

84-86 DEODAR ROAD, LONDON SW15
LONDON BOROUGH OF WANDSWORTH
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

July 2005

COMPASS



ARCHAEOLOGY

84-86 DEODAR ROAD, LONDON SW15
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AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

SITE CODE: DDR05
SITE CENTRE NGR: TQ 24565 75342
PLANNING REF: 2004/1313

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July 2005
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Project 312

Abstract

Archaeological evaluation of a site adjoining Deodar Road, SW15, took place in June 2005. The evaluation was carried out as part of the planning process prior to residential redevelopment.

This area has potential for archaeological remains of prehistoric and later date, and early maps show that there was some development in the vicinity by the mid 18th century. Other evidence indicated that the site itself had been disturbed by 19th century gravel extraction, although the extent of this was unclear.

One evaluation trench measuring c. 2m by 10m in plan was excavated by machine within the area of proposed development. No archaeological remains were found: natural River Terrace Deposits had been truncated an estimated 2m below their original surface, clearly as a result of gravel extraction. This event probably took place in the second half of the 19th century, after the demolition of properties shown on the 1849 Tithe map and during the subsequent development of the area. The site itself was built over around the turn of the century.

The evaluation produced no evidence for earlier activity or any residual finds, and the only other finds related to the later houses. It is likely that the gravel quarry occupies most (if not all) of the site area: this is indicated by the subsidence of adjacent properties to the southeast, and by previous archaeological observation some 20 to 30m to the south.

In view of these findings it is recommended that no further archaeological measures should be undertaken in relation to the development.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** This report presents a summary of archaeological evaluation of a site adjoining Deodar Road SW15, prior to redevelopment (Figure 1: site approximately centred at National Grid Reference TQ 24565 75342).

The evaluation was required through the planning process, prior to residential redevelopment (LB of Wandsworth Planning Ref: 2004/1313, Condition 7).

- 1.2** It was considered that the site had potential for archaeological remains of prehistoric and later date. Historically the area appears to have been open land, although early maps suggest some potential for features relating to the 18th century and later development of the area. It was also recognised that the site itself may have been disturbed by 19th century gravel extraction, although the extent of this was not established.
- 1.3** At the time of the evaluation the development site comprised an open yard, with early 20th century housing to the south and west and elsewhere bounded by Deodar Road.
- 1.4** English Heritage advised that an archaeological evaluation of the site should be undertaken as part of the planning process, prior to the commencement of development. It was agreed that one trial trench should be dug, with a contingency for a second if the initial results were positive.

2. Acknowledgements

The archaeological evaluation was commissioned by Mr Max Goulden on behalf of Thornhill Development Ltd.

Diane Walls (English Heritage Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service) monitored the project on behalf of the London Borough of Wandsworth.

3. Background

3.1 Location and topography

Topographically the site is located on slightly rising ground some 75m to the south of the present bank of the Thames, at just above 8m OD.

The British Geological Survey (*South London Sheet 270, 1998*) indicates that the site overlies a fairly recent River Terrace Deposit (Kempton Park Gravel). This is broadly confirmed by previous archaeological observations in the area just to the south, between the present site and Putney Bridge Road (Compass Archaeology: site code PBG03).

The site itself occupies a north-south plot of land with overall dimensions of about 26m by 13m.

3.2 Archaeology and history

- 3.2.1** This area has some potential for prehistoric remains: scattered finds are recorded in the vicinity, principally on the Thames Gravel Terraces and to the east overlooking the Wandle Valley. Discrete artefacts have also been recovered from the Thames itself. There is speculation that a ford may have existed between Putney and Fulham, with the adjacent gravel terraces giving a firm approach as well as a flood-free location for settlement.

There is evidence for Roman occupation in the Putney and Wandsworth areas, with a possible east-west road on the line of the present A205 Upper Richmond Road. However, there do not appear to be any finds in the immediate site vicinity.

3.2.2 Historically the site appears to have formed open but possibly cultivated land on the perimeter of the Putney settlement. By the time of Rocque's map in 1746 there was some development: a similar picture is given by the Putney Tithe map of 1849, which also shows buildings just to the east and north of the site. Deodar Road itself was laid out in the mid 19th century, with the area to the south developed piecemeal over the next 50 years.

3.2.3 Development of the present site is recorded by map evidence between the 1890s and 1913. However, there are indications that the area had already been heavily disturbed by gravel extraction and then backfilled. The evidence comes from several sources, including the obvious subsidence of existing terraced houses immediately to the east and southeast (Nos. 88-90 Deodar Road). It is also understood that the properties that previously stood on the site were demolished in the 1970s or 80s as a result of subsidence.

Recent archaeological observations to the south (site code PBG03) recorded a substantial area of backfill of probable 19th century date, some 20m from the present site and continuing in that direction. It was felt that this might represent the southwestern part of a much larger backfilled quarry, running behind the standing buildings to the northeast and into the present site area to the north. However, prior to the evaluation the extent of the feature remained uncertain.

3.2.4 The archaeological observations in 2003 revealed no other notable features or finds. The site area had been largely reduced to basement level, although a buried post-medieval soil and overlying dumps of 19th and 20th century date were recorded in section. Elsewhere the surface of the natural River Terrace sand and gravel was exposed in plan.

4. Aims and objectives of the evaluation

4.1 Archaeology and planning

It is proposed to redevelop the site for residential use, including construction of a basement (Planning Ref: 2004/1313).

An archaeological evaluation was recommended by English Heritage, to form a condition of Planning Consent for the proposed development. It was agreed that one trial trench of c 10m by 2m at base should be opened, with a contingency for a second if justified.

4.2 Archaeological research questions

The evaluation presented an opportunity to address a number of research questions, as defined in the preliminary Written Scheme of Investigation (*Compass Archaeology, June 2005*). These included possible evidence for prehistoric activity and indications of later (medieval and earlier post-medieval) land use.

The evaluation would also investigate the extent and depth of later post-medieval gravel extraction, and assess to what extent this had destroyed the archaeological potential of the site.

5. Evaluation methodology

5.1 The *Written Scheme of Investigation* was agreed prior to the fieldwork. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with English Heritage guidelines (including *Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork*, 1998) and those of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (*Standard and Guidance for Field Evaluations*).

5.2 The evaluation comprised one trial trench, set out on an approximate north-south alignment with nominal dimensions of 10m by 2m in plan. The final trench position and outline is shown in Figure 2.

The trench was opened by machine (JCB 3CX), using a toothless bucket and working under archaeological supervision. Made ground and backfill deposits were removed to depths of between just over 1m to about 3.25m. At the conclusion of the evaluation the trench was backfilled by machine with removed spoil.

5.3 The excavated trench was recorded, planned and photographed. Individual elements and deposits were noted but were not separately contexted. Levels were derived from an OSBM located at the western side of the junction of Deodar Road and Putney Bridge Road, value 8.99m OD (see Figure 1).

The evaluation trench position was located onto the existing site plan by taped measurement. This was in turn related as a 'best fit' to the Ordnance Survey grid as derived from the 1:1250 plan. The OS coordinates to nearest metre for the local evaluation trench baseline (Figure 3) are as follows:

North point: TQ 24566 75348

South point: TQ 24563 75339

The records from the evaluation have been allocated the site code: DDR05 by the Museum of London Archaeological Archive, although there were no finds. An ordered and indexed site archive will be compiled in line with the MoL *Guidelines* and will be deposited in the Museum of London Archive.

6. The archaeological evaluation

6.1 Excavation

The evaluation trench was excavated by machine from a more or less level surface, at about 8.3m OD. A series of quite recent (19th century+) deposits were removed, establishing an overall depth of over 3m of recent made ground to the extant natural surface.

The depth of excavation clearly raised Health and Safety issues in relation to the trench, whilst the size of the site imposed restrictions on the amount of spoil that could be removed and the extent to which the trench could be stepped out. The excavation was therefore stepped up and down along the line of the trench in order to establish the continuity and level of deposits (Figure 3), and these were recorded before backfilling on the same day.

6.2 Summary of deposits and features (Figures 3-6)

6.2.1 Excavation to the full depth of made ground deposits exposed a clean and compact sandy gravel that was clearly the top of the natural River Terrace deposit (identified as Kempton Park Gravel by the *British Geological Survey* Sheet 270).

The natural gravel was exposed at just above 5m OD, and up to 3.25m below the present land surface. The top of the deposit appeared to be fairly level but was overlain by made ground and clearly truncated. By contrast previous observations just to the south revealed an undisturbed natural surface at a depth of approximately 1.2m, sealed by a buried soil profile (*Compass Archaeology: site code PBG03*).

6.2.2 It is clear that the present site area has been subject to extensive gravel extraction. In addition to the findings within the evaluation trench other evidence has already been cited (3.2.3 above): this includes subsidence of adjacent houses (Nos. 88-90 Deodar Road), the demolition of properties previously on the site, and archaeological observations just to the south which recorded a large area of backfill. It is likely therefore that the feature covers most (if not all) of the site.

6.2.3 The deposits directly overlying natural and infilling the presumed gravel pit comprised mainly a dark grey sandy silt with scattered pebbles, interleaved with mid brown slightly sandy silt. Both layers contained occasional brick and mortar fragments, but no readily identifiable material. The brick was mainly red with a few pieces of yellow stock, and of broadly 19th century date.

At a higher level (*c* 6.5m to 6.8m OD) the fill changed to a lighter coloured mixed silty sand with frequent gravel and building rubble. This deposit was at least 0.6m thick, but cut at its upper level by a disused north-south ceramic pipe. The latter ran the length of the trench, and included a concrete capping.

6.2.4 Both the pipe and adjacent fills were overlain by surviving elements of the houses that were built on the site around 1900, and demolished in the 1970s or 80s. A continuous red brick wall base ran along the eastern side of the trench, and can be identified from earlier OS plans as the party wall between the two properties. At the southern end of the trench there was also an area of *in situ* tiled floor on a weak concrete base, within an area that is shown on the 1:1250 map of 1951 as a small glazed room (?conservatory) to the rear of No. 84.

- 6.2.5** The uppermost deposits within the trench consisted of primarily of brick and mortar rubble, evidently demolition material from the buildings that had stood on the site. This was sealed by the unmade surface of the present yard.

7. Assessment of the results

The archaeological evaluation has provided an opportunity to address the site-specific objectives that were defined within the preliminary *Written Scheme* (4.2 above). The responses to these are outlined below.

The natural River Terrace within the evaluation trench had been truncated at a level that is probably some 2m below its original surface, quite clearly as a result of gravel extraction. Although there were no closely dateable finds this event probably took place in the later 19th century, after the demolition of the properties that are shown on the Putney Tithe map of 1849 and during the subsequent housing development. Certainly the whole area including the present site was built up by c 1910.

Consequently the evaluation produced no evidence for any earlier activity, or indeed any surviving land surfaces or residual finds. Apart from simple backfill deposits the only other evidence related to the two houses that had subsequently stood on the site.

Further evidence for the extent of the gravel pit is provided by the subsidence of adjacent properties to the southeast, and by the probable continuation of this feature in archaeological observations some 20 to 30m to the south.

8. Conclusion and recommendations

There were no significant archaeological features or finds. The evaluation revealed evidence for deep 19th century gravel quarrying that is likely to occupy most if not all of the site area. Natural Terrace Deposits had been truncated by about 2m, and by up to 3.25m below the present ground surface.

It is therefore recommended that no further archaeological measures should be undertaken in relation to the proposed development.

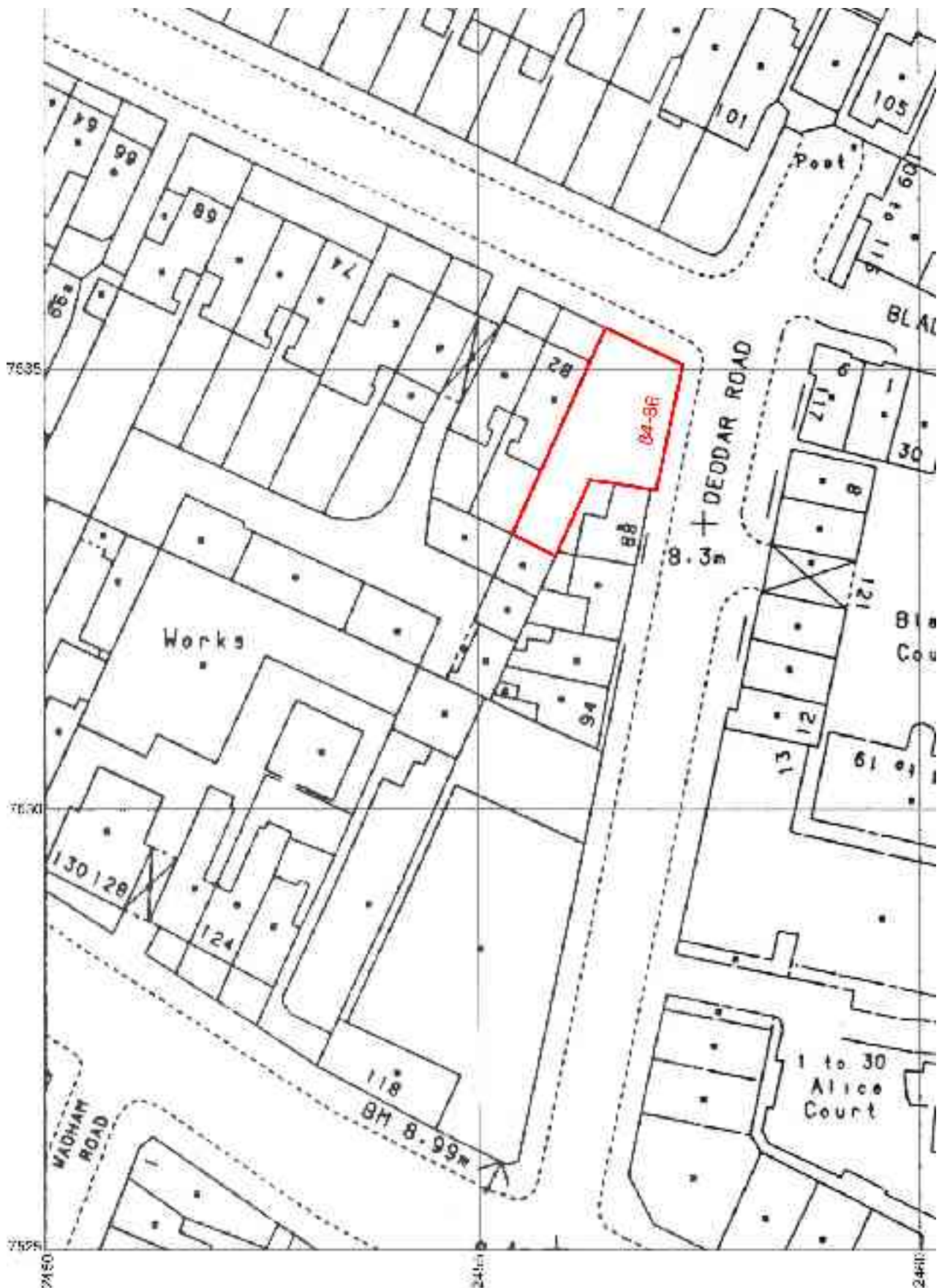


Fig 1 Site location in relation to the Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map

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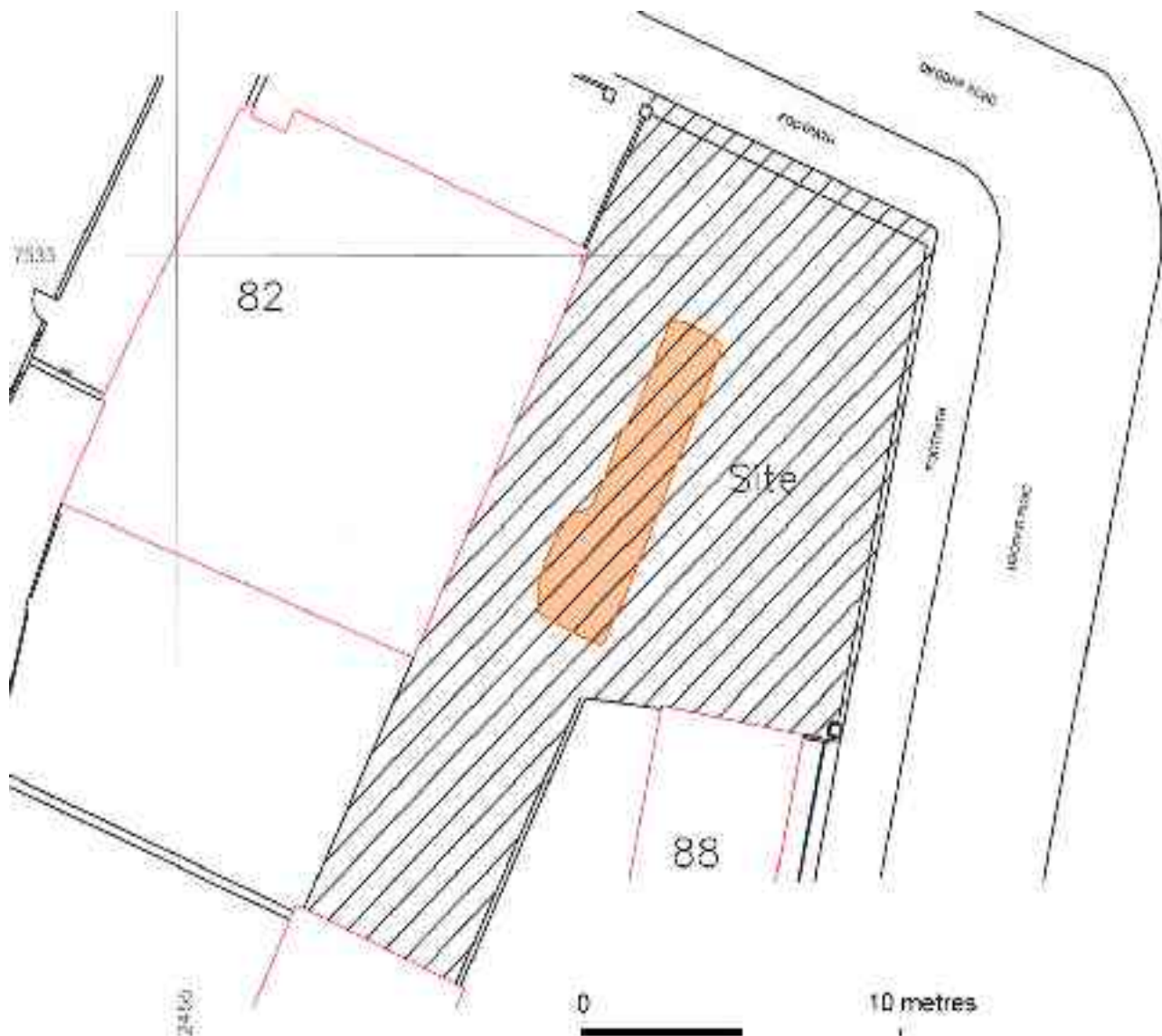


Fig 2 Site outline plan showing the position of the evaluation trench (shaded orange)

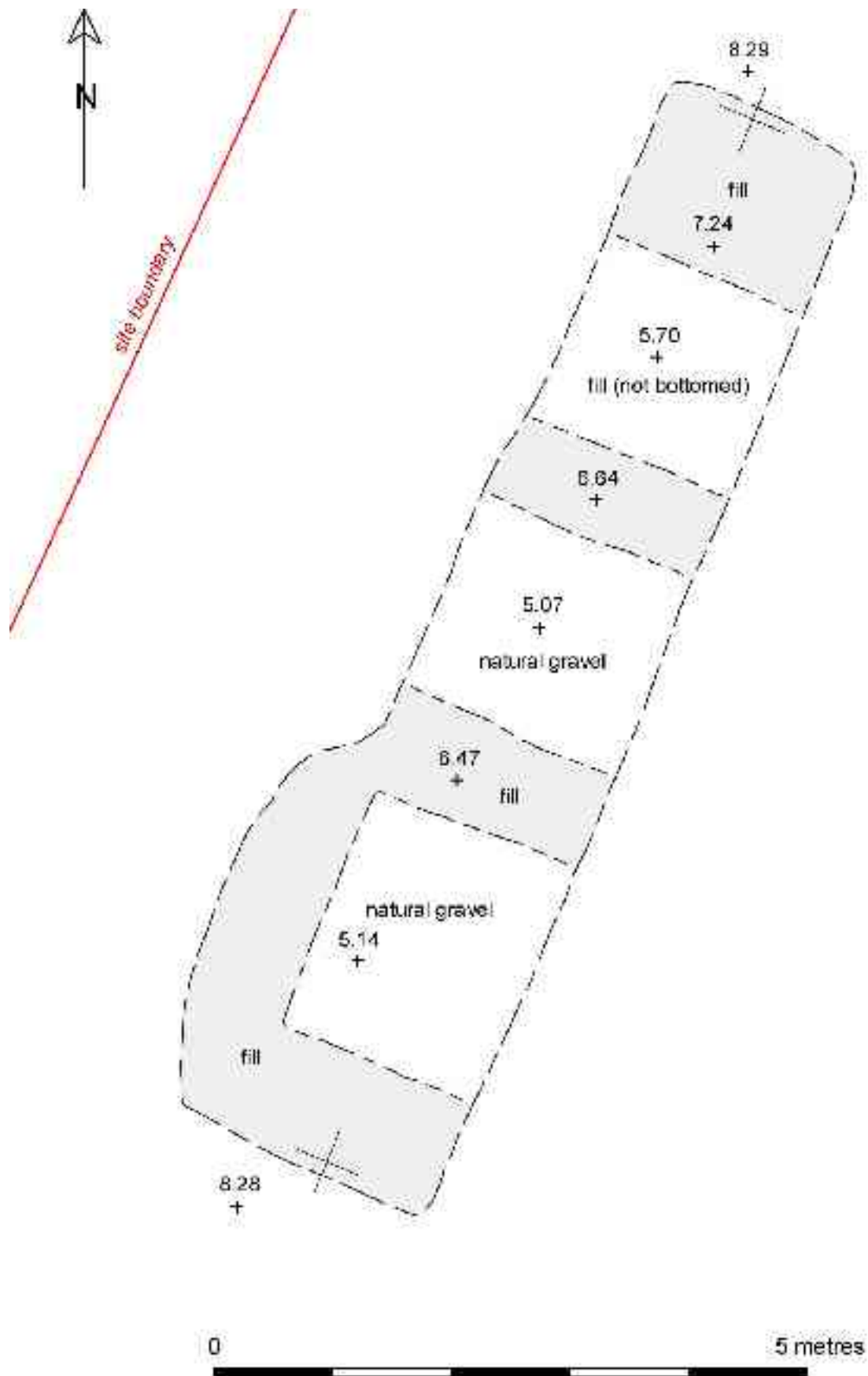


Fig 3 Plan of the evaluation trench showing deeper and shallower areas of excavation plus OD levels on the exposed deposits and adjacent surface



Fig 4 View of the evaluation trench looking north (*0.5m scale*)



Fig 5 The southern end of the trench looking west. The staff height is 3m, with natural gravel at base



Fig 6 The central part of the evaluation trench looking west, again showing deep made ground deposits overlain by brick rubble. Staff height is 3m

Appendix I. London Archaeologist publication summary

84-86 Deodar Road, London SW15. TQ 24565 75342. CA (Geoff Potter). Evaluation. June 2005. Thornhill Development Ltd. DDR05

Summary

There were no archaeological remains. A single machine trench revealed evidence for gravel quarrying, which had truncated the natural River Terrace by an estimated 2m below its original surface. This probably took place in the second half of the 19th century, after the demolition of properties shown on the 1849 Tithe map and during subsequent housing development.

It is likely that the backfilled quarry occupies most of the site area: this is indicated by subsidence of adjacent properties, and by previous archaeological observation some 20 to the south (PBG03).