Mardol Quay Gardens

Shrewsbury Shropshire

Archaeological Evaluation Report

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Mardol Quay Gardens, Shrewsbury, Shropshire

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

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SUMMARY

In July 2008, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological evaluation test pitting at Mardol Quay Gardens, Shrewsbury (NGR: SJ 489 127). The work was commissioned by Pearce & Lal in advance of proposed redevelopment for a public art project to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Charles Darwin (1809-1882). The evaluation revealed a cobbled surface close to the river, and a recently demolished brick structure closer to Smithfield Road.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project Background

1.1.1 In July 2008 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological evaluation at Mardol Quay Gardens, Shrewsbury. The work was commissioned by Pearce & Lal in respect of a proposed public art redevelopment of Mardol Quay Gardens to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Charles Darwin.

1.1.2 The Historical Environment Officer for Shropshire, Michael Watson, prepared a project brief outlining the planning condition for archaeological assessment. The assessment was to be in the form of archaeological evaluation of two trial pits.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

1.2.1 Mardol Quay Gardens (Fig. 1) is located 350 m from the centre of Shrewsbury and is bounded by the River Severn to the north, Smithfield Road to the south and east and Welsh Bridge to the West. The line of the town wall crosses the southern part of the site. The site lies on the river terrace deposits of the River Severn overlying Westphalian and Stephanian (undivided of Barren Red) deposits (BGS Sheet 152, Solid and Drift 1:50,00). The site lies approximately at 52 m OD. The site is centred on NGR: SJ 489 127.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

1.3.1 The redevelopment proposal for the site is for a public art project consisting of a large sculpture and re-landscaping of the current gardens to celebrate the centenary of the birth of Charles Darwin (1809-1882).

1.3.2 Mardol Quay Gardens is an area of lawned gardens, trees and pathways that front onto the south bank of the River Severn. The area includes within the site of the southern abutments of the medieval St George's Bridge which was in existence by the 12th century until this was demolished in 1795, when part of the bridge was heavily damaged by flood waters. This was then replaced by Welsh bridge which is still in use today. The medieval Town is also known to have extended within the area.

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1.3.3 In 1607 Mardol Quay was constructed and by the 18th century much of the area was substantially built up. This was still in use up to the 1950's until the land was then turned into a landscaped garden.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area. In particular, the evaluation will seek to identify deposits/structures relating to medieval or post medieval use of Mardol Quay and evidence of St George's Bridge abutment.

2.1.2 To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains present.

2.1.3 To establish the ecofatural and environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features.

2.1.4 To use the results to produce and outline chronology and interpretative account of the development of the proposal area within the context of its archaeological and historical and architectural surroundings.

2.1.5 To make available the results of the investigation. To identify and recommend options for the management of the archaeological resource, including any further archaeological provision where necessary.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 The evaluation was conducted in accordance with "Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations" (IFA, 2001).

2.2.2 Two trial pits were excavated by hand each measuring 2 m x 2 m and were located as indicated by the Historic Environment Officer for Shropshire County Council and shown on figure 2. A plan showing the archaeological remains was maintained and presented at a scale of 1:20. The sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavations and any recorded sections 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 D Wilkinson, 1992).

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3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Trial Pit 1

3.1.1 Was located to the southern part of the park close to the retaining wall which runs parallel with Smithfield Road. (Fig 2).

3.1.2 The earliest deposit encountered in the trial pit was a cobbled surface (104) encountered 0.48 m below ground level. The cobbles were composed of limestone and laid to form a solid, hard wearing surface. Immediately overlying this hard surface was a layer of demolition debris comprising crushed red brick and mortar (103). This demolition material was not relatively thick at only around 0.05 m, but does indicate the presence of buildings in the vicinity.

3.1.3 Overlying layer 103, was a layer of mid brown clayey silt up to 0.3 m in thickness. It would appear that this layer formed a purpose built subsoil layer for the overlying topsoil (101) which forms the modern day Mardol Quay Gardens. A single find from the topsoil was a 1971 two pence coin.

3.1.4 No evidence of massive masonry was identified within the trial pit at the level excavated. The possibility of archaeological remains being protected by and surviving below cobbled surface 104 cannot be discounted.

Trial Pit 2

3.1.5 Trial Pit 2 was located closer to the modern edge of the river (Fig. 2).

3.1.6 Topsoil (201) consisted of a soft mid brown silt. As test pit 2 was on a gradient at the southern end of the test pit 2 this was found at a depth of 0.1 m and at the north maximum of 0.2 m. No finds/dating evidence were recovered form this layer. Underlying the topsoil was a thin band of tarmac (202). This may have derived from the laying of the path within the current gardens or could just be part of an earlier path that has been covered up. This though was only 0.02 m in thickness. The tarmac in turn was overlying the subsoil (203) which is a mid yellow-brown silt clay. This in turn was overlying a thick layer of rubble (204). This appears to be part of the demolition phase of the buildings by the quay side. This could also have been used as a levelling deposit. However it does suggest from both sections 201 and 202 that Layer (204) had been moved around as part of the landscaping phase as (204) seals a modern layer (206). Beneath (204) is layer (205) which consists of a layer of gravel hardcore. This was probably used as levelling of the demolition of buildings located on the quay front. Layer (206) seems to be a dark modern soil in origin and contained remains of modern sweet wrappers. It does suggest that this deposit originated from the landscaping of the gardens.

3.1.7 At the bottom (0.9 m below ground level) of trial pit 2 which was Structure 207. This was a brick built structure with up to 2 courses surviving and a flagstone floor. The

bricks were red in colour and measured 22 cm x 12 cm x 8 cm and were bonded with a cement mortar. The bricks were unfrogged and appeared to be machine made.

3.1.8 Overlying structure 207, was a layer of coarse gravel up to 0.2 m thick (205). This layer was very clean and would appear to be layer of free draining material overlying the impermeable structure below. Lying immediately above this gravel was a layer of brick rubble similar to that encountered in trial pit 1 which contained late 19th - 20th century pottery including blue and white transfer-ware.

3.1.9 Overlying the rubble was 0.3 m thick layer of the subsoil as noted in trial pit 1 (203),. This was overlain by a very thin layer of tarmac, which is almost certainly a remnant from the laying out of the modern garden. The sequence in this trial pit was completed with a topsoil and a flower bed soil that contained numerous modern inclusions such as food wrappings and drinks cans.

3.2 Finds

3.2.1 Finds were retrieved from both Test Pits 1 and 2. These consisted of material from post medieval and modern day.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

3.3.1 No deposits were suitable for Palaeo-environmental sampling during the course of the evaluation.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

4.1.1 Evidence within the trial pits clearly points to surval of archaeological from at least the late post medieval period. Both the brick structure noted in trial pit 2 and the cobbled surface appear to have been demolished and buried in the not too distant past. Given the nature of these remains, both having recognisable surfaces, it is perfectly reasonable to assume that the possibility of further, earlier remains surviving below, is not beyond doubt.

4.1.2 Future fieldwork would help to elucidate further what exactly it is that has been exposed in the trial pits and how this relates to the site as a whole. Earlier archaeological remains may well survive in other parts of the park.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth	Width	Comments	Finds	Date
Test Pit 1						
101	Layer	0 m- 0.13 m	>2m	Topsoil	Coin	C20th
102	Layer	0.13m - 0.3 m	>2m	Subsoil	Pottery, Bone	C20th
103	Layer	0.3 m - 0.33m	>2m	Made ground	Pottery	C20th
104	Layer	0.48 m	>2m	Cobbled Surface	-	C17th
Test Pit 2						
201	Layer	0 m - 0.2 m	>2m	Topsoil	-	C20th
202	Layer	0.2 m - 0.22 m	>2m	Tarmac	-	C20th
203	Layer	0.22 m - 0.52 m	>2m	Subsoil	-	C20th
204	Layer	0.52 m - 0.62 m	>2m	Demolition Rubble	Pottery, Glass, Metal	C19th-C20th
205	Layer	0. 62 m - 0.82 m	>2m	Gravel Hardcore	-	C20th
206	Layer	0.82 m - 0.94 m >	>2m	Modern Garden Soil	Pottery	C20th
207	Structure	0.94m >	>2m	Victorian Structure	-	C19th

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

IFA, 2001 Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological watching Briefs

OAU, 1992 *Field Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson)

SCC, 2008 Brief For Mardol Quay Gardens - 2

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Mardol Quay Gardens, Shrewsbury, Shropshire
Site code: SHMQ08
Grid reference: SJ 489 127
Type of Evaluation: Hand excavation of 2 test pits.
Date and duration of project: 7th-9th July 2008, three days on site
Area of site: 8 m^2
Summary of results: The watching brief observed deposits and structures relating to the Post Med/ Victorian use of Mardol Quay Gardens
Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES.

\\FILEPATH*INITIALS*DATE

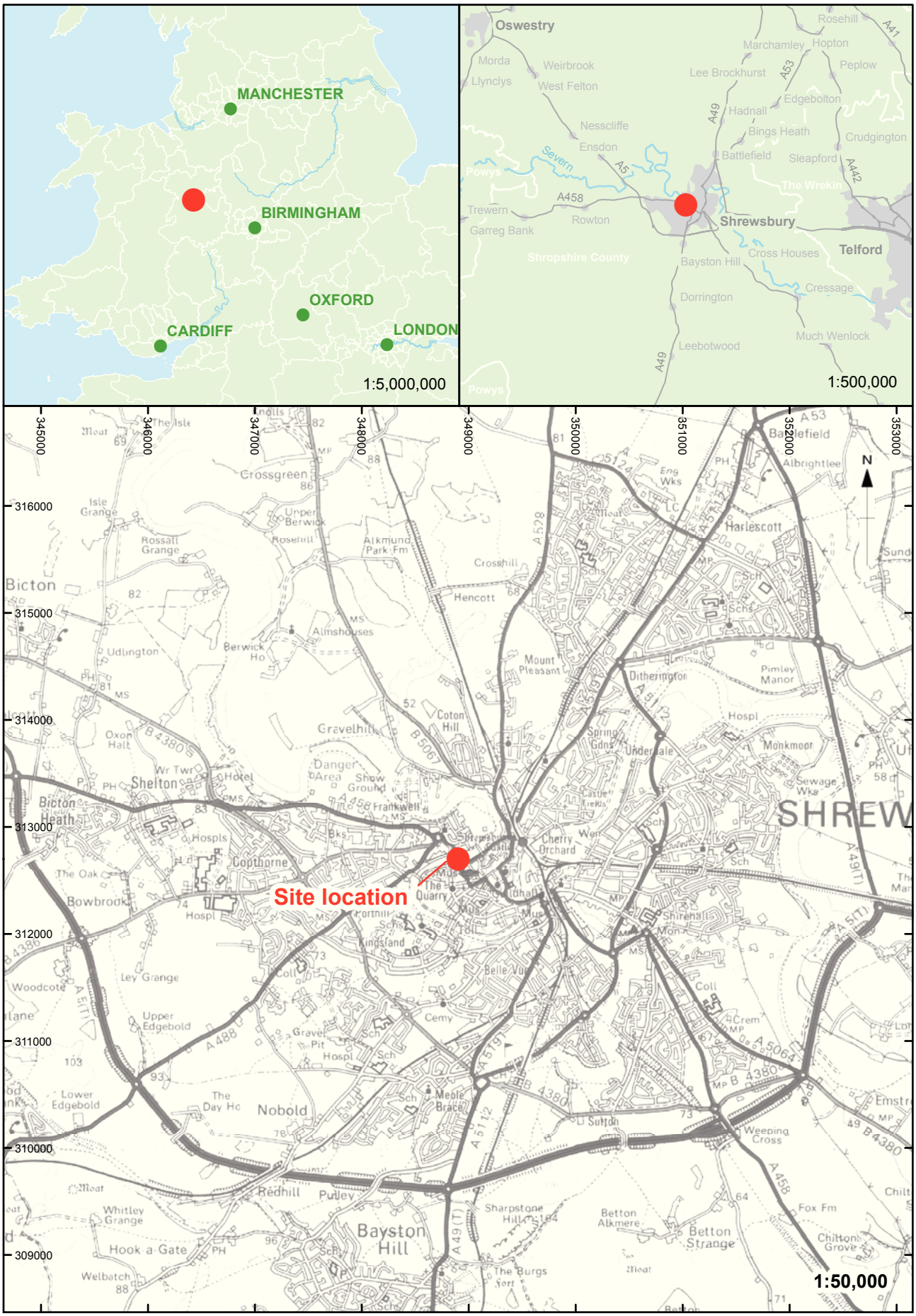

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Figure 1: Site location

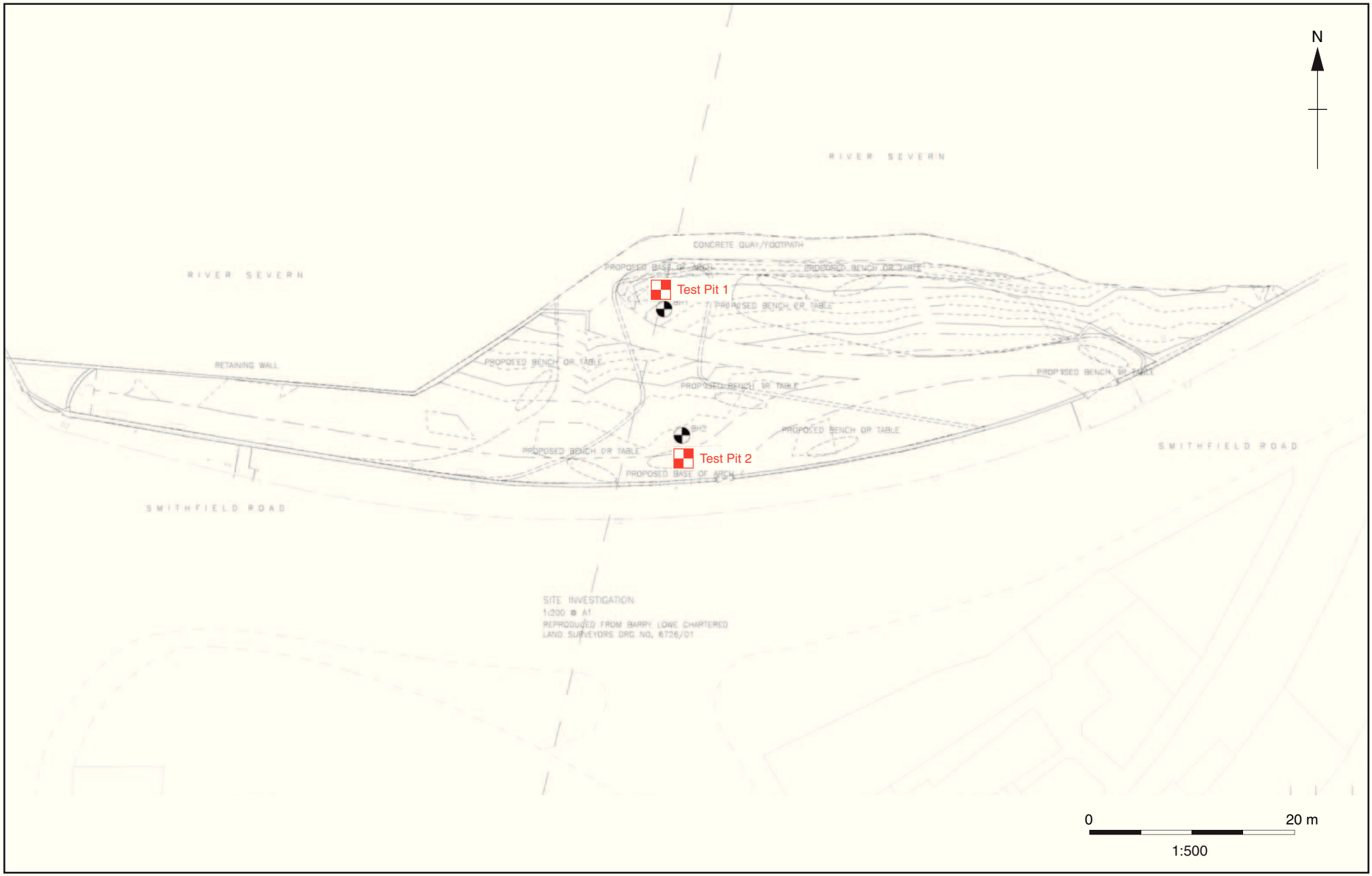

Figure 2: Test Pit locations

Server go:/oaupubs1_RtoZ*SHMQ08*SHMQEV*Quay Gardens*AH*11.07.08

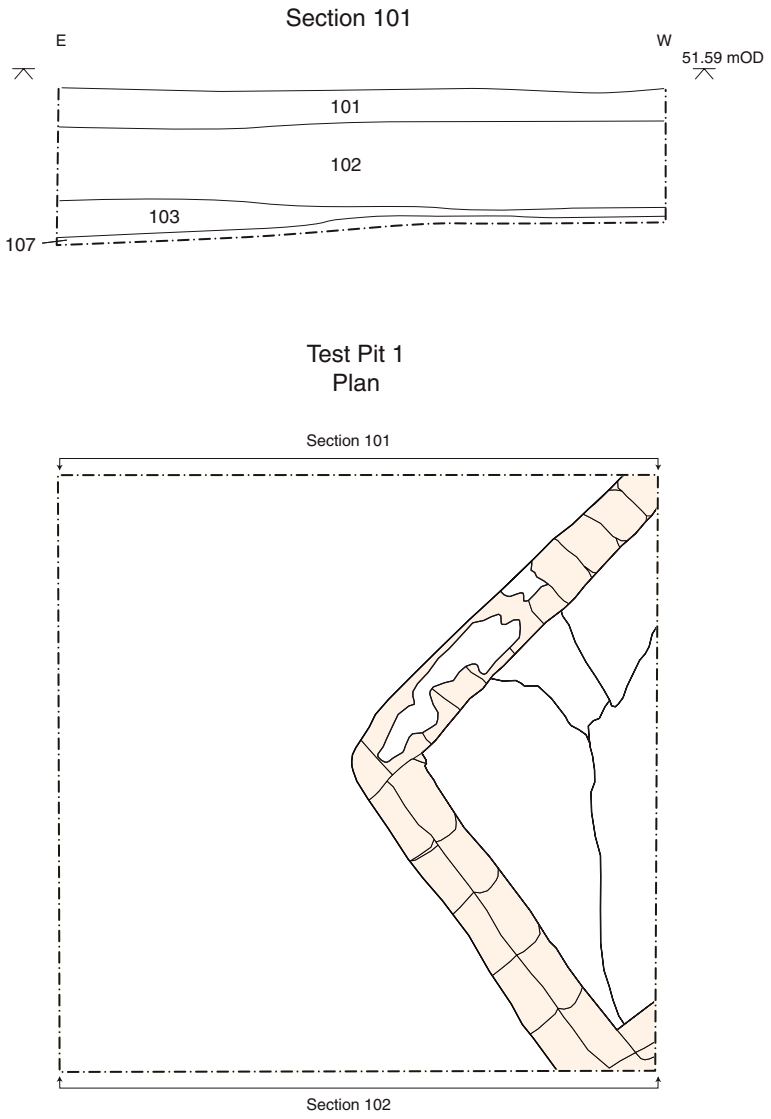

Figure 3 : Sections 101 and 102 in test pit 1

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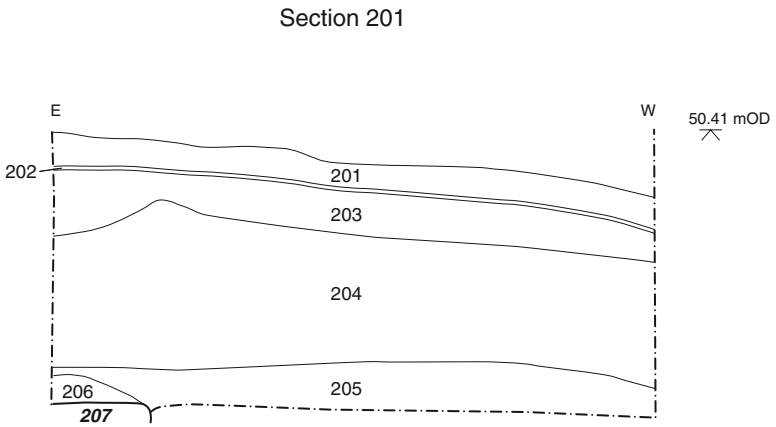

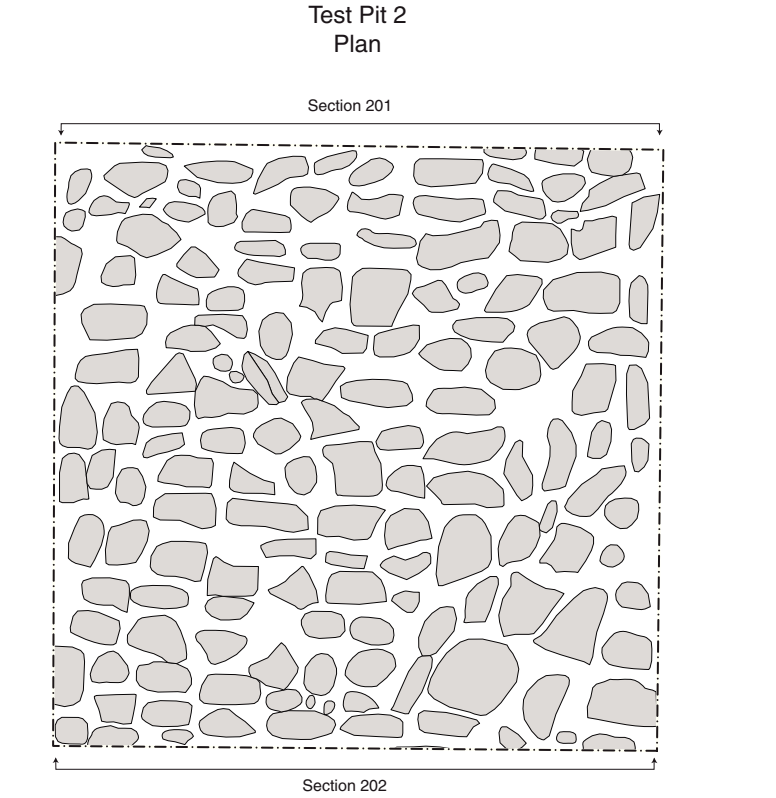

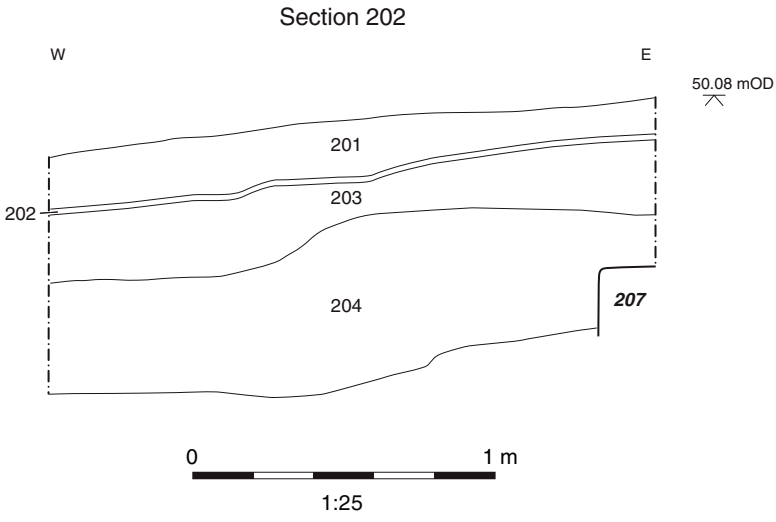

Figure 4 : Sections 201 and 202 in test pit 2

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