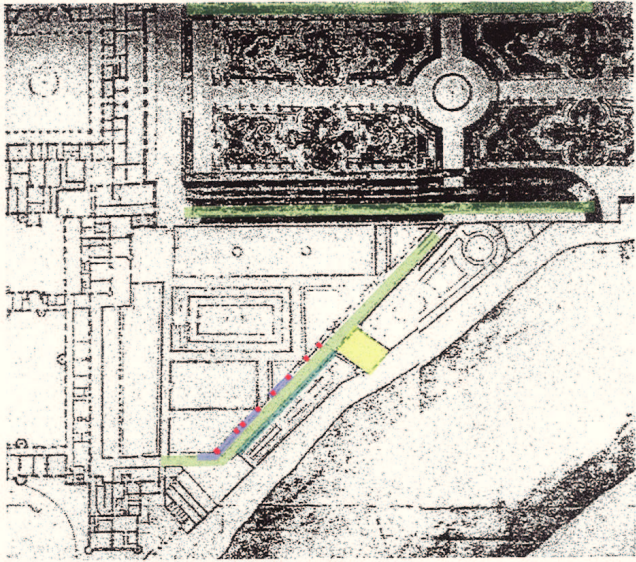
John Kipp's view from the South West (c.1705).



Wynegaerde's view from the river in 1558.

— extant wall

Figure 4: Two historic views.



Legend:

- suggested 'Mount'
- extant wall
- projected line of excavated wall
- trench
- Banqueting Hall
- maps to varying scales

N

Figure 5: Set of 6 historic maps overlain by positions of walls, mount and trenches.



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