

Templars' Retail Park

Between Towns Road
Oxford



Archaeological Evaluation and Building Recording Report

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Templars' Retail Park, Between Towns Road, Oxford

Evaluation and Building Recording Report

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Summary

Between the 6th and 8th of November 2012, Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological evaluation and building survey at Unit 1 Templars' Retail Park, Oxford.

Two trenches were located within a former garden centre area and one trench was located within a service area. The remains of buildings associated with the Oxford Steam Ploughing Company, probably constructed after the factory was acquired by John Allen and Sons Ltd in 1897, were found in the former garden centre. Modern made ground deposits to a depth of more than 1m below the current ground surface were recorded in the service yard. No archaeological features pre-dating the late 19th century were present.

A gable, which formed part of the factory buildings and which had been re-located to its current location following the closure of the factory, was recorded. A rag stone boundary wall was partially recorded. The wall probably dates to the foundation of the Oxford Steam Ploughing Company in the late 19th century but an earlier date cannot be ruled out.



1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by Kyara Sarl to undertake an evaluation in advance of the refurbishment of Unit 1, Templars' Retail Park, Between Towns Road, Oxford (centred on SP 540 040).
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref: 11/02032/FUL). A brief (Oxford City Council 2012) was set by David Radford of Oxford City Council Planning Control and Conservation detailing the Local Planning Authority's requirements for work necessary to discharge the planning condition; OA has implemented Stage 2 (archaeological evaluation) and partially implemented Stage 1 (photographic record) of those requirements.
- 1.1.3 All work was undertaken in accordance with local and national planning policies.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on the east side of Oxford, 2.5 miles from the city centre (Fig. 1). The site has a natural slope downwards from north to south (from c 67m OD to 63.5m OD), although development in the 1980s has resulted in a largely level surface at c 64.5m OD.
- 1.2.2 The area of proposed development currently consists of a large retail unit, a service yard and an open area used as a garden centre (Fig. 2).
- 1.2.3 The geology of the area consists of fine-grained silts and sands, calcareous sandstones and clayey silts of the Temple Cowley Member (RPS 2008).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site has been described in detail in a desk-based assessment (Oxford Archaeology 2011), and is not be reproduced here. A brief summary is given below to provide the context for the proposed works.
- 1.3.2 No archaeological sites or finds dating from the pre-modern period have been identified from the site itself.
- 1.3.3 There is some evidence in the area for activity during the Iron Age.
- 1.3.4 This part of Oxford has a strong association with an important Roman pottery industry and several kiln sites have been identified within 400m of the site. Further Roman remains, including burials, have been found in the area.
- 1.3.5 The site lies within the medieval and post-medieval core of the settlement of Church Cowley and a number of houses are shown within the area of the site on 18th century maps.
- 1.3.6 The Oxford Steam Ploughing Company was founded in 1868 and initially occupied the eastern part of the site, fronting on to Rymers Lane. It was acquired by John Allen and Sons in 1897 and, by the early 20th century, the factory had expanded to occupy most of the site. The works closed in the early 1980s and the land was developed as a retail park. A dutch gable wall from the factory was retained (although not in its original position) and survives today. Two surviving stretches of rag wall may have formed boundaries of the original factory although an earlier origin cannot be ruled out.



- 1.3.7 The desk-based assessment concluded that, across the southern half of the site, levelling works associated with the 1980s redevelopment of the site would have totally truncated any archaeological deposits which may have been present.
- 1.3.8 However, because of the natural slope, truncation is likely to have been less severe in the northern half of the site, away from the foundations of the existing retail unit itself. The desk-based assessment concluded that the area of the former garden centre would have variable but possibly medium potential for survival of archaeological deposits and that the service yard would have high potential for the survival of archaeological deposits.
- 1.3.9 Where deposits do survive, it was concluded that the site has a general potential to contain deposits or artefacts dating to the later prehistoric period onwards.
- 1.3.10 Of particular importance would be deposits associated with the Oxford Roman pottery industry. The draft resource assessments for both Oxford City (Oxford City Council 2011) and for the wider region (Fulford 2010) recognise the importance of the Oxford industry. The site has some potential to contribute to a better understanding of the process of pottery manufacture.

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Kyara Sarl generously funded the works. The fieldwork was undertaken by Steve Leech, Ian Cook and Deirdre Forde and was managed for OA by Ken Welsh. David Radford monitored the archaeological work for Oxford City Council.



2 EVALUATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.2 General

2.2.1 The general aims of the evaluation was to gather sufficient information to generate a reliable predictive model of the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of burial of any important archaeological remains within the site.

2.3 Specific aims and objectives

2.3.1 The specific aims and objectives of the evaluation were to:

- (i) establish the character and extent of any Roman activity, bearing in mind the proximity of known pottery manufacturing sites;
- (ii) establish the character and extent of any medieval or post-medieval activity, bearing in mind the potential for remains relating to the evolution of the settlement of Church Cowley;
- (iii) establish the character and extent of any 19th-early 20th century remains associated with the Oxford Steam Plough factory.

2.3.2 In addition, the existing factory façade and rag walls were to be recorded.

2.4 Methodology

2.4.1 It was proposed to excavate three trenches (15m, 10m and 5m long) in order to evaluate the potential of the site. The trenches (Fig. 2) were targeted on the service yard (an area of high potential survival) and the former garden centre (an area of variable potential survival).

2.4.2 In the event, all three trenches were modified, in consultation with the Oxford City Archaeologist:

- Trench 1 was shortened because of the presence of a large service trench (or other modern intrusion) at the south end;
- Trench 2 was extended to an 'L' shape to further investigate the deposit sequence revealed; and
- Trench 3 was shortened as the depth of made ground was over 1m deep, well below the depth of impact of the proposed scheme.

2.4.3 It was proposed to record the historic factory façade and rag walls. It was only possible to record the factory façade and the outer (western) face of the north-south stretch of the rag wall due to the presence of dense vegetation.

2.4.4 All building recording was carried out at Level 2 as defined by English Heritage in their guidelines *Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice* (2006).



3 RESULTS: TRENCHES

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

3.1.1 Individual trench details including sizes, orientations and depths of deposits are shown in the tables that form Appendix A. General stratigraphic data, ground conditions, the distribution of archaeological features and the descriptions of these are contained within the sections below.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

3.2.1 All the trenches were overlain by concrete or block paving. Underlying these were either modern made ground or the demolition layer associated with demolition in the 1980s.

3.2.2 Overlying the natural clay in Trenches 1 and 2 were the remains of a building, represented by various walls, that were sealed by the demolition layer.

3.2.3 All the trenches were excavated and recorded in good weather conditions.

3.3 General distribution of archaeological deposits

3.3.1 The only archaeological deposits found were related to the building used by the Oxford Steam Plough company, established in 1868, until its closure and demolition in the 1980s. Remains of the building were only present in Trenches 1 and 2. Trench 3, located in the service yard of the retail centre, revealed only modern made ground deposits to a depth of at least 1m below ground level.

3.4 Trench 1 (Figs 3 & 4)

3.4.1 Trench 1 was orientated NNW – SSE, 1.7m wide and only excavated to a length of 7.5m due to the presence of modern service trench 112. This service trench was orientated NE-SW and truncated brick wall 110.

3.4.2 Four walls were present within the trench. The earliest wall (110) was orientated north-south for 2.1m, and turned eastwards at its southern end for 0.50m, where it was truncated by service trench 112. It had a single course of limestone blocks forming the foundations to a brick wall, and survived to a depth of six courses of bricks. The wall was cut into a redeposited grey clay (contexts 106 and 107) to the west of the wall. To the east, demolition layer 111 abutted the wall.

3.4.3 Abutting wall 110 was brick wall 109. This wall ran for 0.5m westwards, before it was overlain by wall 103. Brick wall 109 had three courses of bricks, and was cut into redeposited grey clay 107. It was overlain by a thin demolition layer 105, which was 0.1m thick.

3.4.4 Limestone wall foundation 108 was situated at the northern end of the trench, and was overlain by wall 103. It comprised of loose, un-bonded limestone blocks overlying a cast iron pipe, cut into the redeposited grey clay layer 106. The wall was 0.4m wide, 0.4m deep and 0.3m in length.

3.4.5 Limestone wall foundation ran for 4m North – South, it was 0.6m wide and 0.2m thick. It was made of rough unfinished limestone bonded together with a yellow / grey cement bond. This wall overlay walls 109 and 108 and was overlain by the modern concrete 102.



3.5 Trench 2 (Figs 5 & 6)

- 3.5.1 Trench 2 contained four walls, a drain and a post-hole. These features all overlay the natural, 213, that comprised a yellowish brown clay.
- 3.5.2 The earliest wall was limestone wall foundation 208, extended 3.2m from the South, Northwards before turning East for 0.3m. It was 0.60m wide and 0.3m deep and overlay the natural yellowish brown clay 213. The wall comprised of faced limestone, bonded with a yellowish mortar, and was up to two courses thick.
- 3.5.3 Abutting foundation wall 208 to the West was foundation wall 207. This was also orientated north-south and was 3m in length, 0.5m wide and 0.2m thick. It composed of un-bonded, roughly hewn limestone blocks that were laid directly on top of the natural clay 213.
- 3.5.4 Brick wall 206 abutted both walls 208 and 207 and was orientated north-south. It was 0.6m in length, 0.22m wide and 0.1m thick and was composed of a single course of bricks bonded with a grey cement mortar. This wall overlay a yellowish grey mortar layer 205, and was overlain by deposits 204, a thin lens of reddish brown iron rich material, 0.04m thick, and 203, a thin lens of yellowish grey redeposited mortar. These were overlain by demolition layer 202.
- 3.5.5 Forming a brick face to the eastern side of foundation wall 207 was brick wall 209. It comprised a single row of bricks bonded with a grey cement mortar. It was 1.8m long, 0.11m wide and 0.1m thick, and was laid directly on-top of the natural clay 213. It was overlain by demolition layer 202.
- 3.5.6 Post-hole 210 was situated directly East of wall 209. This was 0.2m in diameter, 0.3m deep, with vertical sides and a concave base. It contained a single fill, 211, that was a loose, dark grey - brown silt 0.3m thick.
- 3.5.7 Running along the eastern side of wall 208 was tile drain 212 It comprised a fragmentary circular-section ceramic drain, that veered off to the NE at the end of the wall.

3.6 Trench 3 (Fig. 2)

- 3.6.1 Trench 3 contained no archaeological deposits. The sequence of deposits comprised modern made ground to a depth of at least 1m below ground level, overlain by the modern yard surface.

3.7 Finds summary

- 3.7.1 Four bricks from the brick walls were retained and one sherd of pottery was recovered from the demolition layer 202, these all dated from the late 19th to early 20th Century.

4 RESULTS: BUILDING RECORDING

4.1 Introduction and general description

- 4.1.1 The Gable wall is located at the south side of the southern boundary of the the former garden centre and at the northern foot of the slope which inclines towards Between Towns Road. It was moved from here in the 1980s from its original location on the eastern side of the site, fronting onto Rymers Lane, where it was built in 1900, a date that it bears on its central plaque.
- 4.1.2 The rag wall is believed to be the remains of the corner wall of the Oxford Steam Plough factory boundary. It runs south to north along Rymers Lane and turns west to east along the boundary of the site. The interior of the wall, or the east and south facing sides, are currently obscured by thick vegetation and the north facing side runs along a private property.

4.2 Oxford Steam Plough Company gable

- 4.2.1 The red brick gable is built in the Dutch style, which experienced revived popularity in Britain in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Plate 1). Each side features two curves, characteristic of Dutch or Flemish gables, the upper of which is inverted, and a central pediment at the top. The stone dressings are moulded with careful detailing and the pediment is simple and Classical. The gable sits on two large moulded cornices at either side of the wall. The red bricks are coursed in an English bond and the cement mortar is likely to have been applied when the wall was relocated.
- 4.2.2 The gable features two large rectangular four light windows with stone quoining and cross mullions (Plate 2). They are simple with a moulded pediment and are in perfect symmetry with each other, reflecting Classical architectural forms. The lights have been plastered over with cement.
- 4.2.3 In the centre of the gable, over the windows is a plaque with the inscription "THE OXFORDSHIRE STEAM PLOUGHING COMpy ENGINEERS". Above this and below the pediment is a stone crest with the date 1900 and a detailed, high relief carving of a steam plough (Plate 3).
- 4.2.4 On the left hand side of the gable, what would have been the the corner of the building, is an indentation that appears to be like a chamfer for the accommodation of passing traffic but is rather more decorative than functional. The wall within the indentation is outwardly curves and it is surmounted with a moulded stone pendant decoration where the wall indents (Plate 4). On the curved wall are two small stone plaques with the inscriptions "E H J A AUG 1899" and "EXTENDED 1928" on them.
- 4.2.5 The north facing side of the wall is supported with three buttresses, which were presumably added when the wall was relocated. An outer skin of red bricks also covers the window openings on this side and it may be that the this was added to thicken the wall for support. This sits on a red brick and concrete plinth. There are concrete sills at sill level of the windows on the south face but the red brick skin bulges slightly in the areas of the window openings. The bricks are the same as those on the south elevation and are coursed in an English bond. It is very likely that they were reused from the remains of what once existed of the building after it was demolished. The red brick of the buttresses and a rounded solid pier on the right hand side that seems to support the curved wall on the south face (Plate 6), are both built with more modern bricks.



- 4.2.6 Dutch gables were usually built to extend above the roof itself but there were exceptions to this. Although the rest of the building is gone now, sloped indentations on the north side of the gables cornices would suggest that this was the case (Plate 7).

4.3 Rag wall

- 4.3.1 The west facing side is visible from Rymers Lane. It is a roughly coursed stone wall, approximately 1.8m in height (Plate 7). Stones are squared but of irregular sizes. What appears to be original mortar remains in large areas of the wall and it is a yellowish, gritty lime mortar.

5 DISCUSSION

5.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 5.1.1 The machining and recording of the trenches and the recording of the historic walls was carried out in dry conditions with good light. It is therefore felt that the results of the evaluation provide a reliable characterisation of the nature and date of archaeological remains present.

5.2 Evaluation objectives and results

- 5.2.1 The trenches were located to gather sufficient information to generate a reliable predictive model of the extent, character, date, state of preservation and depth of burial of any important archaeological remains within the site.

5.3 Interpretation

- 5.3.1 The sequence of walls and other deposits present in Trenches 1 and 2 demonstrate that the footings of buildings forming part of the Oxford Steam Plough Company, and its successors, still survive in the area of the former garden centre. However, they have been, in part at least, truncated by later activity associated with the construction and use of the current retail park. Given the limited extent of the trenches, it is not possible to provide a more detailed interpretation of the various footings. The date of the bricks used in their construction does, however, suggest, that the buildings represented are likely to have been first constructed in the late 19th century or the first quarter of the 20th century, following the acquisition of the factory by John Allen and Sons Ltd. They may, therefore, be contemporary with the extant gable wall which now forms the southern limit of the former garden centre area.
- 5.3.2 Modern made ground deposits extend to at least 1m below the ground surface in the service yard (Trench 3), below the depth of proposed impact from the current proposals. It is possible that archaeological features survive at a greater depth as this area of the site was built-up during the construction of the retail park.
- 5.3.3 There was no evidence of archaeological features pre-dating the late 19th century within any of the trenches.
- 5.3.4 The Dutch style of architecture found in the standing gable represents a style that arrived in Britain during the latter part of the 16th century and became absorbed in vernacular architecture, particularly in the south and south east, where trade with Amsterdam was strong. This 1900 Dutch gable with its flowing curves is a fanciful addition to what is essentially industrial architecture but this particular building may represent what remains of office or administrative buildings associated with the Oxford Steam Plough Company.



- 5.3.5 The rag wall is more difficult to date. It is believed to date to the founding of the Oxford Steam Plough factory in the 1860s, but it remains possible that it could pre-date this.



APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Trench 1						
General description				Orientation	NNW-SSE	
Trench consists of modern surfaces overlying a modern service trench that cuts through walls of a building. The natural clays were not reached in this trench.				Avg. depth (m)	1	
				Width (m)	1.7	
				Length (m)	7.5	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
100	Layer	-	0.1	Block paving	-	Modern
101	Layer	-	0.07	Bedding layer	-	Modern
102	Layer	-	0.1	Concrete	-	Modern
103	Wall	0.6	0.2	Limestone wall foundation	-	-
104	Layer	-	0.04	Wall layer	-	-
105	Layer	-	0.1	Rubble layer	-	-
106	Layer	-	0.4	Clay layer	-	-
107	Layer	-	0.8	Clay layer	-	-
108	Wall	0.45	0.45	Limestone wall foundation	-	-
109	Wall	0.35	0.25	Brick wall	Brick	L19th – E 20 th century
110	Wall	0.22	0.43	Brick wall	Brick	L 19 th century - 1920's
111	Layer	-	1.05	Demolition layer	-	-
112	Cut	1.7	1	Service trench	-	Modern
113	Fill	1.7	1	Service trench fill	-	Modern

Trench 2						
General description				Orientation	NNW-SSE	
'L' shaped trench, consists of modern surfaces and demolition layer overlying walls of a building that sat on the surface of the natural clay.				Avg. depth (m)	0.8	
				Width (m)	3	
				Length (m)	5	
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
200	Layer	-	0.2	Concrete	-	Modern
201	Layer	-	0.2	Made ground	-	Modern
202	Layer	-	0.4	Demolition layer	Pottery	1825 - 1900
203	Layer	0.4	0.04	Mortar layer	-	-
204	Layer	0.4	0.04	Iron rich layer	-	-
205	Layer	0.4	0.25	Mortar layer	-	-



206	Wall	0.22	0.1	Brick wall	Brick	L19th – E 20 th Century
207	Wall	0.5	0.2	Limestone wall foundation	-	-
208	Wall	0.5	0.3	Limestone wall foundation	-	-
209	Wall	0.11	0.07	Brick line	Brick	L 19 th – E 20 th Century
210	Cut	0.2	0.3	Post-hole	-	-
211	Fill	0.2	0.3	Post-hole fill		
212	Drain	0.1	0.2	Tile drain	-	-
213	Layer	-	-	Natural		

Trench 3						
General description				Orientation		NEE-SWW
Trench devoid of archaeology. Consists of made ground over 1m deep, the natural clay was not encountered.				Avg. depth (m)		1
				Width (m)		1.7
				Length (m)		3
Contexts						
context no	type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	comment	finds	date
300	Layer	-	0.15	Block paving	-	Modern
301	Layer	-	0.3	Type 1 stone	-	Modern
302	Layer	-	0.4	Made ground	-	Modern
303	Layer	-	0.15	Made ground	-	Modern



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Oxford Archaeology, 2011 Templars' Retail Park, Between Towns Road, Oxford: Desk-based Assessment

Oxford City Council, 2012 Brief for an Historic Building Recording and Archaeological Excavation: Templars Shopping Park, Between Towns Road, Oxford

RPS, 2008 The John Allen Centre, Between Towns Road, Oxford, OX4 3JP, Phase 1 – Environmental Assessment



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Templars' Retail Park, Between Towns Road, Oxford

Site code: OXPTP 12

Grid reference: SP 540 040

Type: Evaluation and building recording

Date: November 2012

Summary of results: Two trenches were located within a former garden centre area and one trench was located within a service area. The remains of buildings associated with the Oxford Steam Ploughing Company, probably constructed after the factory was acquired by John Allen and Sons Ltd in 1897, were found in the former garden centre. Modern made ground deposits to a depth of more than 1m below the current ground surface were recorded in the service yard. No archaeological features pre-dating the late 19th century were present.

A gable, which formed part of the factory buildings and which had been re-located to its current location following the closure of the factory, was recorded. A rag stone boundary wall was partially recorded. The wall probably dates to the foundation of the Oxford Steam Ploughing Company in the late 19th century but an earlier date cannot be ruled out.

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 in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS: 2012.140



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Figure 1: Site location

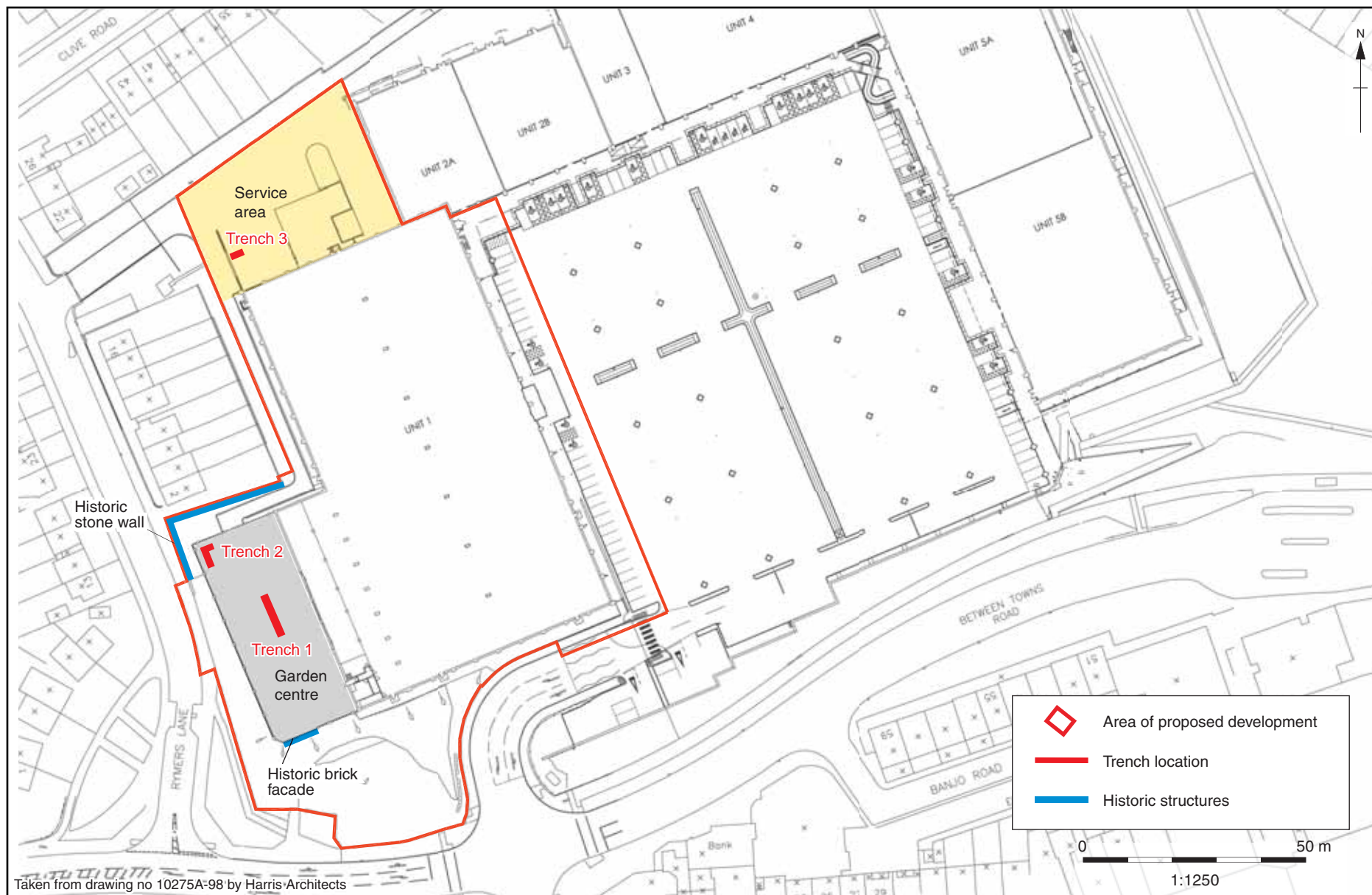


Figure 2: Trench locations

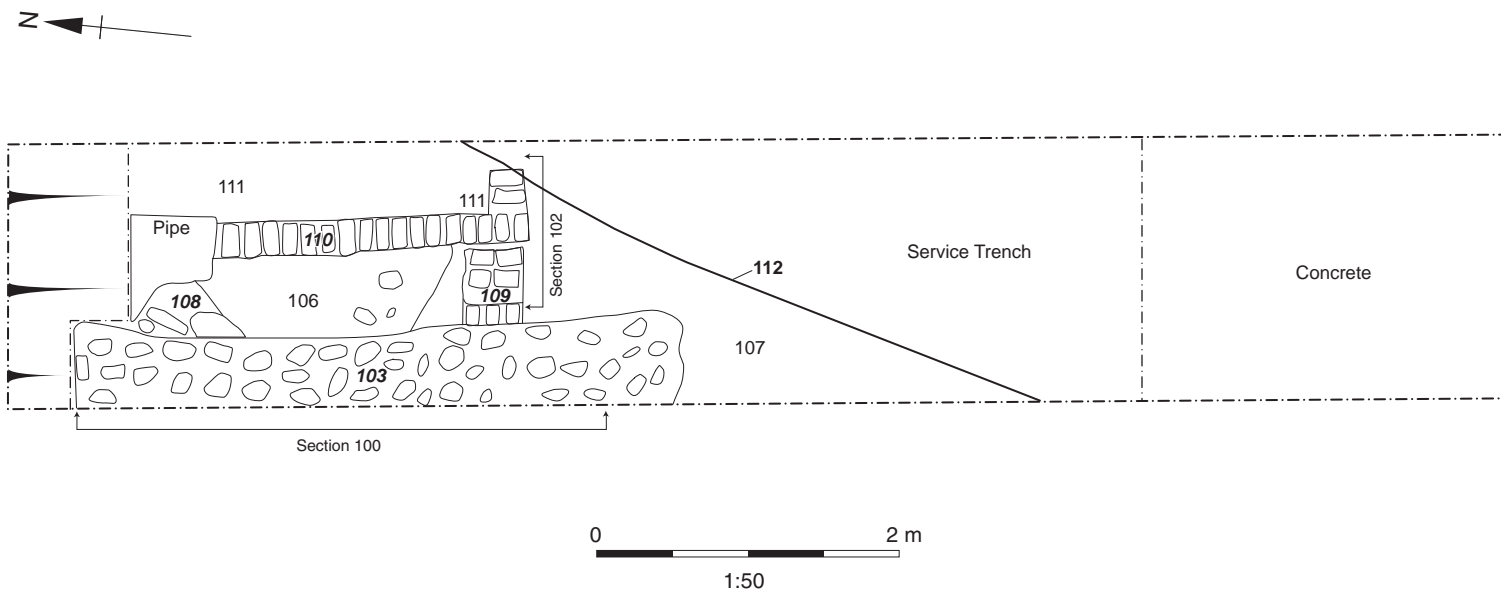


Figure 3: Trench 1

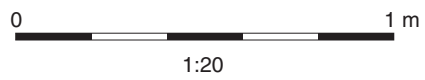
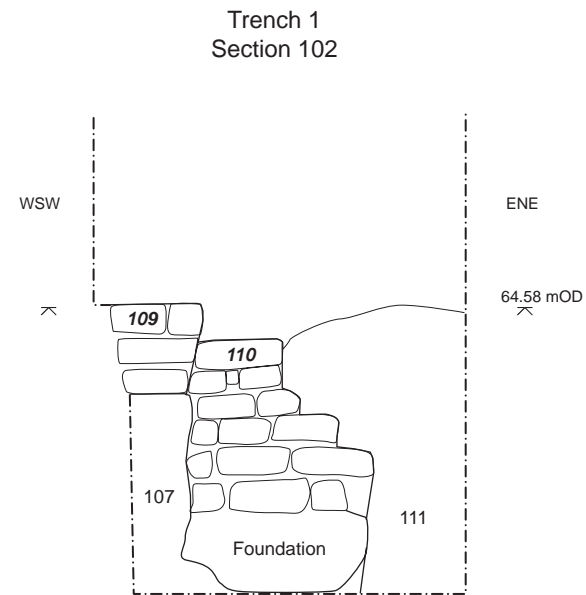
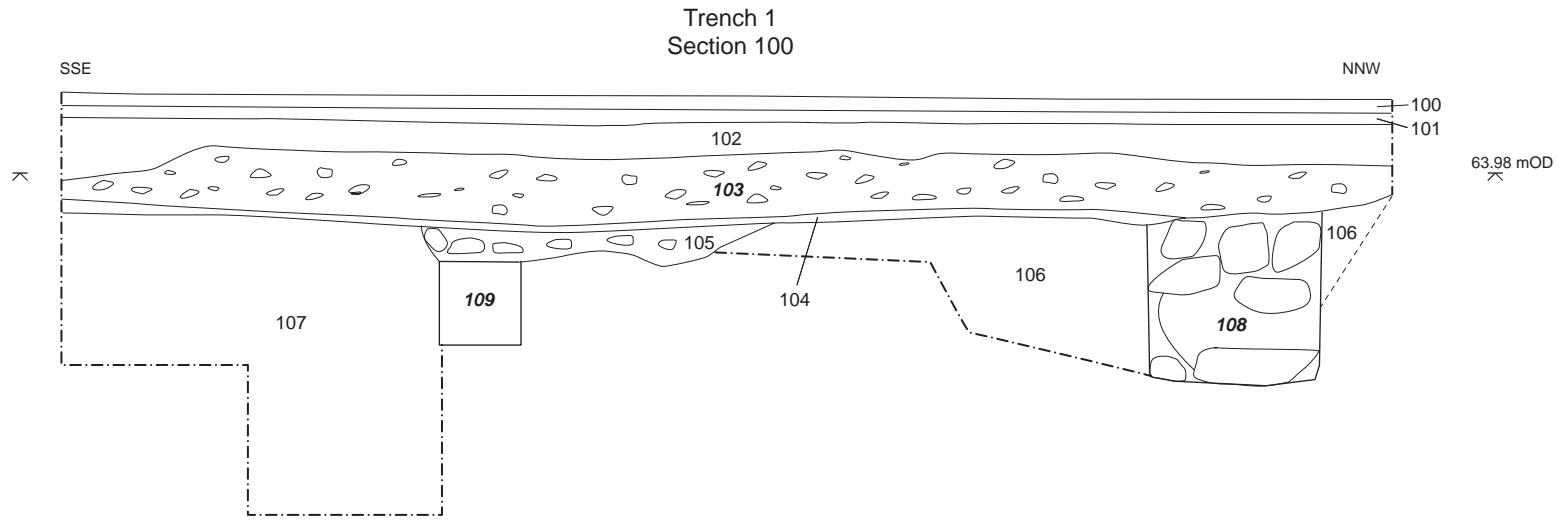


Figure 4: Section 100 and 102

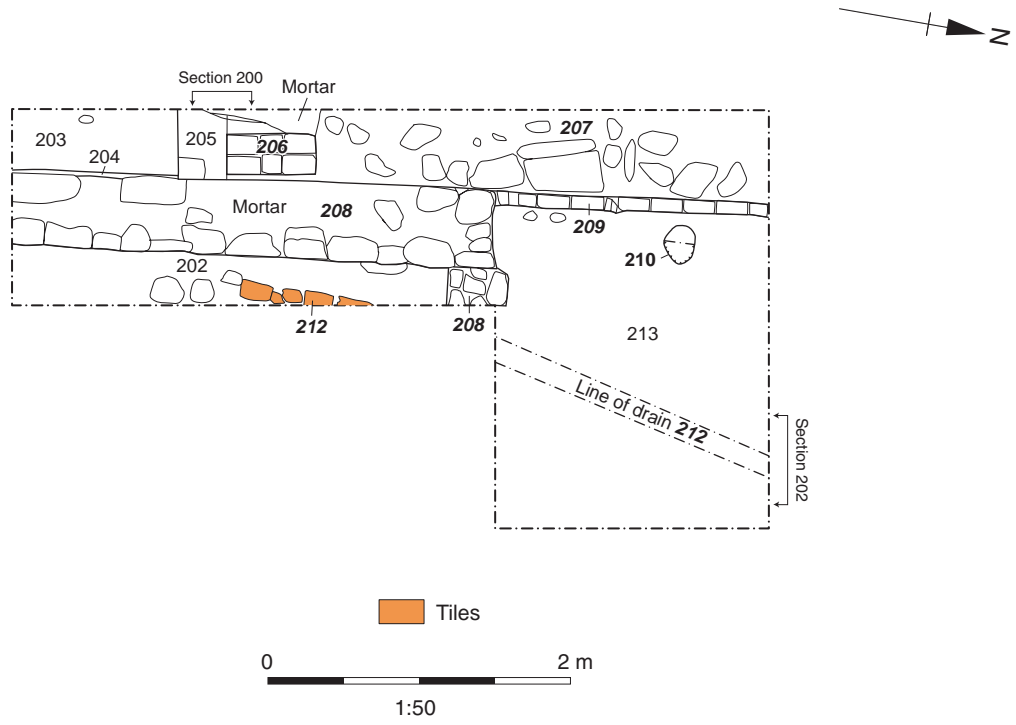


Figure 5: Trench 2

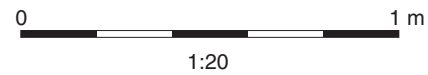
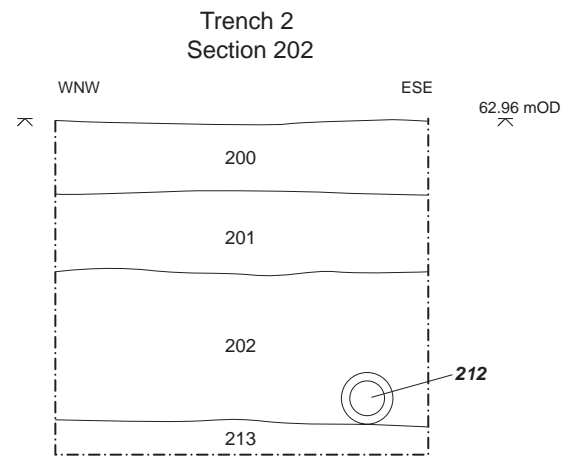
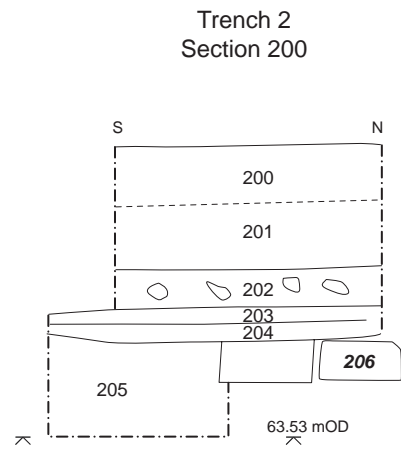


Figure 6: Sections 200 and 202



Plate 1: South face of gable wall



Plate 2: Window in south face of gable wall



Plate 3: Commemorative plaque on south face of gable wall



Plate 4: Corner feature on left side of south face of gable wall



Plate 5: Buttress and plinth on north face of gable wall



Plate 6: Buttress and corner pier on north face of gable wall



Plate 7: West face of rag wall



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