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Soane Pavillion Royal Hospital Chelsea London



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



Oxford Archaeology

February 2005

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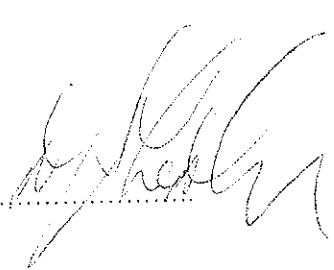
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Soane Pavilion, Royal Hospital, Chelsea, London

ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF REPORT

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Cover Plate: View of the pavilion prior to start of works from the south.

SUMMARY

From October 2004 to January 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Soane Pavilion, Royal Hospital, Chelsea, London (NGR TQ 2830 7800). The work was commissioned by Capita Symonds on behalf of the Royal Hospital Chelsea during the restoration of the Soane Pavilion in the hospital grounds. The watching brief revealed remnants of the original early 19th century pavilion building, much altered in the 20th century.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 From October 2004 to January 2005 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Soane Pavilion, Royal Hospital, Chelsea, London (Fig. 1). The work was commissioned by Capita Symonds on behalf of the Royal Hospital Chelsea during the restoration of the Soane Pavilion in the hospital grounds.
- 1.1.2 The Watching Brief will be carried out in accordance with English Heritage's Greater London Archaeological Service Guidelines.
- 1.1.3 OA prepared a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) detailing how it would meet the requirements of the brief and was based on methodology and proposals contained in previous WSIs by OA for previous monitoring exercises at the site.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The site lies on First River terrace gravel overlying London clay at 5 m above OD. The site is situated in the park grounds of the Royal Hospital opposite the Chelsea Barracks.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the watching brief was prepared from the Watching Brief Report carried out by Oxford Archaeology (OA 2004) during the construction of new buildings for the Superintendent of Grounds and is reproduced below.
- 1.3.2 The Royal Hospital is situated in the ancient parish of Chelsea on the edge of the first gravel terrace of the River Thames. The medieval centre of the village, clustered around the church, lies to the west of the hospital and it appears that when originally constructed the hospital lay in open fields running down to the Thames.
- 1.3.3 No prehistoric or Roman sites have been identified in the immediate vicinity of the Royal Hospital. However the location of the site on the first gravel terrace overlooking the river suggests that it would have been an attractive place to settle, both agriculturally and strategically. The area has produced chance finds of prehistoric material including a Bronze Age palstave, a number of Palaeolithic and Mesolithic flint flakes and a considerable amount of later prehistoric metalwork

dredged from the River Thames. The grounds of the Royal Hospital itself have produced Roman material: a coin of Tetricus (259-274 AD) was found in College Court during the construction of a sewer in 1886.

- 1.3.4 The parish would appear to be able to demonstrate pre-Conquest roots. Chelsea is mentioned in a number of Anglo-Saxon charters and the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle tells us that Offa, King of Mercia, held a synod in Chelsea about AD 787. No recorded Anglo-Saxon material has been discovered in the immediate vicinity of the hospital.
- 1.3.5 During the medieval period the site of the hospital lay in the open fields of the parish of Chelsea to the east of the village which clustered around the church. Hamilton's 1717 map of the parish of Chelsea, (which probably reflects the medieval settlement pattern of the parish) coupled with the various documents relating to the purchase of the land for the hospital allows us to reconstruct fairly exactly the medieval settlement pattern. The site of the hospital lies within Thamesott, an arable field at the eastern edge of the parish of Chelsea. This field was separated from Eastfield, the main open field of the medieval parish of Chelsea (now partly occupied by Burton Court) by the road from Westminster to Chelsea. This road, known as Paradise Row, to the east of the Royal Hospital and Jews Row to the west of the Hospital appears likely to have existed as a straight thoroughfare in the medieval period. It ran from Chelsea to Westminster and, as marked on Hamilton's map passed over the Creek to the west via a stone bridge. When the Royal Hospital was built this road was diverted around Burton Court. The road was only re-routed along its original routeway, through the grounds of the hospital, along what is now Royal Hospital Road, following an act of parliament in 1845.
- 1.3.6 The Royal Hospital was built partly on the site of an unsuccessful Theological College built in the reign of James I with the stated intention of training Protestant clergy to refute the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Although this building was originally planned as having a double quadrangle, the smaller of which was to have been partly telescoped within the larger, commentators such as Faulkner (1829, 221) have argued that only one side of one, the largest, quadrangle was ever built. The college, which appears to have struggled against financial collapse from the first moment of its foundation, is recorded as 'dissolved' in a document of 1655 and between 1664 and 1666 it is recorded that it was used as a prison for Dutch Prisoners of War. Dean (1950 31) records that many of these prisoners died during the Great Plague of 1666 and were buried in the college forecourt.
- 1.3.7 In 1667 the building was transferred to the newly founded Royal Society although it appears to have been of little use to them. Despite various attempts to sell the college and its lands the property was to remain in the hands of the Royal Society until 1682 when the land was finally sold to the crown as the site of the Royal Hospital.
- 1.3.8 In this year Christopher Wren was commissioned to design and build the new Hospital. The original plan was for buildings around a single courtyard (Figure Court); the side courtyards (Light Horse Court and College Court) were additions of 1686. In 1689, 476 old pensioners were admitted although the building was not finished until 1690. With a few minor changes the main buildings that we see today are essentially those of the 1690's.

- 1.3.9 The proposed site lies to the south of the main hospital complex within the area originally laid out by Wren as an area of formal gardens. These comprised an elaborate mixture of canals, boulevards and gardens, which are clearly marked on Sturts 1692 plan of the Royal Hospital. Along the south front of the college Wren laid out a wide terrace and to the south of this the ground fell away to an area of trees and lawns. These gardens were bisected by a raised causeway that ran down to a water gate on the river, flanked by two summerhouses. The causeway was flanked on either side by two 40ft (c. 12 m) wide canals, which ran to the bottom of the south Terrace before branching off to run north-east and south-west along its base. On either side of the two major canals Wren laid out plantations of fruit and flowering trees (Ascoli 1974, 100-1).
- 1.3.10 This arrangement survived fairly unscathed for the next 150 years although a gradual diminution is apparent on the various historic maps consulted. The most notable change is the disappearance of the orchards, which is apparent on maps from the mid 18th century onwards. Maps of this date, and later, show that the canals survive throughout the 18th and into the 19th century but that as early as 1717 the orchards had disappeared to be replaced by a Kitchen Garden to the south-west and by a area of meadow, described as the Governors Garden Meadow, to the north-east.
- 1.3.11 The most drastic change came in the 1850s when the construction of the Chelsea Bridge Road and the building of the Embankment carved off the southern edge of the gardens. This led to not only the loss of the Water Gate and the southern edge of Wren's Gardens but also to the infilling of the canals. Later 19th-century and early 20th-century maps show something very close to the modern layout of the gardens with a gravelled pathway following the line of the raised causeway and lawns laid out on the site of the canals and gardens and orchards that flanked them. These fields are now in use as playing fields and will form the site of the new permanent Marquee.
- 1.3.12 A watching brief carried out in 2003 by Oxford Archaeology during the construction of a new building for the Superintendent of Grounds revealed no archaeological features or deposits pre-dating the 19th century, suggesting the site remained undeveloped during the construction of the Royal Society College and later Royal Hospital. Activity pre-dating the 19th century was represented only by a thick layer of cultivated soil, which had been disturbed by later activity. A large quarry pit was observed in the south-west corner of the site was possibly excavated to provide material for the construction of the Chelsea Bridge Road and was subsequently used as a rubbish pit. From the mid 19th century, a series of greenhouses, outbuildings and related features for the care and maintenance of the hospital grounds were constructed at the site.
- 1.3.13 The pavilion was built in 1834 for the pensioners to shelter in while attending their allotments in the now Ranelagh Gardens. Sir John Soane built the pavilion during his period as Clerk of Works from 1807 to 1837. The pavilion appearance was altered in the 20th century with structural rebuilding of the walls and a slate roof replacing the earlier thatch (DIA Ltd 2002) (Figure 2).

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 The restoration of the Soane Pavilion (Fig. 2) consisted of the breaking up and lifting of the concrete floor. The dismantling of the brick pillars and rebuilding with new and retained bricks. A new 0.5 m x 0.5 m x 0.5 m concrete foundation pad was cast to support the south-east corner pillar as it had started to subside due to the 20th century drain being built against the foundations. Two soakaways were excavated at the north-east and south-west end of the building with drains running from the pavilion corners. These works were carried out under archaeological supervision.
- 2.2.2 All archaeological features were planned at a scale of 1:50 and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All excavated features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. A general photographic record of the work was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Field Manual* (OAU 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Pavilion Building (Figures 3 and 4)

- 3.1.1 After the concrete floor had been removed the foundations of the building were exposed. The foundations of the walls (2, 5, 6 and 7) measured 0.45 m wide and internal walls (1 and 3) measuring 0.3 m in wide and were all 0.24 m high. They were constructed three courses high of bricks 0.24 m x 0.11 m x 0.08 m with a light yellowish mortar bond. These were all trench built in a foundation trench (13), which had vertical sides and flat base, measuring 0.42 m wide and 0.25 m in depth. It cut into a ground make up layer (14) of light reddish brown silty sand with brick, mortar and chalk inclusions. The back north-west wall foundation (2) had the remains of a 0.24 m wide x 0.01 m thick strip of bedding mortar for the removed north-west back wall. The walls (5, 6 and 7) supported a 0.08 m Yorkstone plinth on a 0.025 m thick light brown mortar bed. The plinth supported the six wooden columns and formed the edging for the open front and the two end porches. The two porch areas at the north-east and south-west ends covered an area 5 m x 1.65 m. Contained within these areas was the floor make up (8) of light reddish brown sand with brick and mortar inclusions. This was for the earlier floor of the pavilion, which had been removed and replaced with the concrete floor. During the 20th century alterations to the pavilion with the removal of the north-west back wall and side walls (1 and 3). Four stubb walls (10) were constructed in the four internal corners. These were constructed in 0.9 m x 0.5 m rectangular foundation trenches (9) with vertical sides.

The base was not exposed and trench built in these were stubb walls (10) of brick and cement bonding. These were of the same construction as pillars 5, 7, 10 and 13 (see Fig. 3). Filling the void between the cut 9 and walls (10) was a loose very dark brown silty sand (11), which was sealed below the concrete floor.

Soakaway Pits and drainage (Figures 3 and 4)

- 3.1.2 Two new soakaway pits were situated at the north-east to south-west ends of the pavilion with two drains from the each corner running into them. The soakaway pits were 1 m x 1 m x 1 m with a 0.15 m wide and 0.20 - 0.30 m trench running into the pit. The soakaway at the south-west end cut into a demolition spread of light grey mortar with brick fragments (21), which had been overlain by a reddish brown silty sand (20) make up landscaping the gardens. This was sealed below a orange brown silty sand loam (19) make up layer, which was sealed by a 0.35 m thick dark grey brown silty sand (18) well cultivated garden topsoil. The two drain trenches to the soakaway cut through the 0.08 m tarmac path around the pavilion and through topsoil (18) into layer (19).
- 3.1.3 The second soakaway at the north-east end of the pavilion cut into a mid brown silty sand loam (14) ground making up landscaping to the gardens. This had been cut by 20th century water pipes for the garden. Sealing this was a 0.35 m thick dark grey brown silty sand (18) well cultivated garden topsoil. The two drain trenches to the soakaway cut through the 0.08 m tarmac path around the pavilion and through topsoil (18). In the south-east corner the new drain trench cut a soakaway (15) from the 20th century alterations to the pavilion. This was sub-rectangular in shape with steep sloping sides rounding to a flat base. It measured 0.8 m x 0.75 m x 0.6 m and was filled by a loose brick and concrete rubble (16) fill with a 0.1 m thick concrete slab with a cast iron grill set into it.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 No finds were recovered from the site during the course of the watching brief.

3.3 Palaeo-environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for environmental sampling were identified during the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 The watching brief recorded the remains of the original pavilion built by Soane. The remains of the original north-west back wall were exposed in the form of a 0.24 m wide bed of mortar along the foundation wall. Also two small brick foundation between pillars 13 & 14 and 5 & 6. The narrow foundations suggest the walls to have been low walls or had large windows opening out on to the covered porches at each end of the pavilion. The south wall (7) and porch walls (5 and 6) had been capped at floor level with York stone slabs on which the wooden pillars (2, 3, 9, 12, 16 and 17) had been set. This suggests that the pavilion was an enclosed space with a high back wall and two sidewalls and an open front and covered sides. The 20th century alterations removed the back wall and replaced it with brick pillars 7 and 10 and

rebuilt pillars 5 and 13. Where the two smaller walls had been removed four small brick stubb walls (10) were constructed to support the new slate roof. The earlier floor stone slab or tile floor had been removed and replaced with a concrete floor and a new soakaway was constructed in the south-east corner for the guttering of the slate roof (which was the cause of later subsidence to brick pillar 4). The original pavilion would have looked like a large shelter with walls on three sides to provide shelter with a large open front. This had been opened up to its present appearance in the 20th century.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Context</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Depth</i>	<i>Width</i>	<i>Length</i>	<i>Comments</i>
1	Wall		0.24 m	1.80 m	North-east foundation wall
2	Wall		0.38 m	6.90 m	North-west foundation wall
3	Wall		0.24 m	1.80 m	South-west foundation wall
4	Wall		0.24 m	6.90 m	Mortar base of old north-west wall
5	Wall		0.35 m	6.40 m	North-east Porch
6	Wall		0.35 m	6.40 m	South-west Porch
7	Wall		0.35 m	8.60 m	South-east wall
8	Layer				Floor base make up
9	Cut		0.40 m	0.70 m	Foundation trench
10	Wall		0.24 m	0.64 m	20th century stubb walls
11	Fill				Back fill
12	Structure				Soane pavilion
13	Cut	0.25 m	0.42 m		Foundation trench
14	Layer	0.60 m			Make up layer in garden
15	Cut	0.60 m	0.75 m	0.80 m	20th century soakaway
16	Fill				Fill of soakaway
17	Layer	0.10 m			Tarmac surface of pathway
18	Layer	0.40 m			Cultivated topsoil
19	Layer	0.30 m			Make up layer in garden
20	Layer	0.40 m			Make up layer in garden
21	Layer	0.16 m			Make up layer in garden

APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

DIA Ltd 2002 Royal Hospital, Chelsea, The Soane Pavilion Condition Survey Report by Donald Insall Associates Ltd

OA 2004 Royal Hospital, Chelsea, Replacement of the Superintendent of Soane Pavilion. Written Scheme of Investigation

APPENDIX 3 SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name: Soane Pavilion, Royal Hospital, Chelsea, London

Site code: RHCSP 04

Grid reference: NGR TQ 2830 7800

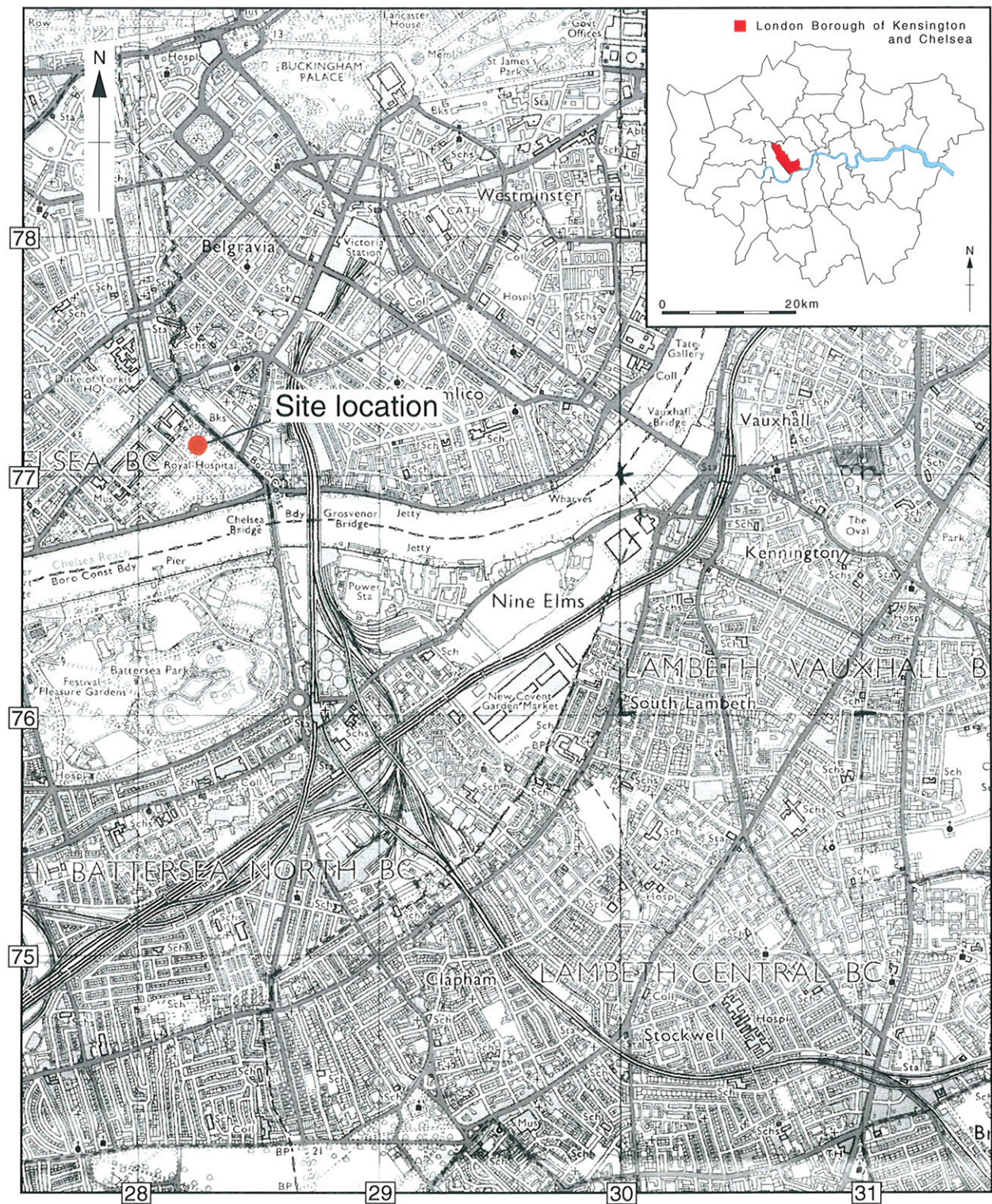
Type of watching brief: Archaeological recording of Soane pavilion during restoration works.

Date and duration of project: Four site visits from the 9/11/2004 to the 10/1/2005.

Area of site: 12 m x 6 m

Summary of results: The watching brief revealed remnants of the original early 19th century pavilion building, much altered in the 20th century.

Location of archive: The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Royal Hospital Chelsea, London in due course.



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Figure 1: Site location

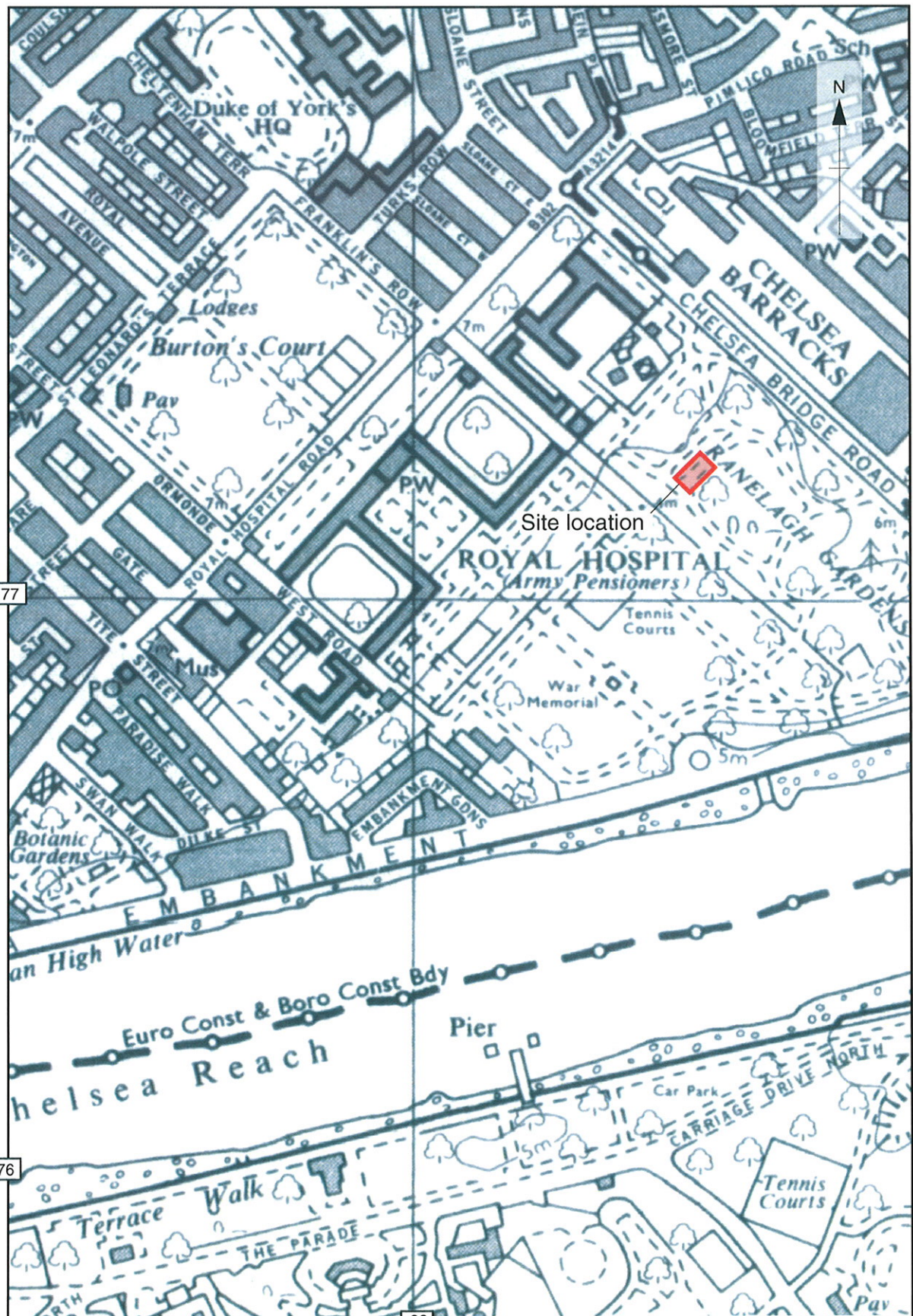


Figure 2: Site location

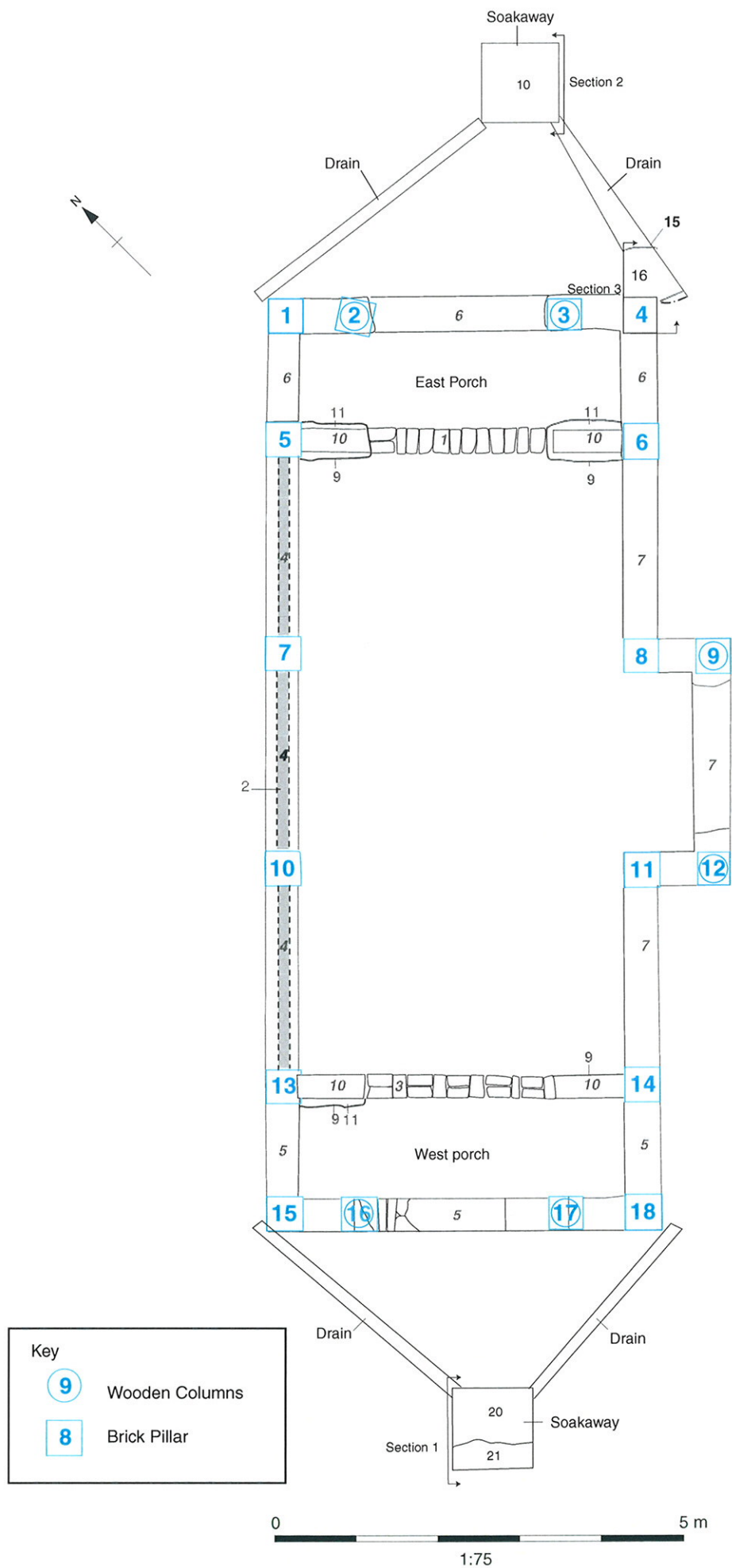


Figure 3: Site plan showing soakaways, building foundations, features and sections

NE

SW

Ground level

18

14

Drain pipe

Modern service trench

This plan view shows the SW corner of the room. A dashed line indicates the ground level. A modern service trench is shown in the corner, containing a drain pipe. The trench is labeled 'Modern service trench' and 'Drain pipe'. The room is divided into two areas, 14 and 18, by a wavy line. The area 14 is the lower part of the room, and area 18 is the upper part. The NE and SW corners are labeled. A ground level symbol is shown in the top right corner.

Key


 Brick

Figure 4: Sections



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