

Buckingham Palace Gardens Buckingham Palace London



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

CONTENTS

Summary.....	1
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Scope of work.....	1
1.2 Location, geology and topography	1
1.3 Archaeological and historical background	2
1.4 Acknowledgements	2
2 Project Aims and Methodology.....	3
2.1 Aims	3
2.2 Methodology.....	3
3 Results	3
3.1 Description of trench deposits.....	3
3.2 Finds	4
3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains	4
4 Discussion and Conclusions	4
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory	6
Appendix 2 Bibliography and References	6
Appendix 3 GLSMR/RCHME NMR Archaeological Report Form	7

LIST OF FIGURES AND PLATES

- Fig. 1 Site location map
 Fig. 2 Location plan of trench and sections
 Fig. 3 Sections 1 and 2
 Fig. 4 Plan and sections of new manhole

PLATES

Cover Plate: Excavation of service trench in progress

- Plate 1 Eastern view of service trench
 Plate 2 Western view of service trench
 Plate 3 Trench section showing rubble deposit
 Plate 4 Plan view of new manhole showing rubble deposit

SUMMARY

In February 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) undertook an archaeological watching brief within the gardens of Buckingham Palace, London (NGR TQ 2900 7940). The work was commissioned by the Royal Household (Property Section) in advance of the excavation of a new service trench leading from the gallery to the ornamental lake to the west of the palace. A continuous archaeological presence was maintained throughout the duration of the excavations.

The watching brief revealed traces of garden landscaping and alterations to ground levels of probable 19th century date, in the form of a layer of brick and mortar that was identified less than 0.5 m below the present ground surface.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 In February 2004, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief within the Gardens of Buckingham Palace, London (NGR TQ 2900 7940).
- 1.1.2 The work was commissioned by the Royal Household (Property Section) in advance of the excavation of a drainage pipe trench leading from the gallery to the ornamental lake, to the west of the Palace. The trench was designed to contain a pipe that will direct water for the cooling of the new gallery into the present ornamental lake.
- 1.1.3 The water in the pipe is likely to be too warm for both the lawn grass and the fauna within the lake, and is therefore being set deep into the ground to cool it before being fed into the lake. Due to the narrow width and depth of the trench, it was impossible and against health and safety guidelines enter the trench for recording purposes. Therefore all observations were made from the ground surface.
- 1.1.4 The watching brief followed recommendations contained in a desk-top assessment produced by OA of the Palace Gardens, that was commissioned by the Royal Household (OA 2003).

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 Buckingham Palace is located in the London Borough of Westminster (NGR TQ 2908 7955). It is situated due south of Green Park at the west end of The Mall (Fig. 1).
- 1.2.2 The service trench was located in the southern part of the palace grounds, extending from the lake to the Palace terrace (Fig. 2). The trench was approximately 158.6 m in length and 0.4 m wide.
- 1.2.3 Previously the site was in the ancient parishes of St George Hanover Square (the Palace and the southern half of Buckingham Palace Gardens) and St Martin in the Fields (the northern half of the Gardens including the area of proposed cable

installation and pits). Both parishes have since been absorbed into the borough administration.

- 1.2.4 The geology of Buckingham Palace Gardens is recent Brickearth (BGS Sheet 270). Immediately to the south and east of the Gardens in the area of the Palace and Royal Mews, is a band of Quaternary (Recent) Alluvium. These deposits are associated with the former watercourse of the River Tyburn, which once flowed north to south to join the River Thames immediately south-east of the Palace.
- 1.2.5 The garden grounds slope gently to the south-east from a height of 10 m OD at the northern end of the Gardens to 5 m OD south of Buckingham Palace Road.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the site was prepared in detail for the desk-top assessment of the site (OA 2003) that included a full gazetteer of known archaeological sites in the area, and an abridged version of that information is presented below.
- 1.3.2 The assessment identified no known sites earlier than those of post-medieval date, but suggested an uncertain potential for the area of proposed cable installations and pits to contain archaeology of prehistoric and Roman date. The site of the later Palace lay outside the limits of Roman *Londinium* and Saxon *Lundenwic*. The assessment also concluded that there was a low potential for the finds of the early medieval and later medieval periods, as the site probably lay in open fields at these times.
- 1.3.3 In 1630 Lord Goring constructed a private residence on the site of the present Palace, enclosing adjacent fields (forming 'Great Goring Garden'). Goring House was extant in the Civil War (1642-46), when the Common Council protected the City, the Liberties and outlying parishes with a 17 km-long defensive circuit that probably crossed the site of Buckingham Palace Gardens (Sturdy 1975, 337).
- 1.3.4 Recent studies of maps and historic documents suggested the potential to encounter three known sites within the area of proposed works. These included the possible below-ground remains of Civil War defensive ditches constructed in c 1643 (OA **Gazetteer Nos. 57 and 58**; Sturdy, *ibid.*); the below-ground remains of garden and garden boundary features of the Duke of Buckingham's military-style garden (OA **62**) designed and built between 1703 and 1705, at the time when Buckingham House itself was built; and an underground conduit known to have been constructed between 1825-1828 to feed the then newly-landscaped ornamental lake (OA **60**).
- 1.3.5 In 2003, Oxford Archaeology (OA) maintained a watching brief in the Gardens during the installation of new cabling and pits. The possible line of part of a back-filled Civil War entrenchment was revealed and traces of garden landscaping and alterations of probable 18th-19th century date including terrace walling and a large conduit or culvert were noted (OA 2004).

1.4 Acknowledgements

1.4.1 OA extends its thanks to Roy Brown at Royal Household (Property Section) for providing site plans and for the further advice of Mark Lane, Head Gardener regarding features on the site.

1.4.2 OA's Rosemary Wheeler and Tim Haines carried out the watching brief.

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

2.1.1 To identify and record the presence/absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the areas affected by the development.

2.1.2 To make available the results of the archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 A supervisor from OA was in attendance during all excavation works that were undertaken by a small mechanical mini-digger. All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:100 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:50 or 1:20. Trench sections containing archaeological strata were recorded - in places only soil deposits for the present lawns were observed and these were not recorded in detail. A location plan was drawn at 1:500, and based on plan BP-34-SS-02 prepared by Plowman Craven and Associates.

2.2.2 All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the excavation works was also made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OA Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D Wilkinson, 1992), and was in accordance with Museum of London standards for sites in London.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of trench deposits

3.1.1 The east-west aligned drainage trench (Fig. 2; Plates 1 and 2) was approximately 158.6 m in length, 0.4 m wide and approximately 1.6 m in depth.

Section 1

3.1.2 The eastern stretch of the trench began within the flowerbeds near to the present Electricians Gate. These beds were created, together with the new gallery, in 2002. The deposits at this end of the trench were therefore of recently disturbed ground. The topsoil (1) overlay the backfill of a manhole (2) and a modern rubble/soil layer (3), containing brick, concrete fragments, plastic and cardboard relating to the recent building and landscaping work (Fig. 3).

Section 2

3.1.3 This length of trench was recorded towards the mid-part of the trench. This section contained topsoil (1), which lay over the modern rubble deposit (3) seen to the east.

Below this was a dark brown, gravelly deposit with rubble inclusions (5), which may have been re-deposited subsoil, mixed with building rubble. Below this was a distinctive layer of brick rubble (4), comprising red bricks that seem to have been dumped, some as lumps of bonded bricks with mortar, others as fragments (Fig. 3; Plates 3 and 4). The layer was identified 0.3 m to 0.4 m below the surface, and was between 0.4 m-0.7 m thick. The deposit was compact with the bricks having degraded *in-situ*. Below this deposit is a layer of re-deposited natural clay, (6), and below this, the natural orange-brown sand and gravel deposits (7).

Section 3

- 3.1.4 This length of trench was recorded on the west side of the site of a new manhole, approximately 64.6 m from the east end of the trench (Fig. 4). The topsoil (1) overlay rubble layer (3); below this was the re-deposited subsoil (5). Below this was a deposit of compact, fine brick fragments, (8), lying above brick rubble deposit (4). Below the brick rubble deposit the re-deposited clay and the gravel layers seen elsewhere were present.

3.2 Finds

Ceramic Building material

- 3.2.1 Ceramic building material was present in the brick rubble deposit (4) and also in the backfill deposit by manhole 2. The brick from deposit 4 was of a rich dark red colour, characteristic of bricks of the Victorian era. The bricks were too fragmentary to record actual measurements or collect a sample. The brick fragments from deposit 2 were less than 0.1 m diameter, and were dark pink in colour, with grit inclusions. They appeared to be modern/20th century in origin.

Post-medieval pottery

- 3.2.2 Two pieces of grey-white glazed stoneware pottery were found in deposit 2. One was the base of a cylindrical vessel, with straight sides, probably from a jar or mug. The pottery sherds are of post-medieval date.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The east end of the trench revealed evidence of the disturbance created during the recent remodelling of the south-west corner of the gardens.
- 4.1.2 The most significant find within the trench was the brick rubble layer. This appeared throughout the majority of the trench, at a constant level and thickness. This indicates that the rubble was deposited widely across this end of the main lawn.
- 4.1.3 It is possible that the layer was formed during to the installation of brick culverts, known to run from the west side of the palace to the lake. These are depicted on

historic maps and date to the Victorian era. Similar features were located during the previous watching brief (OA 2003). It is equally also possible that the layer formed part of a general levelling of the lawns in the Victorian period.

- 4.1.4 All these structures and features appear to be of post-medieval date; wherever natural was exposed no earlier features were identified.

Oxford Archaeology
April 2004

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context No.</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth (m)</i>	<i>Width (m)</i>	<i>Height (m)</i>	<i>Comments</i>	<i>Finds</i>
1	Layer	0.0 m	-	0.2 - 0.4 m	Topsoil	-
2	Deposit	0.38 m	-	0.28 m	Rubble Backfill	Pottery sherds
3	Deposit	0.1m+	-	0.2 m	Rubble Backfill	-
4	Deposit	0.38 m+	-	0.4 m	Brick Rubble Deposit	Brick
5	Layer	0.30 m+	-	0.3 m	Re-deposited Subsoil	-
6	Layer	0.6 m+	-	0.68 m	Re-deposited Natural	-
7	Layer	1.12 m	-	0.46m	Natural gravels	-
8	Deposit	0.52m	-	0.11m	Compacted Brick Fragments Deposit	-

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

OAU, 1992 *Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D. Wilkinson, First Edition, August 1992)

OA, 2003 *Buckingham Palace Gardens: Desktop Assessment*. Client Report for the Royal Household.

OA 2003 *Buckingham Palace Gardens*. Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Sturdy, D, 1975 The Civil War Defences of London in *London Archaeologist* - Vol. 2 No. 13

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: Westminster

Site address: Buckingham Palace

Site Name: Gardens

Site Code: BUCPA3 04

Nat. grid Refs:

centre of site: TQ 2900 7940

Limits of site: N 2900 7990

S 2900 7880

E 2850 7940

W 2950 7940

3) ORGANISATION

Name of archaeological unit/company/society: Oxford Archaeology

Address: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 OES

Site director/supervisor: Rosemary Wheeler/Tim Haines Project manager: Jonathan Hiller

Funded by: Royal Household (Property Division)

4) DURATION

Date fieldwork started: 12th February 2004 Date finished: 23rd February 2004

Fieldwork previously notified? **YES/NO**

Fieldwork will continue? **YES/NO/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

Victorian Brick rubble deposits; modern layers.

7) NATURAL

Type: Orange brown sand and gravels.

Height above Ordnance datum: 5 m -10 m

8) LOCATION OF ARCHIVES

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

Notes 17	Plans 2	Photos Negatives 17
Slides 17	Correspondence	MScripts (unpub reports, etc)
Bulk finds 1 bag	Small finds None	Soil samples None
Other Sections 3		

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

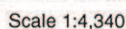
10) BIBLIOGRAPHY

See Bibliography and References

SIGNED: *JHiller*

DATE: 26th April 2004

NAME : Jonathan Hiller, Senior Project Manager, Oxford Archaeology



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Figure 1: Site location map

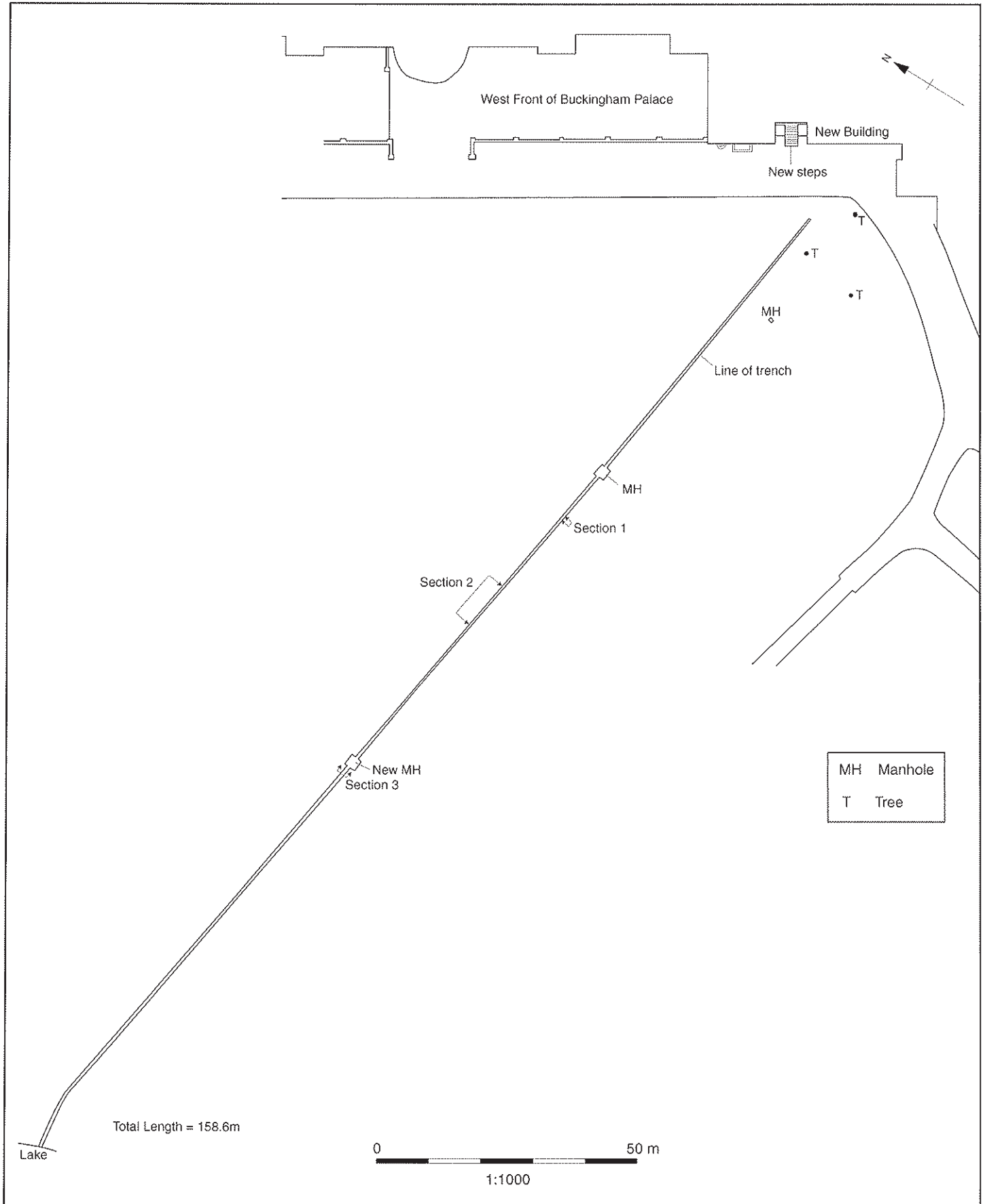


Figure 2: Location plan of trench and sections

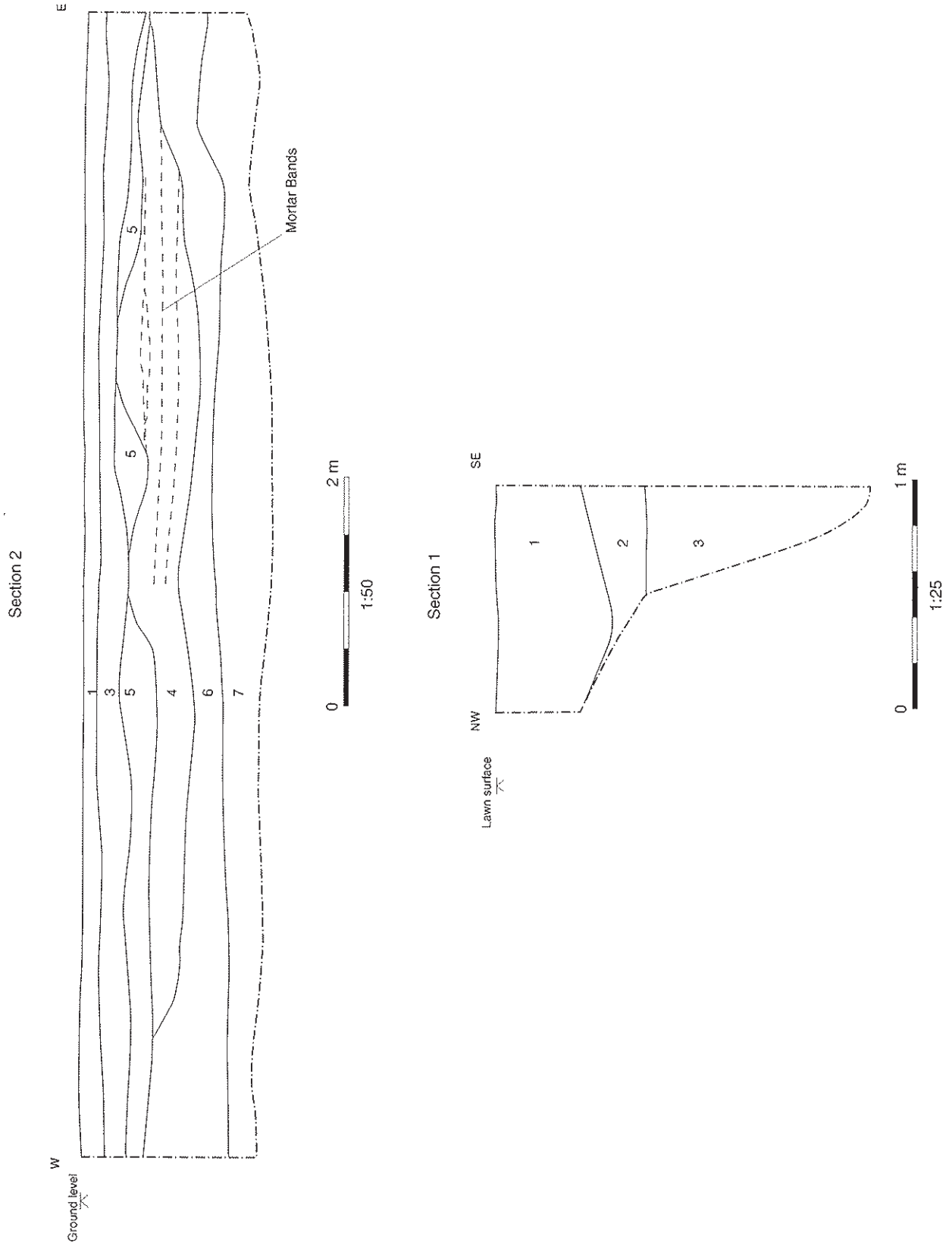


Figure 3: Sections 1 and 2

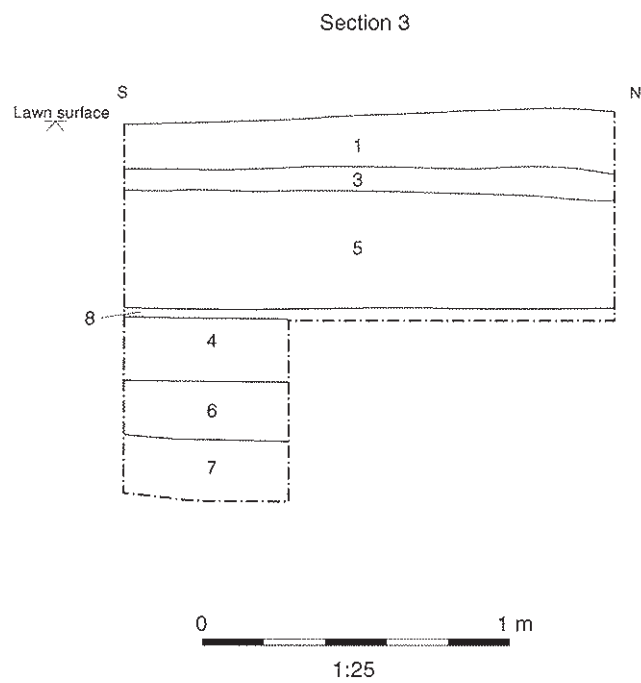
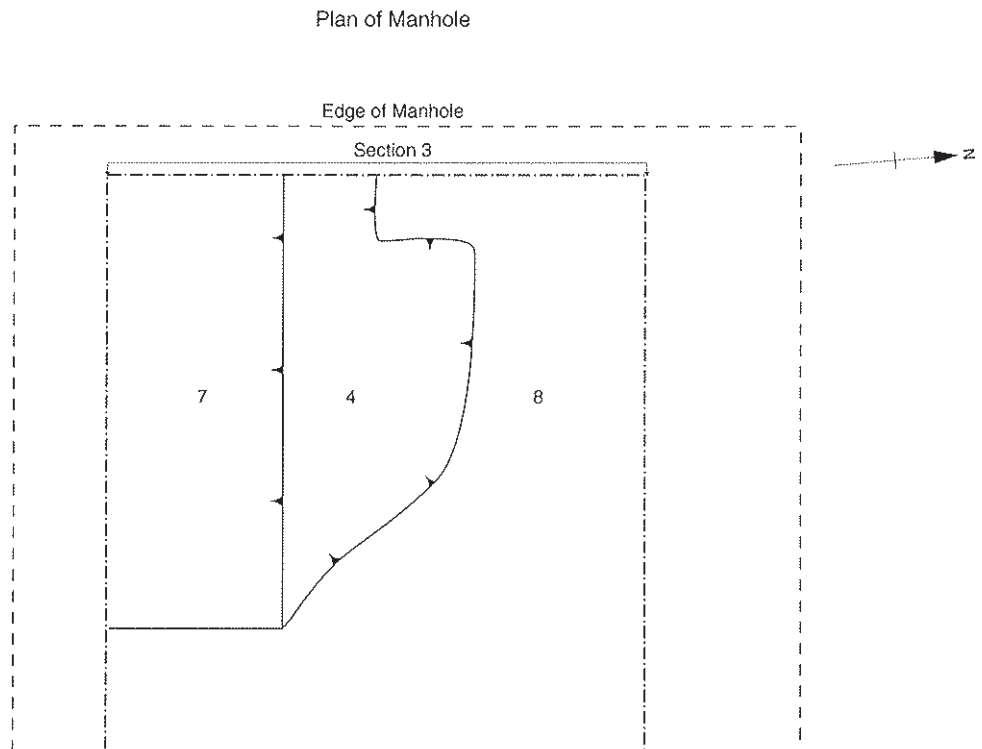


Figure 4: Plan and section of new manhole



Plate 1: Eastern view of service trench



Plate 2: Western view of service trench



Plate 3: Trench section showing rubble deposit



Plate 4: Plan view of new manhole showing rubble deposit



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