

Royal Hospital Chelsea London

New service ducting



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

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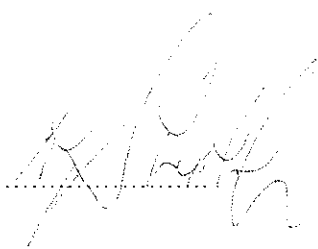
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Royal Hospital Chelsea, New Service Ducting

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In January 2004 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. The work was commissioned by Telcheck Ltd. in advance of replacement and installation of new service ducts. The watching brief revealed extensive deposits of 18th and 19th century garden soils and the foundations of a 20th century structure. No evidence of earlier archaeological remains was encountered.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In January 2004 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea. The work was commissioned by Telcheck Ltd on behalf on the Royal Hospital Chelsea during replacement and installation of new service ducts within the grounds of the hospital.
- 1.1.2 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation for English Heritage based on the methodology and proposals contained in previous monitoring exercises at the site (OA 2003).
- 1.1.3 The area of the watching brief runs between standing buildings with the trenches being excavated into open ground, mostly lawns and paths (Fig. 2).

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on level ground at approximately 7 m OD and occupies roughly 0.3 of a hectare in area. The underlying natural geology is terrace gravels overlying London clay.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the site was prepared by OA in the WSI (OA 2003) and is included below.
- 1.3.2 The Royal Hospital is situated in the ancient parish of Chelsea on the edge of the first gravel terrace of the River Thames. The medieval centre of the village, clustered around the church lies to the west of the hospital and it would appear that, when originally constructed, the hospital lay in open fields running down to the Thames.
- 1.3.3 No prehistoric or Roman sites have been identified in the immediate vicinity of the Royal Hospital. However, the location of the site on the first gravel terrace overlooking the river suggests that it would have been an attractive place to settle, both agriculturally and strategically. The area has produced chance finds of prehistoric material including a Bronze Age palstave, a number of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic flint flakes and a considerable amount of later prehistoric metalwork dredged from the River Thames. The grounds of the Royal Hospital itself have

produced Roman material: a coin of Tetricus (259-274 AD) was found in College Court during the construction of a sewer in 1886.

- 1.3.4 The parish would appear to be able to demonstrate pre-Conquest roots. Chelsea is mentioned in a number of Anglo-Saxon charters and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that Offa, King of Mercia, held a synod in Chelsea about AD 787. No recorded Anglo-Saxon material has been discovered in the immediate vicinity of the hospital.
- 1.3.5 During the medieval period the site of the hospital lay in the open fields of the parish of Chelsea to the east of the village which clustered around the church. Hamilton's 1717 map of the parish of Chelsea, (which probably reflects the medieval settlement pattern of the parish) coupled with the various documents relating to the purchase of the land for the hospital, allows us to reconstruct fairly accurately the medieval settlement pattern.
- 1.3.6 The site of the hospital lies within Thamesott, an arable field at the eastern edge of the parish of Chelsea. This field was separated from Eastfield, the main open field of the medieval parish of Chelsea (now partly occupied by Burton Court) by the road from Westminster to Chelsea. This road, known as Paradise Row, to the east of the Royal Hospital and Jews Row to the west of the Hospital appears likely to have existed as a straight thoroughfare in the medieval period. It ran from Chelsea to Westminster and, as marked on Hamilton's map, passed over the Creek to the west via a stone bridge. When the Royal Hospital was built this road was diverted around Burton Court. The road was only re-routed along its original routeway, through the grounds of the hospital, along what is now Royal Hospital Road, following an act of parliament in 1845.
- 1.3.7 The Royal Hospital was built partly on the site of an unsuccessful Theological College built in the reign of James I with the stated intention of training Protestant clergy to refute the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Although this building was originally planned as having a double quadrangle, the smaller of which was to have been partly telescoped within the larger, commentators such as Faulkner (1804) have argued that only one side of one, the largest, quadrangle was ever built. The college, which appears to have struggled against financial collapse from the first moment of its foundation, is recorded as 'dissolved' in a document of 1655 and between 1664 and 1666 it is recorded that it was used as a prison for Dutch Prisoners of War. Dean (1950, 31) records that many of these prisoners died during the Great Plague of 1666 and were buried in the college forecourt.
- 1.3.8 In 1667 the building was transferred to the newly founded Royal Society although it appears to have been of little use to them. Despite various attempts to sell the college and its lands the property was to remain in the hands of the Royal Society until 1682 when the land was finally sold to the crown as the site of the Royal Hospital.
- 1.3.9 In this year Christopher Wren was commissioned to design and build the new Hospital. The original plan was for buildings around a single courtyard (Figure Court); the side courtyards (Light Horse Court and College Court) were additions of 1686. In 1689, 476 old pensioners were admitted although the building was not

finished until 1690. With a few minor changes the main buildings that we see today are essentially those of the 1690's.

- 1.3.10 The proposed site lies to the south of the main hospital complex within the area originally laid out by Wren as an area of formal gardens. These comprised an elaborate mixture of canals, boulevards and gardens, which are clearly marked on Sturts 1692 plan of the Royal Hospital. Along the south front of the college Wren laid out a wide terrace and to the south of this the ground fell away to an area of trees and lawns. These gardens were bisected by a raised causeway that ran down to a water gate on the river, flanked by two charming summerhouses. The causeway was flanked on either side by two 40ft (c. 12 m) wide canals, which ran to the bottom of the south Terrace before branching off to run north-east and south-west along its base. On either side of the two major canals Wren laid out plantations of fruit and flowering trees (Ascoli 1974).
- 1.3.11 This arrangement survived fairly unscathed for the next 150 years although a gradual diminution is apparent on the various historic maps consulted. The most notable change is the disappearance of the orchards, which is apparent on maps from the mid 18th century onwards. Maps of this date, and later, show that the canals survive throughout the 18th and into the 19th century but that as early as 1717 the orchards had disappeared to be replaced by a Kitchen Garden to the south-west and by a area of meadow, described as the Governors Garden Meadow, to the north-east.
- 1.3.12 The most drastic change came in the 1850's when the construction of the Chelsea Bridge Road and the building of the Embankment carved off the southern edge of the gardens. This led to not only the loss of the Water Gate and the southern edge of Wren's Gardens but also to the infilling of the canals. Later 19th century and early 20th century maps show something very close to the modern layout of the gardens with a gravelled pathway following the line of the raised causeway and lawns laid out on the site of the canals and gardens and orchards that flanked them

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains within the effected area of the trenches.
- 2.1.2 To signal to all parties if significant archaeological remains were discovered, for which the resources allocated may not have been sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard. In which case all building work would be halted until the remains had been suitably investigated.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The service trenches themselves were excavated by a specialist team of groundworkers using a mini-digger (Kubota) fitted with a 0.3 m toothed bucket for a

total length of approximately 150 m. The excavations were monitored on the basis of regular visits.

- 2.2.2 Any archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and sample sections were drawn at scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film and a general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the OA's *Fieldwork Manual* (OAU 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits (Fig.3)

- 3.1.1 The top of the terrace gravel (5) was encountered at a depth of 0.5 m below ground level. This was overlaid by a layer of friable yellow brown silt, 0.1 m deep (4), containing a high percentage of gravels. This represented a layer of worked soil impinging onto the gravels below. Above this was a layer of friable grey brown silty loam (3), measuring 0.1-0.2 m in depth, again representing a layer of worked garden soil. The undulating nature of its base may indicate areas of deeper planting.
- 3.1.2 Cutting into the top of layer 3 were a series of concrete foundations, (6, 7 and 8). These were aligned on the standing buildings and appear to have been truncated down to a depth of 0.15 m below the present day ground level. A double row of frogged bricks and a layer of bitumen (possibly a damp course) could be seen on the surface of (8) and would indicate a late (post 1940's) construction date. Butting up to and over the top of the footings was a 0.25 m thick layer of dark brown silty loam (2). This was a layer of worked soil used to level the ground in order to lay the lawn (1).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Finds recovered from all the soil deposits (1, 2, 3 and 4) consisted of fragments of clay pipe, brick fragments and sherds of transfer printed ware, all consist with an 18th to early 20th century date.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

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

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The concrete footings observed relate to a post-WWII phase of building. An aerial photograph from that date supplied by John Barker, the Surveyor of Works, shows a covered walkway in this location which is probably associated with these footings. The soil stratigraphy exposed within the remainder of the trench is consistent with garden soil deposits. No further significant archaeology was observed in the service duct trenches.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>	<i>Date</i>
1	Layer	0.0 m - 0.1 m	>0.5 m	Turf and topsoil	-	C20th
2	Layer	0.1 m - 0.3 m	> 0.5 m	Worked garden soil	Brick, pottery	C19th/20th
3	Layer	0.3 m - 0.5 m	> 0.5 m	Earlier worked soil	Clay pipe, pottery	C18th/19th
4	Layer	0.4 m - 0.5 m	>0.5 m	Earlier worked soil	Clay pipe, pottery	C18th/19th
5	Layer	>0.5 m	>0.5 m	Terrace gravel	-	-
6	Structure	0.15 m - > 0.25 m	1.6 m	Concrete footing	-	C20th
7	Structure	0.3 m - >0.4 m	0.3 m	Concrete footing	-	C20th
8	Structure	0.3 m - >0.4 m	5.2 m	Concrete base	-	C20th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Ascoli, D, 1974 *A Village in Chelsea: An informal account of the Royal Hospital*

Dean, C G T, 1950 *The Royal Hospital Chelsea* (London)

Faulkner, 1804 *A Historical and Topographical account of the Parishes of Kensington and Chelsea*

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OAU, 1996 *A Desk-Top Assessment of the possible archaeological implications of the Installation of an Automatic Irrigation System at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea.* Oxford Archaeological Unit (unpublished).

OAU, 1997 *An Archaeological Watching Brief conducted during the installation of an Automatic Irrigation System at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea.* Oxford Archaeological Unit (unpublished).

OAU, 1999a *Installation of a Communication Duct System. Archaeological Watching Brief Report.* Oxford Archaeological Unit (unpublished).

OAU, 1999b *Chelsea Flower Show 2000, New Marquee.* Archaeological Watching Brief Report. Oxford Archaeological Unit (unpublished)

OAU, 2000 *Chelsea Royal Hospital, Ranelagh House, Drainage, rehabilitation works*. Archaeological Watching Brief Report

APPENDIX 3 GLSMR/RCHME NMR ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT FORM

1) TYPE OF RECORDING

Evaluation, Excavation, **Watching Brief**, Building Recording, Survey,
Geoarchaeological Evaluation, Fieldwalking, Other

2) LOCATION

Borough: Kensington and Chelsea

Site address: Royal Hospital Road, London

Site Name: Royal Hospital Chelsea Site Code: RHCNSD 03

Nat. grid Refs: centre of site: TQ 281200 781900

Limits of site: N TQ 281000 782100 S TQ 281500 781600

E TQ 281600 782100 W TQ 280900 782100

3) ORGANISATION

Name of archaeological unit/company/society: Oxford Archaeology

Address: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 OES

Site director/supervisor: Mike Sims Project manager: Andrew Holmes

Funded by: Telcheck Ltd

4) DURATION

Date fieldwork started 12.01.04 Date finished: 12.02.04

Fieldwork previously notified? NO

Fieldwork will continue? NOT KNOWN

5) PERIODS REPRESENTED

Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic, Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, Saxon (pre-AD 1066),
Medieval (AD 1066-1485), **Post-Medieval**, Unknown

6) PERIOD SUMMARIES 18th, 19th and 20th century garden soils 20th century structures

7) NATURAL

Type: Terrace gravel

Height above Ordnance datum: 6.5 m

8) LOCATION OF ARCHIVES

- a) Please provide an estimate of the quantity of material in your possession for the following categories:

NOtes x3	PLans x2	PHotos x6	Ngtives x6
SLides x6	COrrrespondence	MScripts (unpub reports, etc)	
BUIlk finds	SMall finds	SOil samples	
OTher			

- b) The archive has been prepared and stored in accordance with MGC standards and will be deposited in the following location: Royal Chelsea Hospital Museum
- c) Has a security copy of the archive been made?: NO

10) BIBLIOGRAPHY

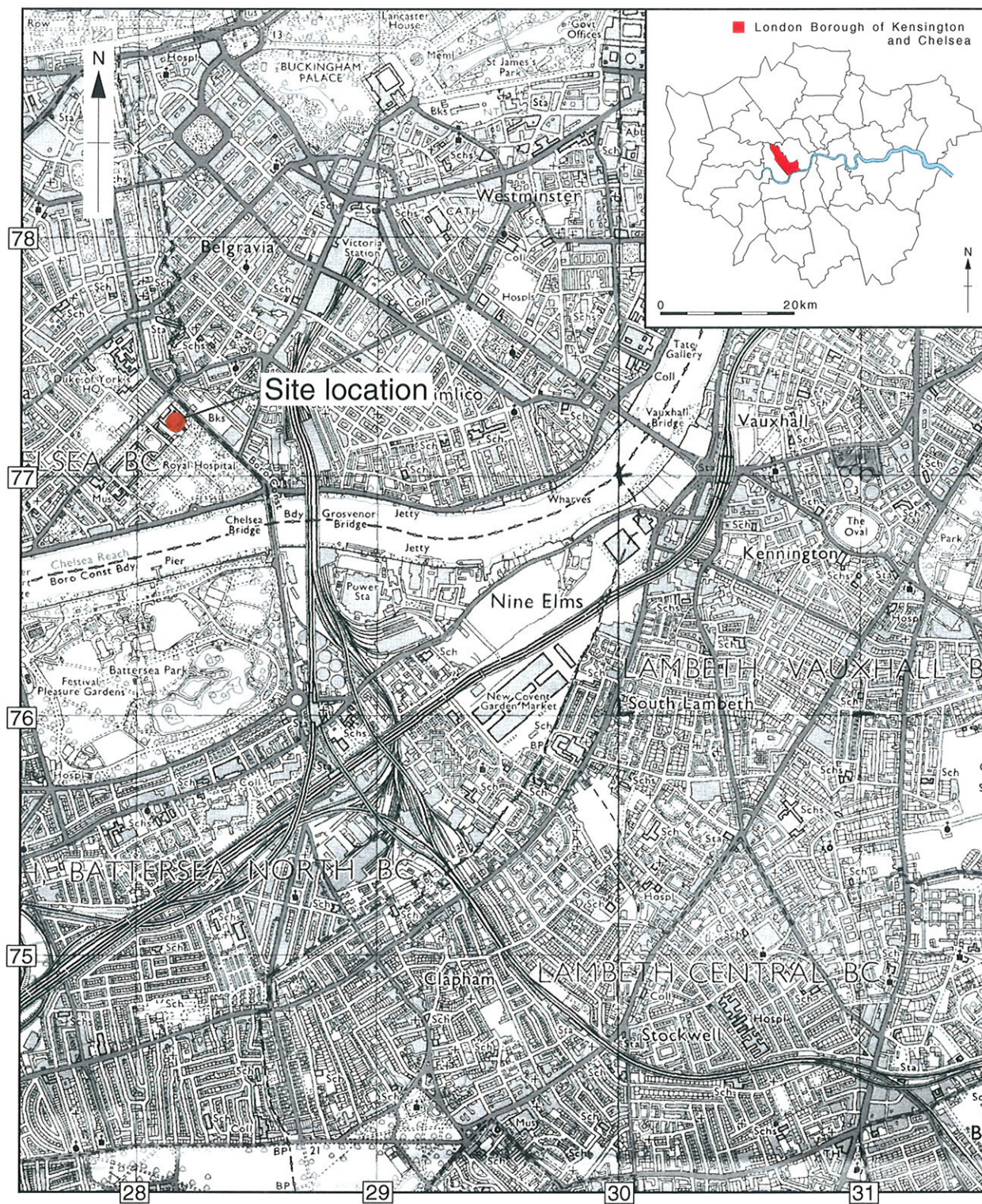
SEE

Appendix 2 Bibliography and References

SIGNED:

DATE:

NAME :



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Figure 1: Site location

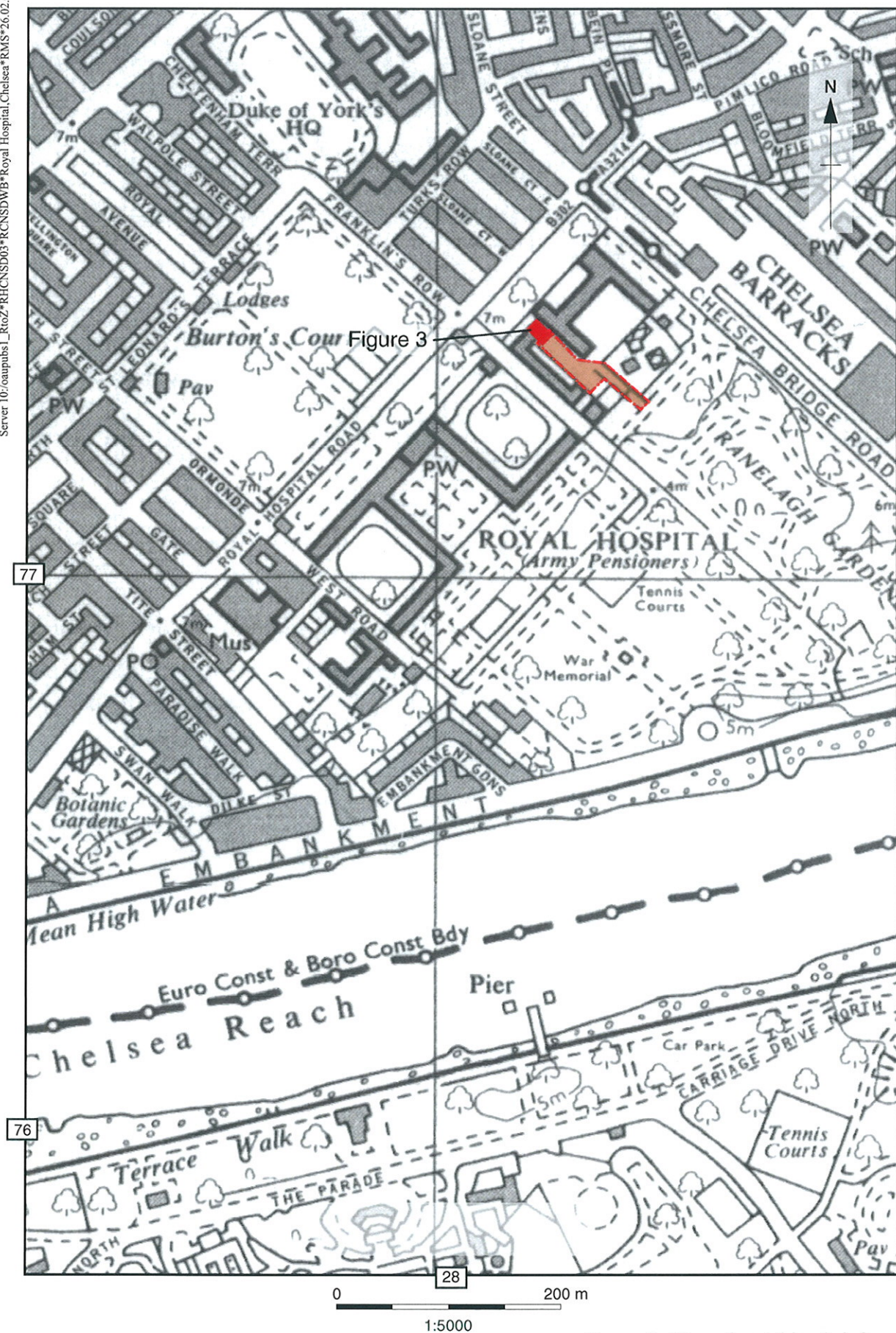


Figure 2: Plan of watching brief area

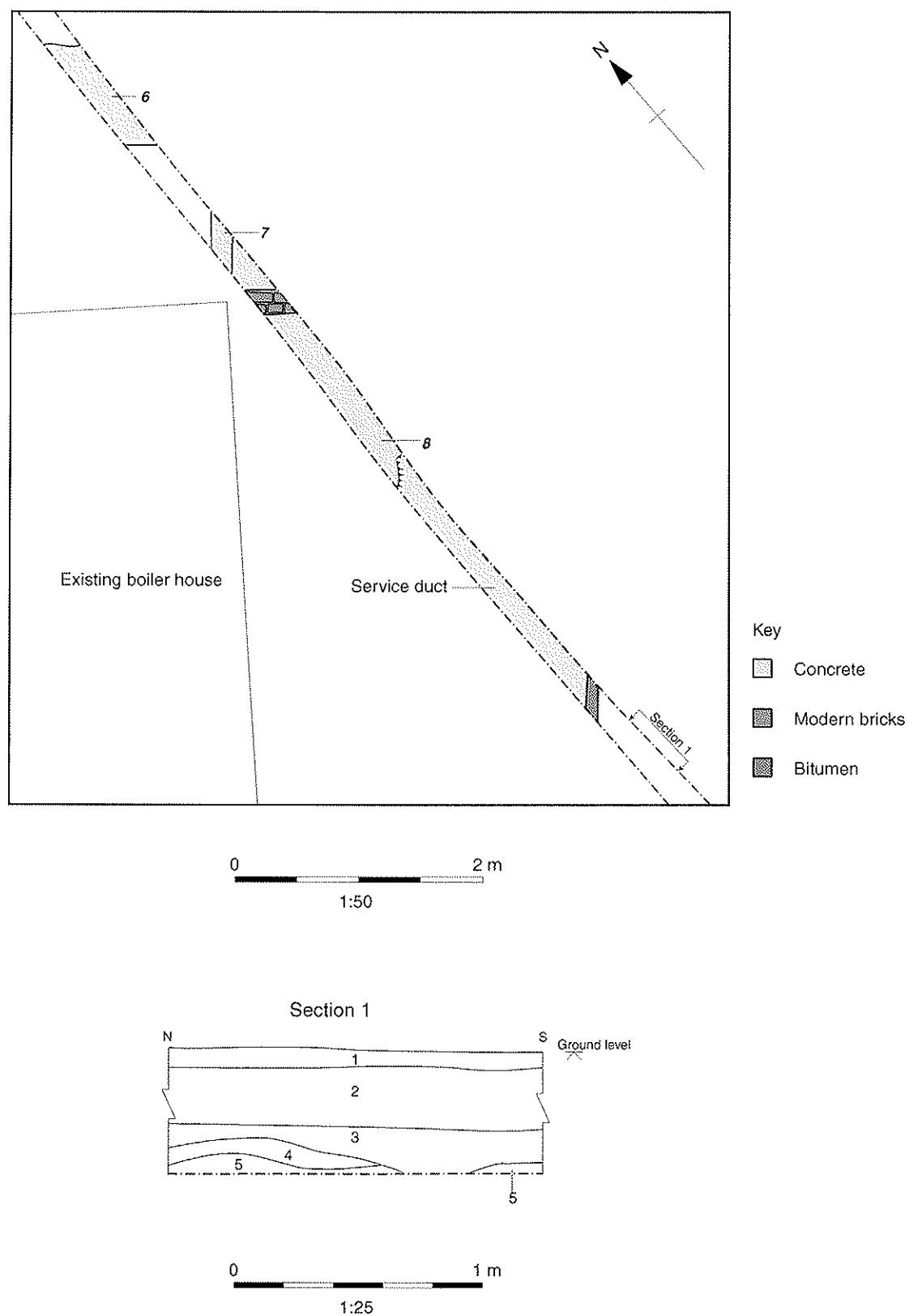


Figure 3: Plan and section of service duct, showing concrete structure



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