

13 Broad Street Bath



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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13 Broad Street, Bath.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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SUMMARY

In July 2006 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out archaeological monitoring on level reduction at the rear of 13 Broad Street, Bath, after the demolition of a rear extension and before the construction of a new one (NGR: ST75006510). The building was to be erected on a concrete raft and monitoring was completed when formation level for the new building was reached. The work was commissioned by Nicholas Magniac Associates Ltd. as an archaeological mitigation of the site works to meet planning conditions. After demolition it was clear that the original extension had been built over a thick layer of mid- to dark grey garden soil which represented the garden of the property before its construction. It utilised the buildings on either side as north and south walls so the only footings were those running east-west on the west end. The dark soil produced post-medieval pot sherds and a small collection of clay tobacco pipe stems and bowls, the pipes all attributable to John Tylee who was active locally 1690 to 1702. Removal of this soil revealed the existence of an underlying yellow brown silt which was either an occupation deposit or the fills of a series of intercutting pits (or both). This produced animal bone and one sherd of 11th-12th century pottery. It was at least 0.20 m thick at the west end (and probably much thicker) but at the east end of the site was absent. A pit was recorded here, cutting the natural clay that was found at formation level here. To the west of it, a rubble raft of unknown thickness was at the same level, although their relationship was not observed. This predated the construction of the present house but is otherwise undated. Formation level was only 0.10-0.15 m below the top of these earlier deposits, the bulk of which (of unknown depth) remain in situ under the present development.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Planning conditions on the planning permission for the development required a watching brief to be mounted on the ground works. These involved (after the demolition, which was not monitored) reduction of the area of the rear extension to formation level 1.77 m below the adjacent car park surface at the north-west corner of the site.
- 1.1.2 A section across the deposits at the west of the site and a plan of features seen at or near formation level were made.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is on the lower slopes of the valley of the River Avon in the centre of the modern city of Bath (ST75006510). The underlying geology here is lias clay forming the valley floor. The site is above the expected range of fluvial deposits.
- 1.2.2 The site slopes slightly from the south-east up to the north-west and sits just above the steep drop down to the river itself and at the beginning of the rise to the upper town, the late 18th century development of Bath, whose old centre was then called the lower town.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 13 Broad Street, a grade II listed building, occupies a site towards the northern end of Broad Street (Fig. 1). It is situated on the edge of the medieval suburb of Bath which sat outside the

North Gate, clustered around the church of St Michael Without. Broad Street, the beginning of the medieval road to Cirencester and Oxford, is attested from documentary evidence as occupied back to the 13th century. It was a centre of weaving in the 16th and 17th century and presumably earlier. The other part of the suburb, Walcot Street, branching from Broad Street at St Michael's, likewise has historical evidence for occupation in the 13th century and pottery from the 11-12th centuries has been found in excavations (Davenport 2003, 132). There has been otherwise very little archaeological excavation in the vicinity.

- 1.3.2 The recently demolished extension had no cellars, and unless earlier construction had been cellared, there was every reason to expect medieval remains on the site.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify the presence or absence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.
- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains (if present) that the development may remove or damage within the impacted area.
- 2.1.3 To monitor all groundwork that may affect or reveal archaeological deposits.
- 2.1.4 To establish the eco-factual and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.5 To make the results of the investigation available.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 The watching brief was conducted on the 29th and 30th of June with a further visit on the 3rd July 2006.
- 2.2.2 The dark soils were dug with a small mechanical excavator but were removed from site by wheelbarrow. Progress was, therefore, relatively leisurely, with some opportunity to examine the layers being removed. Not all of the dark soil overlying the natural clay and the medieval pits at that level was removed. The southern half of the site was seen only at this level and only about 75% of the northern half below the dark soil was observed.
- 2.2.3 In addition, it was possible to superficially examine temporary spoil heaps to check for artefacts.
- 2.2.4 A plan showing the location of the excavated archaeological remains was prepared at a scale of 1:200 (Fig. 2) and a plan showing the archaeological features at 1:50 (reproduced at 1:100 in Fig. 3). A section across the site at the west end was drawn at 1:20 (reproduced at 1:25 in Fig. 3). Sections and any excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Field Manual* (ed. Wilkinson 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

- 3.1.1 The formation level of the construction work coincided closely with the level at which the natural clay occurred. This was close to the level of the threshold of the rear door of the existing building. The natural clay was only seen at this eastern end of the site.
- 3.1.2 Into this were cut several pits. These were nearly all left unexcavated and survived *in situ*. However, pit 11 at the east end of the site was excavated and proved to be circular in plan and 0.4 m deep with nearly vertical sides. Its fill (12) was a dark grey sandy loam with charcoal fragments and pieces of limestone from 40 mm to 150 mm in diameter. It was at the same level as a rubble layer (16) apparently overlying the natural clay, but a relationship was not observed.
- 3.1.3 At least four other pits were recorded at the west end of the site (7, 8, 9 & 10, Fig. 3), but were almost certainly part of a larger group of intercutting pits, whose combined fill is considered to be layer 6, originally thought to be a layer under 5 and over the natural (which was not seen at this end of the site). A small section was excavated into the top 0.15 m of pit 9 and this produced a sherd of 11th/12th century cooking pot and a sheep/goat jaw.
- 3.1.4 The fill of the pit group (6) was a yellow-brown or ochre, firm, clayey silt. It contained the occasional bone fragment, including more sheep/goat jaws and was clearly very mixed, with 5% limestone pebbles <8 mm, limestone grit <2 mm, comminuted CBM and some pieces of slag or similar material. No further pottery was recovered. Apart from the pale colour this is a typical pit fill.
- 3.1.5 The central area of the site between these western pits and pit 11 was not dug down to this level, but around pit 11, which was not part of an intercutting group, there was a mixed layer of gritty grey loam and yellow loamy clay, which overlay the natural clay and seemed to seal pit 11 (13). The rubble raft (16) was at the same level as 13 but, as noted above, no stratigraphic relationship survived.
- 3.1.6 Sealing all these layers and features across the whole site was layer 5. This was the soil immediately preceding the recently demolished building. This was a firm, mid-grey-brown silty clay loam with an estimated 2% flecks of charcoal, 2% flecks of limestone <1mm diameter. In other words, a typical urban occupation soil (Pls. 1 and 2 and Fig. 3). It produced clay tobacco pipe fragments from the workshop of John Tylee who was active 1690-1702. It also produced white, tin-glazed earthenware and blue and white tin-glaze, of a similar date.
- 3.1.7 This had been cut into by (and probably continued to build up against) the original rear wall of the demolished extension to the existing building, which had an angled west wall. Its footings were seen as stone foundations (14, Fig. 3) which matched the scars on the north and south walls. It had been extended westwards at a later date to the position of section 1 (Fig. 3 and Pl. 2).
- 3.1.8 Contemporary with these footings and passing through them was a ceramic drain and its trench and fill (15, Fig. 3).

- 3.1.9 The rear wall of the demolished extension still survived as a single surviving course of ashlar at the west end of the site, a typical 0.31 m (or 12") high (3). It rested on two courses of Bath stone rubble, together 0.23 m (9") high, the foundation of the wall (4, section 1, Fig. 3).
- 3.1.10 The latest deposits were recorded at the west end of the site and were the surface and makeup of the adjacent car park. The tarmac (1) was laid over a discontinuous concrete raft, itself laid over a thick layer of loose, limestone rubble with lots of big voids (2). This had clearly been retained by the wall (3).

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 A single sherd of 11th/12th century pottery was retrieved from the pit fills (6) and late 17th century to early 18th century material from the dark soil (5) including pottery, closely datable clay pipe sherds and some brick fragments. The clay pipes, the medieval sherd and a sample of the post-medieval pottery were retained. Animal bones occurred in layer 5, but were not kept.
- 3.2.2 No environmental samples were taken as the soils were not appropriate (lack of sealing and integrity).

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The structural evidence and the dark soil (5) were clearly post-medieval and essentially dated to the construction and use of the present building in the early 18th century, although the dark garden soil most likely existed at an earlier date.
- 4.1.2 Below these, the pits and associated layers are almost certainly, if not conclusively, of medieval date. Pits in domestic situations in Bath are most commonly of 11th to 13th century date and the limited evidence from here fits in with that interpretation.
- 4.1.3 The results of the observations at 13 Broad Street support the general view that the medieval suburb extended this far up Broad Street by the 12th century. The position of the pits also suggests that the rear building line of the properties was roughly what it is today, or at least no further west.
- 4.1.4 The shallow depth of the excavated pit (11), indicates a degree of truncation, perhaps during 18th century development, which is likely to have affected the whole of the rear of the property. It was not possible to make observations under the car park to see if medieval levels survived higher here, but it remains a possibility.
- 4.1.5 The results of the monitoring were, therefore, limited but very informative about the spread and to some extent the character of occupation in the Middle Ages in this important suburb of Bath. It is clear that controlled excavation in the uncellared areas of Broad Street has a good potential for a worthwhile return. However, the topography, a slight and steepening slope, will make terracing, with its unpredictable impact on deposits, more likely.
- 4.1.6 Conversely, the cellars must have removed all archaeological layers.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Depths in column 4 are measured from the car park surface.

Context	Description	Thickness	Depth
1	Tarmac car park surface	0.14 m	0.0 m
2	Hard core makeup, rubble, Bath stone blocks, concrete	0.34-0.53 m	0.14 m
3	One course of ashlar walling	0.31 m	0.47-0.67 m
4	Two courses of Bath stone roughly squared rubble	0.23 m	0.78-0.98 m
5	Mid grey loam, slightly friable, silty-clay loam	0.46 m	1.01-1.21 m
6	Ochre/yellow-brown firm clayey silt; very mixed comminuted inclusions: cbm, limestone frags 0.1-80 mm	>0.10 m	1.47-1.67 m
7	Unexcavated pit below 5 filled with 6		1.47-1.67 m
8	Unexcavated pit below 5 filled with 6, cut by 14		1.47-1.67 m
9	Sampled pit below 5, filled with 6, cut by 14		1.47-1.67 m
10	Unexcavated pit below 5 filled with 6, cut by 14 & 15		1.47-1.67 m
11	Excavated pit 1.1 m dia, 0.40 m deep		1.5 m
12	Dark grey sandy loam. Fill of pit 11	0.40 m	
13	Mixed gritty grey loam and yellow loamy clay. Layer	0.10 m	1.5 m
14	Masonry footings of original west wall of extension	unknown	1.6 m
15	19th/20th century drainage trench cutting 5, 14	unknown	
16	Spread of rubble at east end of cleared site	unknown	c. 1.6 m

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

- Davenport, P., 2003 *Medieval Bath Uncovered* (Stroud)
- IFA, 2001 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*
- OAU, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D. Wilkinson)

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Bath 13 Broad Street

Site code: BABRST06

Grid reference: ST75006510

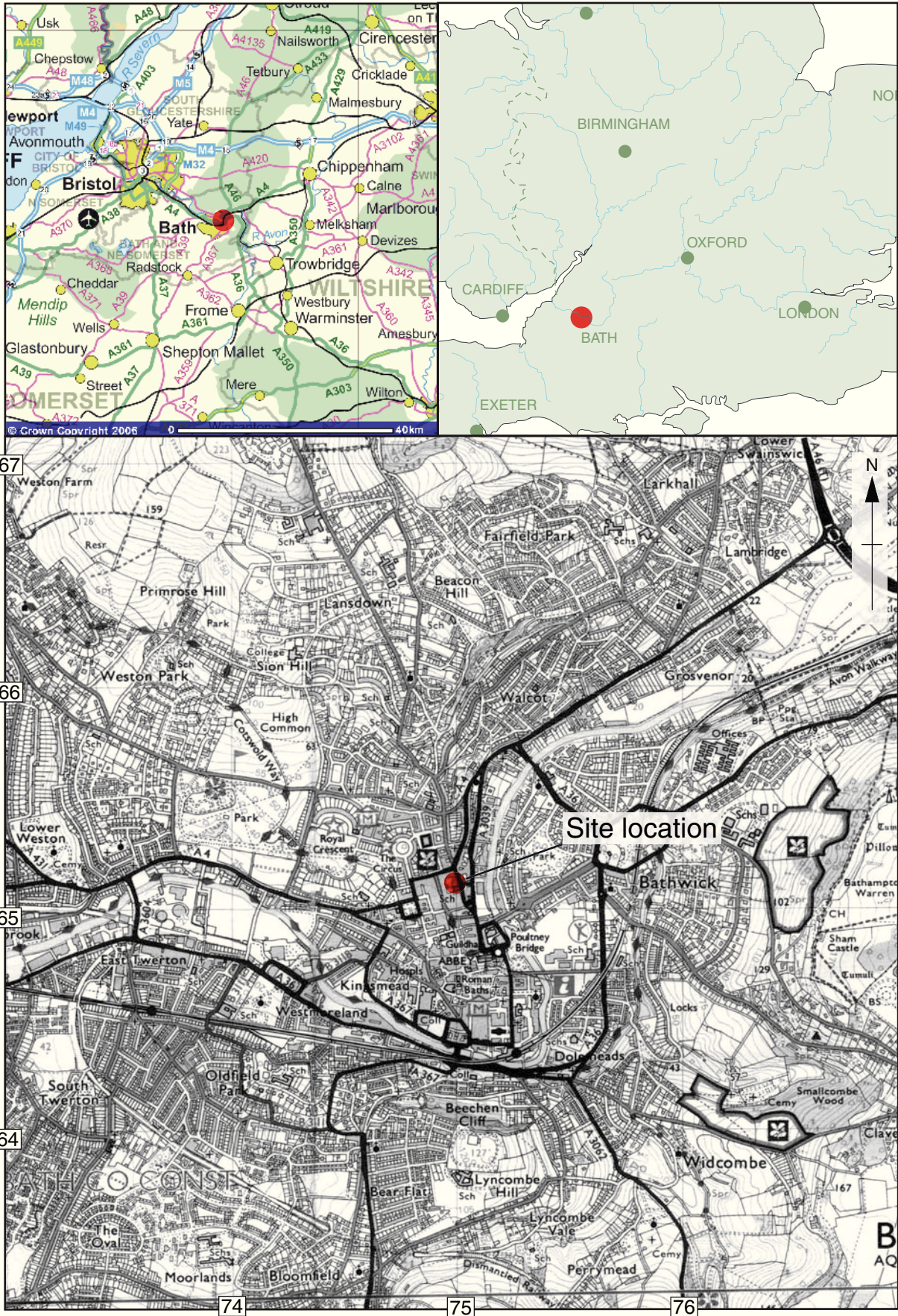
Type of watching brief: Machine excavation of soils to formation level.

Date and duration of project: 3 days, 29th-30th June, July 3rd 2006

Area of site: 51.2 sq. m

Summary of results: Probable medieval pits and possible occupation deposits under post-medieval garden/occupation soils.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with The Roman Baths Museum in due course with the accession number BATRM 2006.xxx (tba).



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Figure 1: Location map



0 20 m
1:500

Figure 2: Location of excavation

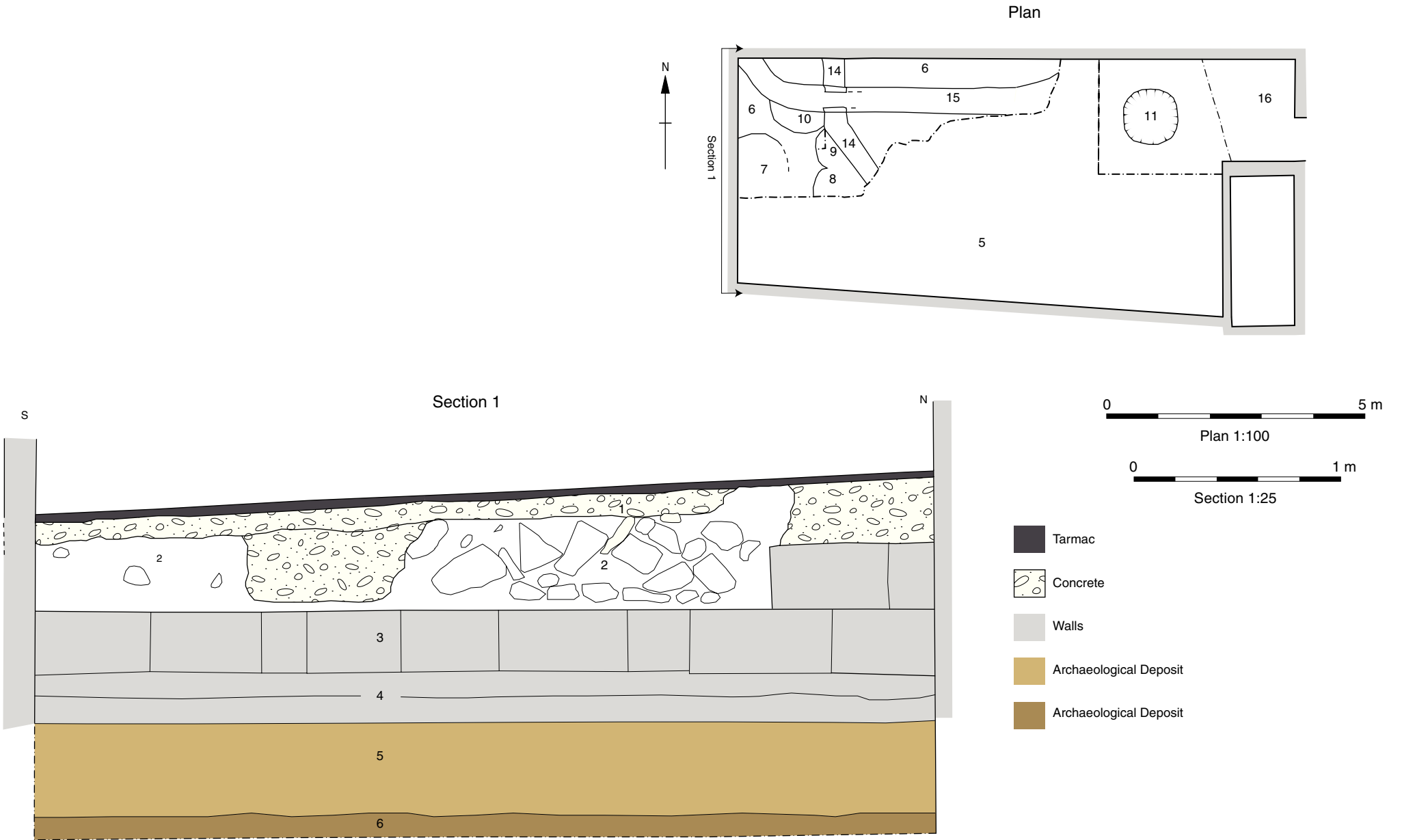


Figure 3: Plan of archaeological features and Section 1



Plate 1: View westwards towards section. The ochre earth at the base is the medieval pit group fill.



Plate 2: Looking eastwards during clearance of the post-medieval garden soil, before the discovery of pit 11, near the back door.