

Alma Tavern Wandsworth London



Archaeological Investigation Report



April 2010

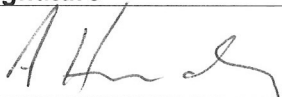
**Client: Young's and Co. Brewery Plc
and Nickless Allen**

Issue No: 1

NGR: TQ 260 750



Client Name: Young's and Co. Brewery Plc.
Client Ref No: N/A
Document Title: The Alma Tavern, Wandsworth, London
Document Type: Archaeological Investigation Report
Issue/Version Number: 1
Grid Reference: NGR: TQ 260 750
Planning Reference: 2008/5510
OA Job Number: 4624
Site Code: AMO09
Invoice Code: AMOEV
Receiving Museum: Museum of London
Museum Accession No: AMO09
Event No:

Issue	Prepared by	Checked by	Approved by	Signature
1	R. Griffin, Assistant Supervisor	A. Norton, Senior Project Manager	Alan Hardy, Senior Project Manager	

Document File Location \\server1\projects\Wandsworth, The Alma\Reports
Graphics File Location \\Server21-db\invoice codes a thru h\A_invoice codes\AMOEV
Illustrated by Lucy Offord, Supervisor

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The Alma Tavern

Wandsworth

London

Archaeological Investigation Report

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*with contributions from Paul Blinkhorn, Ian Scott, Rebecca Nicholson and illustrated by
Lucy Offord*

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Summary

In March 2010 Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook an evaluation at The Alma Tavern, Old York Road, Wandsworth, London (NGR: TQ 260 750) on behalf of Nickless Allen and Young's and Co. Brewery Plc. The work was in respect of planning permission (2008/5510) for a mixed use building up to two storeys. The trenching revealed a buried soil and root disturbance beneath the existing ground level, which had been heavily truncated by services associated with Winstanley metalworks. The buried soil may represent arable land use prior to successive phases of 19th-century building. No other archaeological features were observed.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 Planning permission (2008/5510) was granted by Wandsworth Council for the redevelopment of The Alma Tavern, Old York Road, Wandsworth, London (Fig. 1). The redevelopment consisted of the demolition of an existing building and associated structures, and the construction of a part single-storey, part two-story and part three-storey building.
- 1.1.2 OA was commissioned by Young's and Co. Brewery Plc. and Nickless Allen to undertake an archaeological evaluation and watching brief within the proposal area, in order to assess the potential for the survival of below-ground archaeological features. The investigation was conducted following the demolition of the existing buildings, and it was undertaken in accordance with a planning note issued by Mark Stevenson of Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS). OA produced a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; OA December 2009), outlining how the archaeological requirement of the work would be met.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site is located to the south of Wandsworth Town Railway Station on the corner of Old York Road and Alma Road in Wandsworth, London. It is located on the interface between Second Terrace gravels to the north and London Clay to the south. The site is located at c 5m OD (OA December 2009).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background to the site can be found in the Desk-Based Assessment (OA October 2009), and the more recent historic building report on The Alma Tavern and Winstanley metalworks (now demolished) fronting onto Old York Road (OA January 2010), and is summarised below.

Palaeolithic

- 1.3.2 Evidence for human occupation during the Palaeolithic period, especially in the Greater London area, is extremely rare. Knowledge of the Mesolithic period is presently dominated by earlier Mesolithic sites and surface finds. However, finds from both periods have been found in Wandsworth, including axes and flakes. The nearest identified Palaeolithic/Mesolithic archaeology to the site was the discovery of a group of Mesolithic axes found c. 30 m to the south of the site.

Neolithic

- 1.3.3 There is little evidence for Neolithic activity throughout Greater London, due to the geology predominantly being London Clay, which would have been unattractive for farming and settlement (Lewis, 2000, 65). The nearest identified Neolithic archaeology to the site was the discovery of a collection of scrapers and flakes found c. 160 m to the north-east of the site.

Bronze Age

- 1.3.4 The majority of Bronze Age material found within London has been taken from the River Thames, and it is therefore not possible to determine its provenance. A number of Bronze Age artefacts have been recovered from the Wandsworth Thames foreshore to

the north of the site. These artefacts include daggers, spearheads and axes. The nearest identified Bronze Age archaeology to the site is a Neolithic/Bronze Age settlement, c. 190 m to the east of the site. This settlement consisted of shallow pits and gullies with associated artefacts.

Iron Age

- 1.3.5 Present evidence suggests that the region lay beyond the main hillfort dominated areas during the Iron Age period, and its inhabitants seem to have taken no archaeologically visible part in the tribal politics that characterise the Iron Age elsewhere in the south east. The nearest identified Iron Age archaeology to the site are findspots from the Thames foreshore, c. 420 m to the north of the site.

Roman

- 1.3.6 The site is located approximately 5 km to the west of Roman Southwark, part of the Roman settlement of *Londinium* (London), which was located primarily to the north of the River Thames. There are no archaeological features or artefacts dating from the Roman period within the site. The nearest identified Roman archaeology to the site was the findspot of a bottle, c. 300 m to the south-west of the site.

Anglo-Saxon

- 1.3.7 Wandsworth is first mentioned in a charter of 693 and is later recorded in the Domesday Book (1086) as having seven mills. These mills processed flour at first and later were used for other industries, making Wandsworth one of the leading London boroughs for industry. However, the site is located over 600 m to the north-east of the historic core of Wandsworth, and there are no recorded archaeological discoveries of the Anglo-Saxon period from within the site.

Medieval

- 1.3.8 The settlement at Wandsworth developed away from the River Thames, behind an area of marshland at the mouth of the River Wandle, with All Saints Church at its centre (c. 615 m to the south-west of the site). Outside the village, and away from the Wandle most of the land was used in almost equal proportions for agriculture and pasture. The earliest maps of the site date to the post-medieval period, but show the site to be located in a farmland setting. The 1838 Tithe Map shows the site as being located within 'Swandon Shot', 'shot' being another word for 'furlong' which means a collection of strips of land, and Swandon may have been the name of a local landowner. It is most probable that the site was utilised as common land throughout the medieval period. The nearest identified medieval archaeology to the site is a tile-built kiln, c. 480 m to the south-west of the site.

Post-medieval

- 1.3.9 Milne's Map of London in 1800 shows the site as being located in an undeveloped area of open fields. The Alma public house is recorded as having been built in 1866 along with Alma Road and Alma cottages. The 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey Map 1894-6 shows the Winstanley metalworks building for the first time, as well as a rapid new expansion of Wandsworth. This expansion took the form of numerous new roads, terraced housing, schools and churches, subsuming the site. The Ordnance Survey Map of 1973 shows the 19th-century terraced housing within the site to have been demolished, and the site to have a similar layout to that seen today.



1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA's thanks are extended to Peter Nickless of Nickless Allen and to Young's and Co. Brewery Plc. Thanks are also extended to Mark Stevenson (GLAAS) and Jared Johnston of Phelan Construction Ltd, for their help and assistance during the work.

2 INVESTIGATION AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 The principle aims of the investigation were:

- (i) To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of any archaeological remains by targeting the least disturbed areas of the site.
- (ii) To signal, before the destruction of the material in question, the discovery of a significant archaeological find, for which the resources allocated are not sufficient to support a treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard.
- (iii) To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological deposits and features, and to make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 Once the buildings and hardstanding had been cleared by the demolition contractor, two machine-dug trial trenches were excavated measuring 5 m long by 2 m wide. The trenches were dug under close archaeological supervision by a mechanical excavator equipped with a toothless ditching bucket. The excavation proceeded to the top of the natural geology or to the top of the first archaeological horizon, whichever was encountered first.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were sampled by hand. All features and deposits were issued with unique context numbers, and context recording was carried out in accordance with established OA practice as detailed in the OA Field Manual (Wilkinson, 1992).
- 2.2.3 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and where excavated, sections drawn at a scale of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using digital photography and black-and-white print.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Archaeological deposits

Trench 1 (Fig. 3)

- 3.1.1 Trench 1 was 5 m long and 2 m wide, aligned approximately NW-SE at the south-western end of site. Natural sandy clay (102) was revealed 0.8 m below ground level (BGL). The natural was overlain by a buried soil horizon (101), which was on average 0.22 m thick and contained 19th-century pottery. This was overlain by a clayey silt modern make-up deposit (100), which was 0.5 m thick and contained occasional fragments of demolition rubble.
- 3.1.2 A sub-circular feature (103) cut the natural and was found to have an irregular base, indicative of root disturbance. The fill was a dark grey-brown clayey silt deposit, which contained occasional sub-angular stone (Fig. 3 Section 101; Plate 2).

Trench 2 (Fig. 4)

- 3.1.3 Trench 2 was 5 m long and 2 m wide, and was stepped out 1.3 m at its south-eastern end for ease of access. It was aligned approximately NW-SE. Natural sandy clay (204) was revealed at 0.8 m BGL and was overlain by clayey silt make-up deposit 203, which was on average 0.5 m thick. The deposit contained occasional fragments of brick rubble and was heavily truncated by disconnected services relating to the Winstanley metalworks. All deposits were overlain and sealed by make-up layer (202) and concrete slab (200). The partially demolished foundations (201) of the metalworks (Plate 4) were exposed in the north-eastern part of the trench.

Watching Brief

- 3.1.4 The watching brief covered the machine excavation of six underpinning trenches along the NW-SE aligned boundary wall, on the western limit of site. In each of these trenches the ground deposits were consistent with those recorded in the evaluation. Existing concrete piles were revealed every 3.5 m along the boundary wall (Plate 5).
- 3.1.5 During the removal of the concrete slab 200, a modern mechanic's pit was revealed along with the partial remains of a brick yard surface (Fig. 2 and Plate 6). The pit contained a trolley jack, a ladder and modern concrete. Both the pit and the surface were plotted on the site plan, and were of limited archaeological significance.

3.2 Finds summary

General

- 3.2.1 Summaries of the finds reports can be found below, full reports can be found in Appendix B.

Pottery by Paul Blinkhorn

- 3.2.2 The pottery assemblage comprised 35 sherds with a total weight of 628 g. It was all post-medieval, with most dating to the 19th century, except for a single, somewhat abraded sherd of yellow-glazed Border Ware, which is dated to the mid-16th to late 17th century.

Metalwork by Ian Scott

- 3.2.3 The metals comprise 7 objects including 2 iron nails (buried soil layer 101 and the fill of a root hole 104), a fragment of a blade of uncertain form but with a thickened back (buried soil 101), a copper alloy nail (make-up layer 202), and a copper alloy curtain ring (make-up layer 100). There is a small penknife with the remains of bone handle plates from root hole fill 104, and a copper alloy lace tag from make-up layer 202. With the exception of the lace tag none of the metal finds need date earlier than the later 19th or 20th century. The lace tag could date to the 16th or 17th century.

Glass by Ian Scott

- 3.2.4 The glass is all from make-up layer 100 and comprises 5 thick pieces of glass with remains of silvering from a modern mirror, 5 sherds of vessel glass and 2 complete bottles. None of the glass need be earlier than the later 19th century in date.

Other

- 3.2.5 Clay pipe stems were recovered from buried soil 101 and make-up layer 203.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains summary

- 3.3.1 Soil horizon 101 contained coal, clinker and vitrified charcoal, including oak (*Quercus* sp.). Several very clinkered, indeterminate cereal grains and weed seeds were also present, their condition suggesting burning at high temperatures, possibly as fuel. Several herring (*Clupea harengus*) bones and small fragments of shell, probably from oyster (*Ostrea edulis*), were present, suggesting the inclusion of some domestic rubbish. Fragments of slag were also common (both spherical and amorphous, the latter of a silvery appearance) which suggests that industrial material was incorporated into the soil, possibly from the nearby Victorian Winstanley metalworks. Fragments of clay pipe, an iron nail and pottery were also extracted from the residue.

4 DISCUSSION

The site had been heavily truncated by successive phases of 19th-century buildings and no significant archaeological features were revealed. However, a buried soil horizon survived at the base of the archaeological sequence, and the absence of significant and/or residual finds was unlikely to have been the result of truncation.

The investigation results suggest that the site was unoccupied and functioned as farmed arable land until the 19th-century development. The results further support the idea that the site was peripheral to the main Roman and medieval settlements.

APPENDIX A. TRENCH DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Contexts							
Trench	Context	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	finds	date
1	100	Layer	-	0.5	Make-up	Pot/Clay pipe/CBM/ Glass	L19thC
	101	Layer	-	0.22	Buried soil	Pot/Clay pipe/Fe Nail	M16thC
	102	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	
	103	Cut	0.56	0.2	Root hole	-	
	104	Fill	0.56	0.2	Fill of root hole	Pot/CBM/Fe Nail	19thC

Contexts							
Trench	Context	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Comment	finds	date
2	200	Layer	-	0.3	Concrete slab	-	-
	201	Structure	-	0.3	Foundation wall	-	-
	202	Layer	-	0.2	Make-up	Fe Nail	19thC
	203	Layer	-	0.3	Make-up	Pot/Clay pipe	19thC
	204	Layer	-	-	Natural	-	-

APPENDIX B. FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

By Paul Blinkhorn

- B.1.1 The pottery assemblage comprised 35 sherds with a total weight of 628 g. It was all post-medieval, with most dating to the 19th century, except for a single, somewhat abraded sherd of yellow-glazed Border Ware, which is dated to the mid-16th to late 17th century.
- B.1.2 The fabric codes utilized are those of the Museum of London post-Roman type-series (Vince 1985), as follows:
- BORDG: Green-glazed Border ware, 1550-1700. 1 sherd, 9 g.
- CHINA: 'Ironstone' china, 1800-1900. 33 sherds, 618 g.
- CHPO: Chinese porcelain, 1580 -1900. 1 sherd, 1g.
- B.1.3 The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a terminus post quem. The fabric types are all common finds in the City of London and its hinterland. A sherd from context 100, a marmalade jar, gives that assemblage a date of post-1873.

Table B.1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type

	BORDG		CHPO		CHINA		
Cntxt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	Date
100					23	586	L19thC
101	1	9					M16thC
104					5	18	19thC
202			1	1	5	14	19thC
Total	1	9	1	1	33	618	

B.2 Metal

By Ian Scott

- B.2.1 The metals comprise 7 objects including 2 iron nails (context 101 & 104) and 1 copper alloy nail (context 202), a fragment of a blade of uncertain form but with a thickened back (context 101), and a copper alloy curtain ring (context 100). There is a small penknife with the remains of bone handle plates (context 104) and a copper alloy lace tag (context 202). With the exception of the lace tag none of the metal finds need date earlier than the later 19th or 20th century. The lace tag could date to the 16th or 17th century.

B.3 Glass

By Ian Scott

- B.3.1 The glass is all from context 100 and comprises 5 thick pieces of glass with remains of silvering from a modern mirror, 5 sherds of vessel glass and 2 complete bottles. The vessel sherds include a hand finished rim from a moulded jar or wide necked bottle in very pale green glass, and a sherd of dark olive green glass probably from the neck/shoulder of a wine bottle, and a colourless body sherd from an undiagnostic vessel. In addition there is a small curved body sherd with two layers of glass, one layer milky pale green over a layer of clear pale green, and large colourless glass sherd from the base of a square bottle or vessel embossed 'T 4'.
- B.3.2 The complete bottles comprise a machine moulded Daddie's Sauce bottle with embossed inscription and corked closure, and a small decorative ink bottle with burst-off finish for a corked closure. The Daddie's Sauce bottle dates to early or mid 20th century. The ink bottle is mould blown and embossed 'THACKER LONDON' on the base. There is pen rest to one side of the neck. It probably dates to the late 19th or very early 20th century.
- B.3.3 None of the glass need be earlier than the later 19th century in date.

APPENDIX C. PALAEO-ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

By Rebecca Nicholson

C.1 Methodology

- C.1.1 A single, small, soil sample (4L) was taken from a 19th-century soil horizon (101). The sample was taken to assess the preservation of ecofactual evidence relevant to environment and economic activity and to recover small bones and artefacts.
- C.1.2 The sample was processed by flotation using a modified Siraf-type machine, the flot being collected onto a 250 micron mesh and the residue on a 0.5mm mesh. Both flot and residue were retained and air-dried, the fractions were then sorted for artefacts and small bones down to 2 mm.

C.2 Results

- C.2.1 The small sample produced a large flot (220 mls). The majority of the flot was composed of coal, clinker and vitrified charcoal, including oak (*Quercus* sp.). Some items were >2mm and have potential to be identified to species level. Several very clinkered, indeterminate cereal grains and weed seeds were also present, their condition suggesting burning at high temperatures, possibly as fuel. The numbers and condition of these makes further interpretation impossible. Several herring (*Clupea harengus*) bones and small fragments of shell, probably from oyster (*Ostrea edulis*), were present, suggesting the inclusion of some domestic rubbish. Fragments of slag were also common (both spherical and amorphous, the latter of a silvery appearance) which suggests that industrial material was incorporated into the soil, possibly from the nearby Victorian Winstanley metalworks. Fragments of clay pipe, an iron nail and pottery were also extracted from the residue.



APPENDIX D. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

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Wilkinson, D (ed.), 1992 Fieldwork Manual, Oxford Archaeology Unit (unpublished)

APPENDIX E. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	The Alma Tavern, Wandsworth, London
Site code:	AMO09
Grid reference:	NGR: TQ 260 750
Type:	Archaeological Investigation
Date and duration:	March 2010
Area of site:	780 m ²
Summary of results:	The site comprised arable land until the 19th-century development of the area.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with the Museum of London in due course, under the following accession number: AMO09



Scale 1:25,000

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Figure 1: Site location

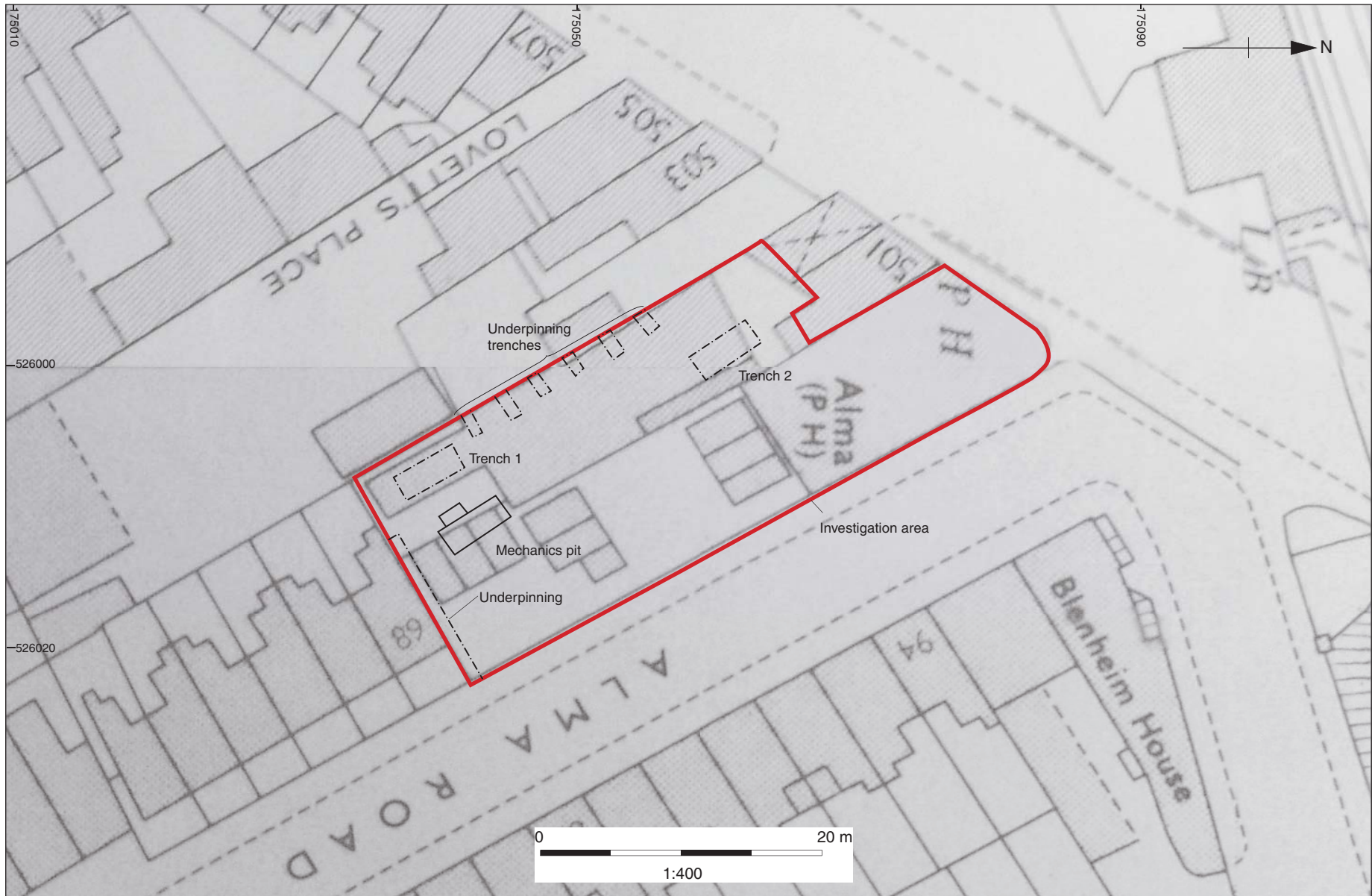


Figure 2: Site plan showing trench locations and watching brief works overlying Ordnance Survey Map 1973 and 1988

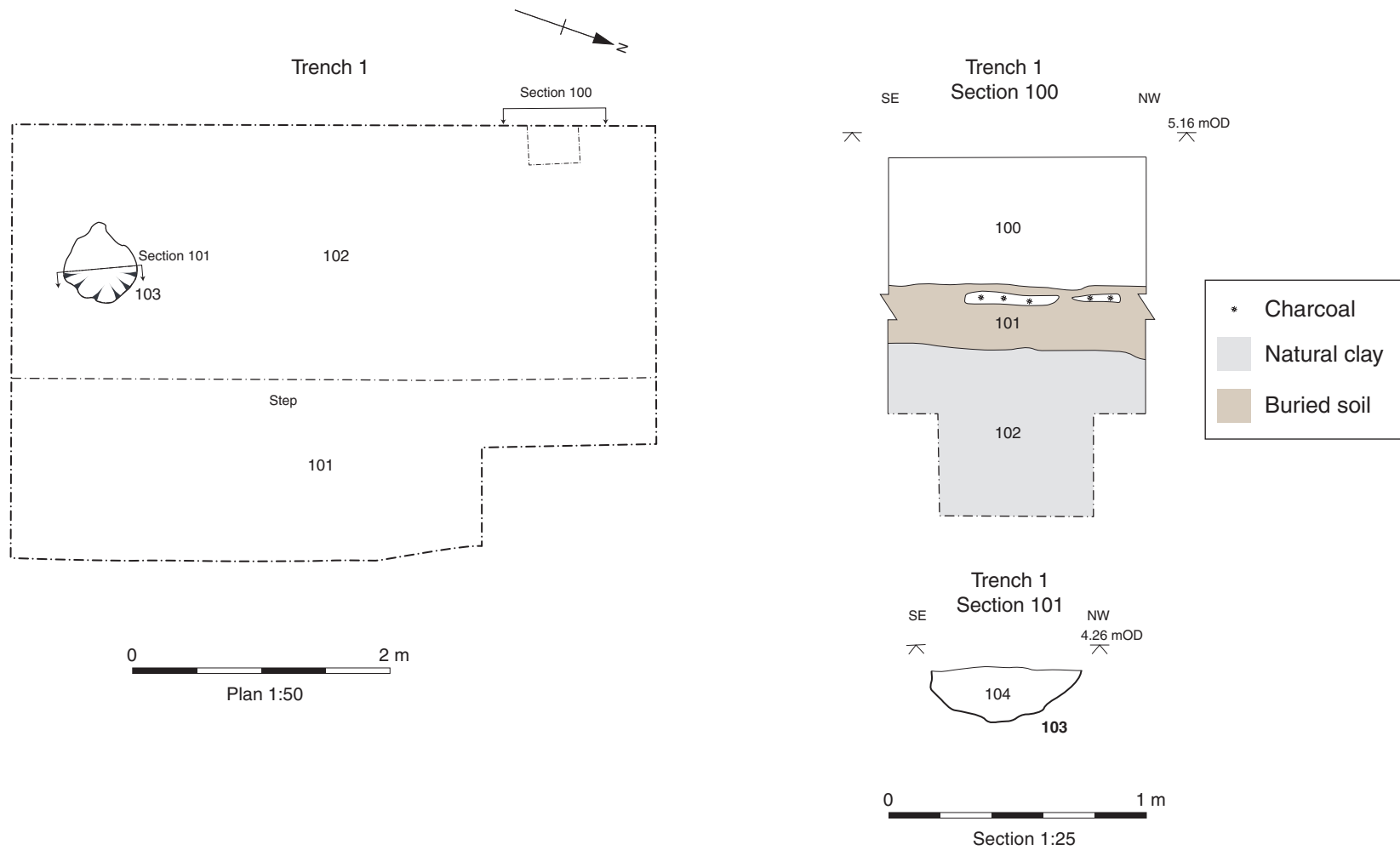


Figure 3: Trench 1 plan and sections

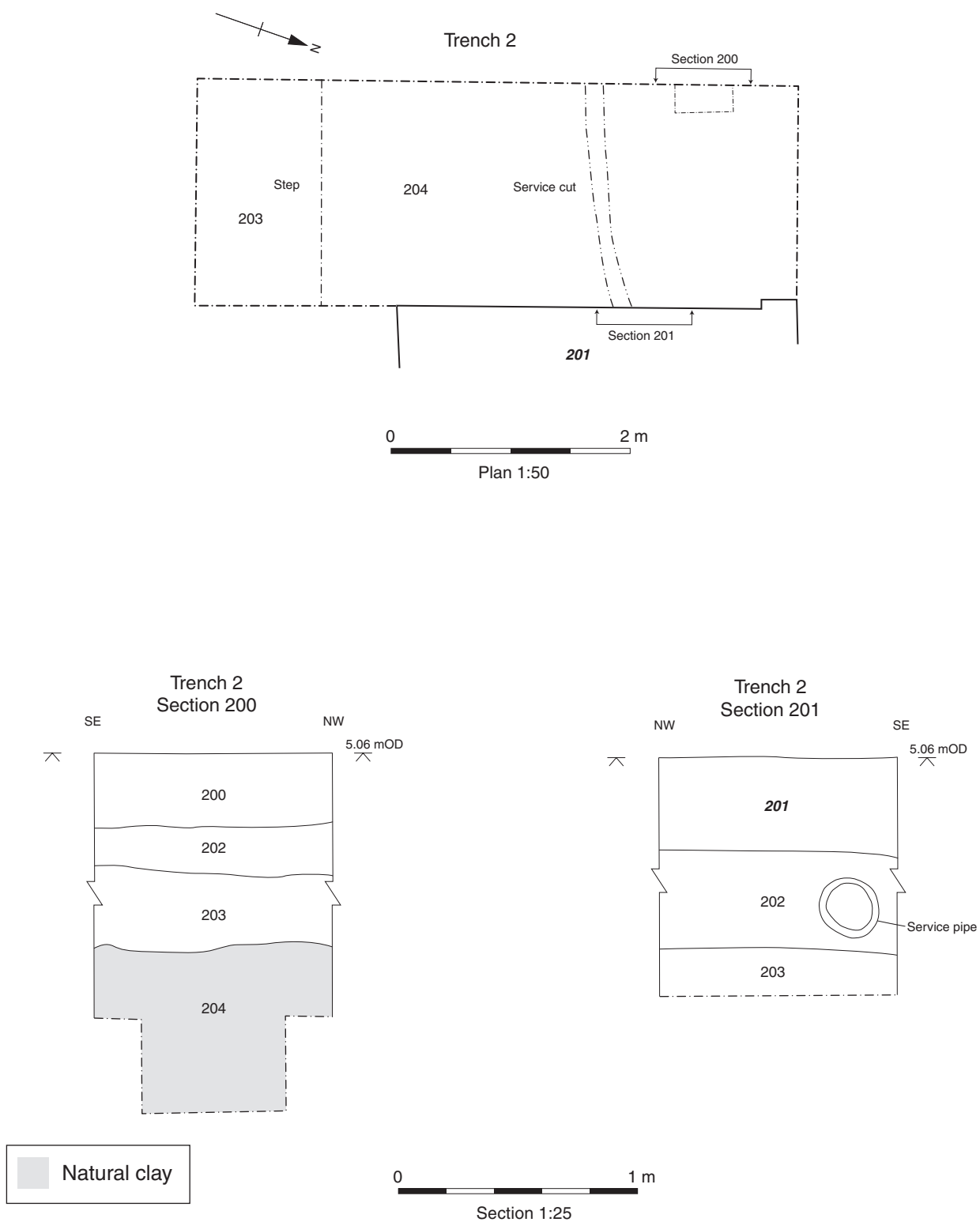


Figure 4: Trench 2 plan and sections



Plate 1: Section 100, Trench 1



Plate 2: Section 101, root hole 103



Plate 3: Section 200, Trench 2



Plate 4: Section 201, Trench 2



Plate 5: Underpinning trench, showing pile foundation



Plate 6: Mechanic's pit and associated yard surface



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