

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Kensington Palace Gardens

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 2595 7995

**Written and Researched by Denise Mulligan and Teresa Hawtin
Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited, August 2007**

Project Manager: Tim Bradley

**Commissioning Client: Lee Prosser: Curator (Historic Buildings),
Historic Royal Palaces**

**Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited
Unit 54
Brockley Cross Business Centre
96 Endwell Road
Brockley
London
SE4 2PD**

**Tel: 020 7732 3925
Fax: 020 7732 7896
E-mail: tbradley@pre-construct.com
Website: www.pre-construct.com**

**© Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
August 2007**

© The material contained herein is and remains the sole property of Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited and is not for publication to third parties without prior consent. Whilst every effort has been made to provide detailed and accurate information, Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd cannot be held responsible for errors or inaccuracies herein contained

CONTENTS

- 1 Abstract
- 2 Introduction
- 3 Geology and Topography
- 4 Archaeological and Historical Background
- 5 Archaeological Methodology
- 6 Archaeological Sequence
- 7 Phase Discussion
- 8 Conclusions
- 9 Bibliography
- 10 Acknowledgements

APPENDICES

- 1 Context Register
- 2 Matrix
- 3 OASIS Report Form

LIST OF FIGURES

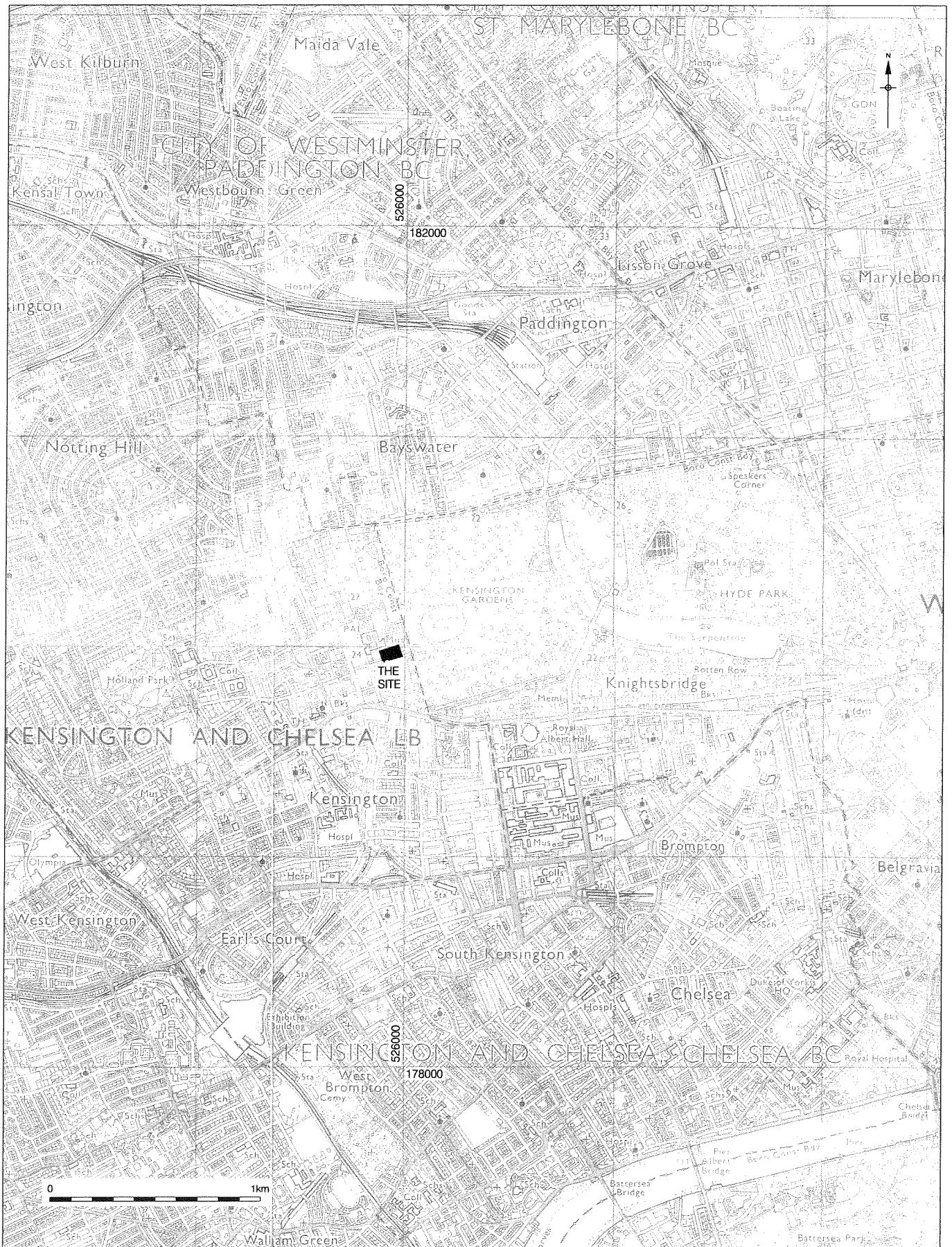
- Figure 1: Site Location
- Figure 2: Foundation Pit Locations
- Figure 3: Plan and Section of FP 6
- Figure 4: Sections 5, 8 and 9

1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results and working methods of an archaeological watching brief conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd (PCA) at Kensington Palace Gardens (Fig. 1). The watching brief was conducted between 12th and 21st June 2007, and was commissioned by Lee Prosser, Curator (Historic Buildings), Historic Royal Palaces. The site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 2595 7995
- 1.2 The watching brief monitored the excavation of foundation pits for the erection of 10 metal flower structures, as part of a commemoration to the late Princess Diana. The watching brief consisted of the monitoring of 11 foundation pits, each measuring 1m² and excavated by hand to a depth of 1m. These were located in the gardens on the southern side of Kensington Palace. D & P Contractors carried out the groundwork.
- 1.3 The watching brief found evidence in the base of the pits of a natural sand, overlain by a mid grey / brown sandy silt sub-soil, with orange / brown mottling. This was sealed by a light grey, silty sand with frequent root disturbance. A 0.2m thick layer of topsoil capped the sequence.
- 1.4 In Foundation Pit 6, the remains of a 17th century wall foundation were revealed. The foundation was aligned east / west with at least three courses remaining in situ. Some of the bricks showed signs of burning and this may relate to a fire in 1691, which destroyed part of the Southern Great Court. It is also possible that the bricks may have been reused to form a base for a statue, which stood in the more formal gardens in the early 18th century, but the limited area exposed precludes a conclusive interpretation.
- 1.5 In Foundation Pit 10 the remains of a shallow ornamental pond were revealed, which was backfilled in the 1980's. The top of the pond was observed at 0.20m below ground level, sloping down to a depth of 0.50m below ground level.
- 1.6 No archaeological features pre-dating the 17th century were encountered during the watching brief.

2 INTRODUCTION

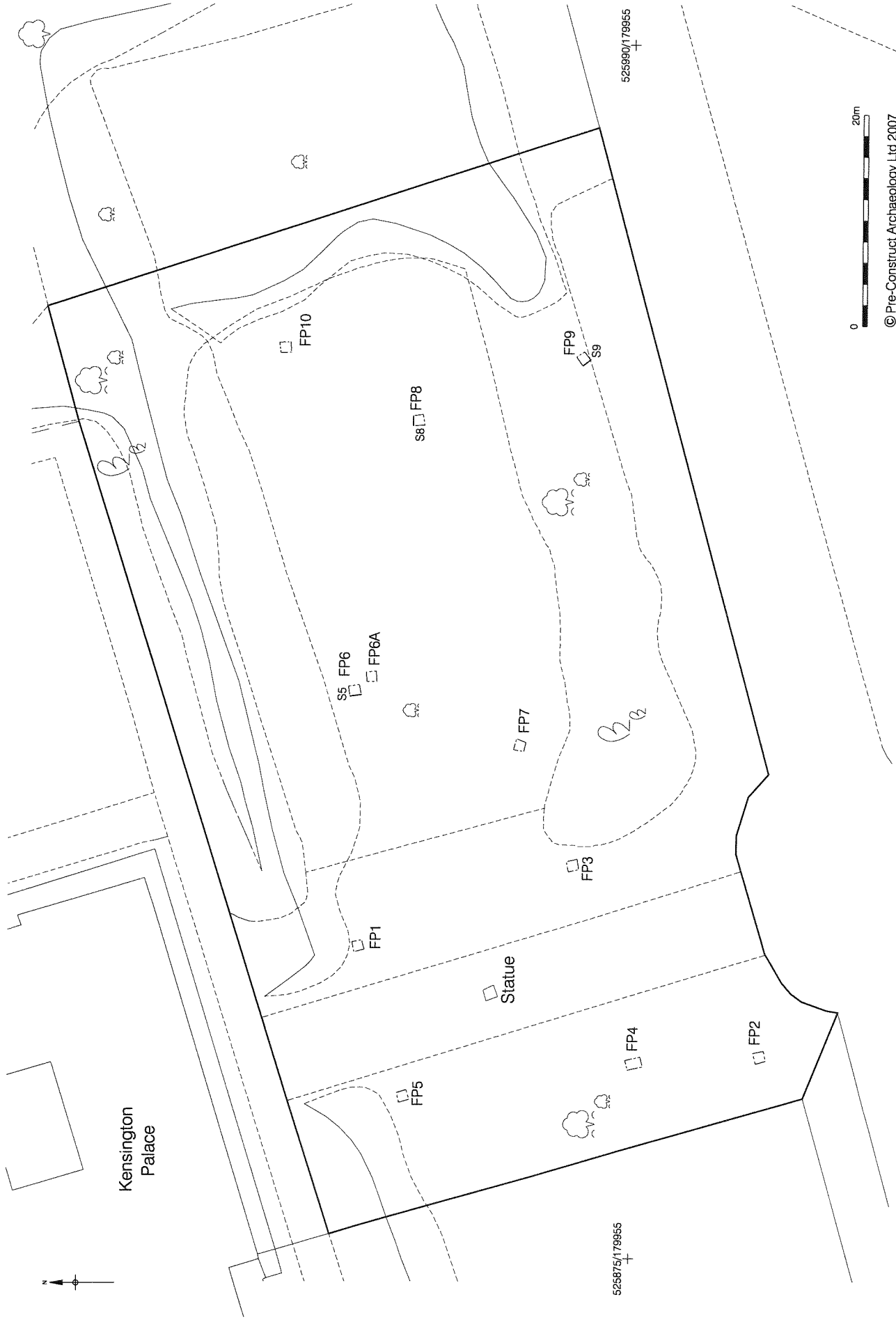
- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd at the Kensington Palace Gardens between 12th and 21st June 2007. Lee Prosser, Curator (Historic Buildings), Historic Royal Palaces, commissioned the watching brief. The fieldwork was monitored by the author project managed by Tim Bradley (PCA).
- 2.2 The site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 2595 7995. It is situated at the southern side of the palace and is bordered by high metal fencing, with entry through two highly decorated formal gates to the south (Fig.1).
- 2.3 The watching brief monitored the excavation of 11 foundation pits (Fig. 2). The watching brief was designed to record any archaeological deposits and features exposed during groundwork.
- 2.4 The completed archive comprising written and drawn records will be deposited at the Historic Royal Palace Archive.



© Crown copyright 1993. All rights reserved. License number 36110309

© Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd 2007

Figure 1
 Site location
 1:25,000



© Crown copyright 2007. All rights reserved. License number PMP36110309

© Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd 2007

Figure 2
Foundation Pit locations
1:500

3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.1 The British Geological Survey indicates that the underlying geology on site consists mainly of Kempton Park gravel. During the archaeological monitoring of the foundation pits the natural stratum was recorded at a depths of between 0.65m BGL (below ground level) and 0.80m BGL.

- 3.2 The site is currently located within the southern gardens of Kensington Palace.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The following summary is drawn from the historical background is summarised from the Historic Royal Palaces website (www.hrp.org.uk/kensington).

- 4.1 When William III (1689-1702) and Mary II (1689-94) came to the throne, the sovereign's principal London residence was Whitehall Palace. In the summer of 1689 William and Mary purchased Nottingham House, a Jacobean mansion built about 1605. It stood in Kensington, a village that 'esteem'd a very good Air'.
- 4.2 Nottingham House was owned by William's trusted Secretary of State, Daniel Finch, Earl of Nottingham, and the purchase price was £20,000. William instructed Sir Christopher Wren, Surveyor of the King's Works from 1669 to 1718, to improve the house immediately. Nicholas Hawksmoor was appointed Clerk of Works (1689-1715) and the project was hurried forward, as the Queen was anxious to move in.
- 4.3 In order to save time and money, the Jacobean house was left intact and Wren added blocks, or pavilions, to its four corners, to provide additional accommodation for the King and Queen and their court. Each pavilion was of three storeys, with attics above.
- 4.4 Wren also re-orientated the building by designing a new entrance and service courtyard (the Great Court) on its west side. On the south side of the Great Court, Wren built a range narrow block containing a corridor (the Stone Gallery) which led from the main entrance to the south-west pavilion, with rooms for courtiers behind. On the north side of the courtyard were the kitchens and on the west, an archway surmounted by a clock tower, which still survives.

More works at Kensington House

- 4.5 The royal court took up residence at Kensington House, as it was known, shortly before Christmas 1689. The following year while William was away on military campaign, fighting and defeating James II in Ireland, Mary decided to launch a second round of improvements.
- 4.6 She extended her apartments by building the Queen's Gallery. With its own staircase, the Queen's Gallery also provided a separate block adjoining for her Maids of Honour.
- 4.7 In November 1691, a fire that destroyed part of the southern range of the Great Court was made the occasion for a complete remodelling of the approach to the royal apartments: the King's Staircase was rebuilt in marble and a finely decorated Guard Chamber was constructed, facing the foot of the stairs.

- 4.8 The last addition to the palace in William's time was the South Front, built in 1695, probably by Hawksmoor. The main feature of the new building was a long gallery at first-floor level – the King's Gallery, in which William hung many works from his picture collection.

Death of the monarchs at Kensington

- 4.9 In the early hours of Friday 28 December 1694 Mary died at Kensington Palace of smallpox, at the age of 32. The Queen had contributed much to the beautification of the palace, and in the years following her death much of her furniture was removed and her vast collection of oriental porcelain was given to the Earl of Albemarle.
- 4.10 In February 1702, several years later, on a visit to Hampton Court, William fell from his horse while riding in the park. Despite a broken collarbone, the King insisted on returning to Kensington almost immediately. He lay ill at the palace from 22 February until his death at 8.00am on Sunday 8 March.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 The watching brief monitored the hand excavation of 11 foundation pits, each measuring of 1m x 1m in plan, excavated to a depth of 1m below ground level.
- 5.2 Ten foundation pits were located in previously agreed positions. It was agreed that if any archaeological remains were exposed during the excavation work would stop in that pit and another would be opened in its place. Consequently, following the recording of a post-medieval east / west wall in Foundation Pit 6, and additional pit (6A) was excavated to the south.
- 5.3 All recording systems adopted during the investigations were fully compatible with those most widely used elsewhere in London that is, those developed out of the Department of Urban Archaeology Site Manual, now published by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS 1994). Individual descriptions of all archaeological strata and features excavated and exposed were entered onto pro-forma recording sheets. All plans and sections of archaeological deposits were recorded on polyester based drawing film, the plans being drawn at a scale of 1:20 and the sections at 1:10. A full photographic record of the investigations was also prepared, using digital images.
- 5.4 The completed archive comprising written and drawn records will be deposited at the Historic Royal Palace Archive.

6 THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

General

- 6.1 The topsoil across the site generally consisted of a firm, dark brown-black sandy silt with frequent root activity, containing occasional to moderate fragments of ceramic building material (CBM), including 19th century brick, and occasional small sub-angular or sub-rounded flint pebbles. This varied in thickness between 0.10m and 0.53m and was recorded in each foundation pit, as contexts [1], [5], [9], [12], [15], [18], [22], [26], [30], [40] and [43].
- 6.2 Underlying the topsoil was a subsoil consisting of a firm, friable, light-mid grey-brown or brown-grey sandy silt, containing occasional small sub-rounded or rounded flint pebbles, with occasional to moderate root disturbance. This deposit was between 0.16m and 0.45m thick and was recorded as contexts [2], [6], [10], [16], [19], [23], [27], [37], [41] and [44].
- 6.3 As earlier subsoil was observed in FPs 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6A, often sealing the natural stratum, with a thickness of between 0.18m and 0.41m. It consisted of a loose, light grey-brown leached sand with moderate to frequent orange brown mottling, probably iron staining, and occasional small sub-rounded or rounded flint pebbles. This was recorded as contexts [3], [7], [11], [13] and [24].
- 6.4 In FPs 8 and 9 a more gravelly subsoil was encountered underlying the subsoil. It consisted of a very compact, light grey-brown gravelly silt-sand with very frequent small gravel inclusions, recorded as contexts [28] and [38] respectively. It reached a maximum thickness of 0.20m in both pits and sealed another subsoil, contexts [29] and [39], which consisted of a very firm light grey sandy gravel, with a thickness of between 0.20m and 0.25m. Both of these subsoils were not seen in any other foundation pits and they may represent a former riverbed or bank. Alternatively they could be connected to previous landscaping of the gardens.
- 6.5 The subsoil in FP 10, context [41] appeared to have been disturbed, possibly owing to its close proximity to underground service cables, although no associated cuts were visible. It consisted of a firm, light grey gravelly sand-silt with frequent root disturbance and reached a maximum thickness of 0.46m. This overlay a similar layer, context [42], which consisted of a firm mid brown-grey sandy gravel and was up to 0.24m thick. Although this could be redeposited gravel related to nearby underground services, it may be connected with the gravelly layers seen in the northeast corner of

the southern garden area, mentioned above (Para. 6.4), and possibly represents previous landscaping activities.

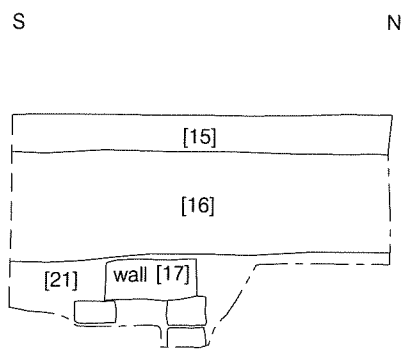
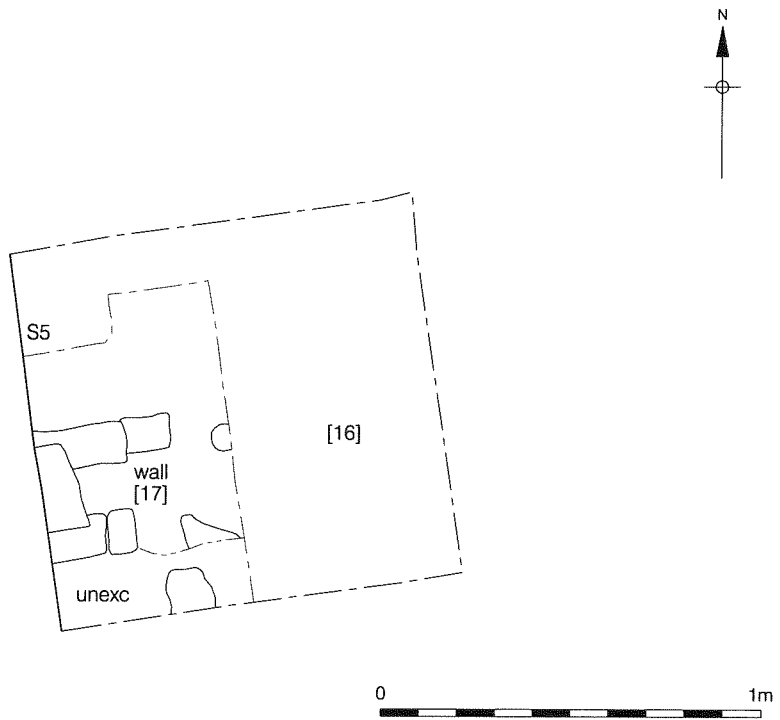
6.6 The natural stratum was encountered in many of the foundation pits, at depths of between 0.63m BGL and 0.82m BGL. This generally consisted of a loose, light orange-grey or yellow-brown sand with occasional fine gravel and small sub-rounded or sub-angular flint pebbles, recorded in FPs 1, 3, 5, 7 and 6A as contexts [4], [8], [14], [20] and [25] respectively. However, in FP 2 the natural stratum, context [45], was seen to consist of a soft, light brown-yellow silty sand with pockets of clay.

6.7 Foundation Pit 6

6.8 In FP 6, the remains of a 17th century wall foundation were revealed. The foundation was aligned east / west with at least three courses remaining in situ. No construction cut was visible, suggesting a build up of soil [21] around the structure. Some of the bricks showed signs of burning and this may relate to a fire in 1691, which destroyed part of the Southern Great Court. It is possible that the bricks may have been reused to form a base for a statue, which stood in the more formal gardens in the early 18th century, but this could not be clarified within the confines of the trench (Fig 3).

6.9 Foundation Pit 9

6.10 In FP 9, directly below the topsoil the remains of a shallow ornamental pond were exposed. It was made with a soft black plastic lining [31] with a 0.03m layer of bedding sand [32]. The cut [36] for the pond was visible and had a gradual vertical slope and a flat even base. The top of the cut was at 0.20m below ground with the base at a maximum depth of 0.50m below ground level. The cut was backfilled with [34], a loose mid brown sandy silt with occasional small stones. This was backfilled in the 1980's.

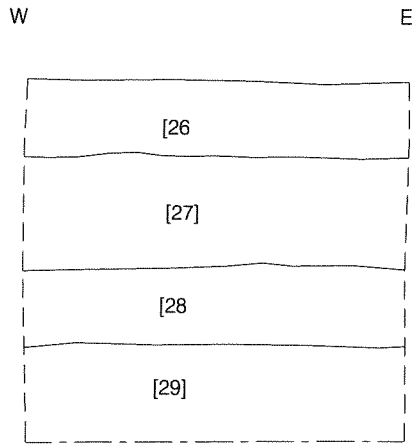


Section 5
FP 6 East facing

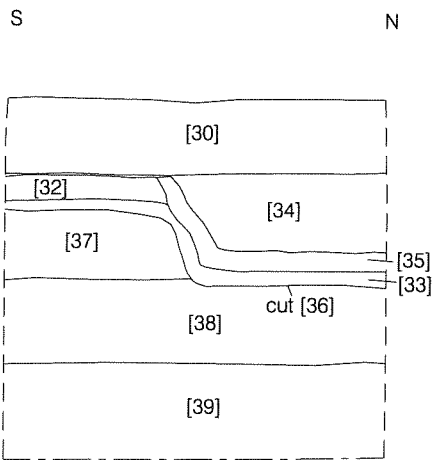


© Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd 2007

Figure 3
Plan and section of FP 6
1:20



Section 8
FP 8, South facing



Section 9
FP 9, East facing



© Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd 2007

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PHASE DISCUSSION

7.1 Phase I: Natural Sand

The earliest deposit encountered on site was natural sand. This generally consisted of a loose, light orange-grey or yellow-brown sand with occasional fine gravel and small sub-rounded or sub-angular flint pebbles, recorded at depths between 0.65m and 0.80m below ground level. No features or artefacts were observed cutting this deposit.

7.2 Phase 2: Subsoil

A subsoil [3], [7] and [21] was recorded sealing the natural stratum in FPs 1, 3, and 6 respectively, with a thickness of between 0.18m and 0.41m. It consisted of loose, light grey-brown leached sand with moderate to frequent orange brown mottling, probably iron staining, and occasional small sub-rounded or rounded flint pebbles. This was recorded at depths between 0.35m and 0.60m below ground level.

7.3 Phase 3: 17th Century Structure

The remains of a 17th century wall foundation, located at a depth of 0.37m below ground level, was revealed in FP 6 - no cut was visible at this level. The foundations were aligned east / west with at least three courses remaining in situ. Some of the bricks showed signs of burning and this may relate to a fire in 1691, which destroyed part of the Southern Great Court. It is also possible that the bricks may have been reused to form a base for a statue, which stood in the more formal gardens in the early 18th century.

7.4 Phase 4: Subsoil

A later subsoil recorded as [2], [6], [10], and [16], was recorded in FPs 1, 3, 4 and 6 respectively. This consisted of a firm, friable, light-mid grey-brown or brown-grey sandy silt, containing occasional small flecks of brick and occasional small sub-rounded and rounded flint pebbles with occasional to moderate root disturbance. This layer was located at a depth of between 0.18m and 0.30m below ground level.

7.5 Phase 5: Topsoil

Topsoil covered the entire area investigated. This layer had a maximum thickness of between 0.16m and 0.45m.

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 No archaeological features pre-dating the 17th century were encountered during the watching brief, with the majority of the test pits revealing natural sand/gravel deposits sealed by subsoils and topsoil.
- 8.2 The watching brief did, however, record evidence for an east / west orientated early to mid 17th century wall in FP 6. There are a number of alternative interpretations for this structure. It may relate to the earliest phase of the palace, which was constructed in 1605. As some of the bricks showed signs of burning, this may relate to a fire in 1691, which destroyed part of the Southern Great Court, built by Christopher Wren in 1669. It is also possible that the bricks may have been reused to form a base for a statue, which stood in the more formal gardens in the early 18th century. Given the restricted nature of the foundation pits, however, no definitive interpretation can be made.
- 8.3 With the exception of the backfilled pond recorded in FP 9, no further garden or other archaeological features were recorded within the foundation pits.

9 BIBLIOGRAPHY

[www.hpp.org.uk/Kensington palace/](http://www.hpp.org.uk/Kensington_palace/)

ads.ahds.ac.uk 'Archaeological Data Services'

www.british-history.ac.uk 'Victoria County History: Middlesex'

10 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 10.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank Lee Prosser, Historic Royal Palaces for commissioning the watching brief.
- 10.2 The author would like to thank D & P Contractors Ltd. for their help and co-operation with this project.
- 10.3 The author would like to thank Dave Harris for the illustrations and Tim Bradley for his project management and editing.

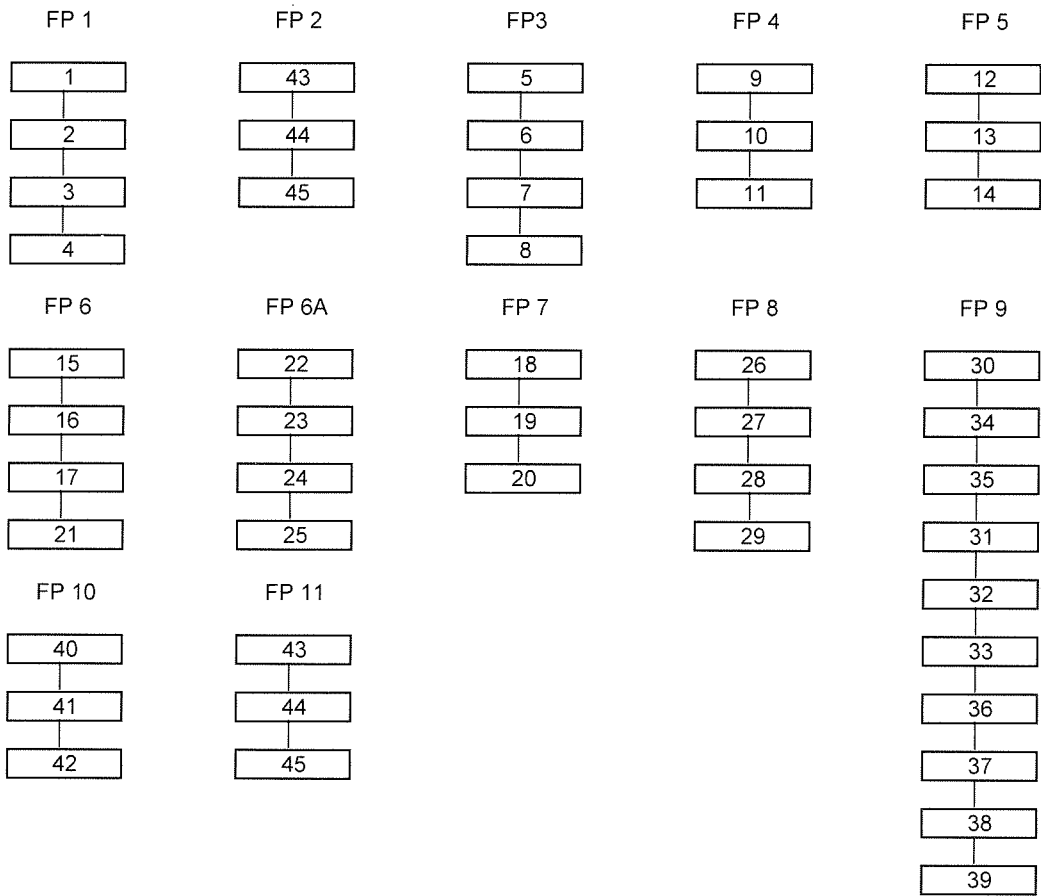
APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT REGISTER

Site Code	Context No.	Pit No.	Plan	Section / Elevation	Type	Description	Date	Depth BGL (top)	Depth BGL (base)	M OD Phase	Drawings	Photos No.
	1	FP 1	FP 1	1	Layer	Topsoil	12/06/2007	0.00m	0.18m			D1: 2, 3
	2	FP 1	FP 1	1	Layer	Subsoil	12/06/2007	0.18m				D1: 2, 3
	3	FP 1	FP 1	1	Layer	Subsoil	12/06/2007	0.35m				D1: 2, 3
	4	FP 1	FP 1	1	Layer	Natural	12/06/2007	0.75m				D1: 2, 3
	5	FP 3	FP 3	2	Layer	Topsoil	12/06/2007	0.00m	0.31m			D1: 4, 5
	6	FP 3	FP 3	2	Layer	Subsoil	12/06/2007	0.31m				D1: 4, 5
	7	FP 3	FP 3	2	Layer	Subsoil	12/06/2007	0.53m				D1: 4, 5
	8	FP 3	FP 3	2	Layer	Natural	12/06/2007	0.76m				D1: 4, 5
	9	FP 4	FP 4	3	Layer	Topsoil	12/06/2007	0.00m	0.26m			D1: 6, 7
	10	FP 4	FP 4	3	Layer	Subsoil	12/06/2007	0.26m				D1: 6, 7
	11	FP 4	FP 4	3	Layer	Subsoil	12/06/2007	0.55m				D1: 6, 7
	12	FP 5	FP 5	4	Layer	Topsoil	13/06/2007	0.00m	0.52m			D1: 8, 9
	13	FP 5	FP 5	4	Layer	Subsoil	13/06/2007	0.52m				D1: 8, 9
	14	FP 5	FP 5	4	Layer	Natural	13/06/2007	0.82m				D1: 8, 9
	15	FP 6	FP 6	5	Layer	Topsoil	14/06/2007	0.00m				
	16	FP 6	FP 6	5	Layer	Subsoil	14/06/2007	0.10m				
	17	FP 6	FP 6	5	Masonry	Red brick wall	14/06/2007	0.37m	0.60m			

18	FP 7	FP 7	6	Layer	Topsoil	14/06/2007	0.05m					
19	FP 7	FP 7	6	Layer	Subsoil	14/06/2007	0.35m					
20	FP 7	FP 7	6	Layer	Natural sand	14/06/2007	0.80m					
21	FP 6	FP 6	5	Layer	Layer containing masonry	14/06/2007	0.38m					
22	FP 6A	FP 6A	7	Layer	Topsoil	15/06/2007	0.00m	0.32m				
23	FP 6A	FP 6A	7	Layer	Subsoil	15/06/2007	0.30m					
24	FP 6A	FP 6A	7	Layer	Subsoil	15/06/2007	0.60m					
25	FP 6A	FP 6A	7	Layer	Natural sand	15/06/2007	0.78m					
26	FP 8	FP 8	8	Layer	Topsoil	18/06/2007	0.00m	0.20m				
27	FP 8	FP 8	8	Layer	Subsoil	18/06/2007	0.20m					
28	FP 8	FP 8	8	Layer	Subsoil - very stony	18/06/2007	0.60m					
29	FP 8	FP 8	8	Layer	Sandy gravels	18/06/2007	0.80m					
30	FP 9	FP 9	9	Layer	Topsoil	19/06/2007	0.00m	0.20m				
31	FP 9	FP 9	9	Lining	Plastic pond lining	19/06/2007	0.20m					
32	FP 9	FP 9	9	Layer	Layer, mid brown	19/06/2007	0.22m					
33	FP 9	FP 9	9	Layer	Bedding sand for pond [36]	19/06/2007	0.28m					
34	FP 9	FP 9	9	Fill	Backfill of pond [36]	19/06/2007	0.20m					
35	FP 9	FP 9	9	Fill	Organic fill of pond [36]	19/06/2007	0.21m	0.46m				

36	FP 9	FP 9	9	Cut	Cut of pond	19/06/2007	0.20m	0.50m					
37	FP 9	FP 9	9	Layer	Layer truncated by [36]	19/06/2007	0.30m						
38	FP 9	FP 9	9	Layer	Subsoil	19/06/2007	0.48m						
39	FP 9	FP 9	9	Layer	Base of FP 9	19/06/2007	0.70m						
40	FP 10	FP 10	10	Layer	Topsoil	20/06/2007	0.00m	0.20m					
41	FP 10	FP 10	10	Layer	Subsoil	20/06/2007	0.20m						
42	FP 10	FP 10	10	Layer	Subsoil	20/06/2007	0.65m						
43	FP 2	FP 2	11	Layer	Topsoil	21/06/2007	0.00m	0.20m					
44	FP 2	FP 2	11	Layer	Subsoil	21/06/2007	0.21m						
45	FP 2	FP 2	11	Layer	Natural sandy clay	21/06/2007	0.63m						

APPENDIX 2: SITE MATRIX



APPENDIX 3: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-29868

Project details

Project name Kensington Palace

Short description of the project The watching brief monitored the excavation of 11 foundation pits for the erection of 10 metal flower structures, as part of a commemoration to the late Princess Diana. The watching brief consisted of 11, 1m square pits excavated by hand to a depth of 1m. These were located in the gardens on the southern side of Kensington Palace. No archaeological features pre-dating the 17th century were encountered during the watching brief. The watching brief, found evidence for an east / west early to mid 17th century wall.

Project dates Start: 12-06-2007 End: 21-06-2007

Previous/future work Yes / Yes

Type of project Recording project

Site status Scheduled Monument (SM)

Current Land use Other 15 - Other

Monument type ROYAL PALACE Post Medieval

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA
KENSINGTON Kensington Palace

Postcode W8 7

Study area 4835.30 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 259 800 51.5043955134 -0.185794320137 51 30 15 N 000 11
08 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd

Project brief originator Historic Royal Palaces

Project design originator Pre-Construct Archaeology

Project director/manager Tim Bradley

Project supervisor Denise Mulligan

Type of sponsor/funding body Historic Royal Palaces

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient Historic Royal Palaces

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title Watching Brief at Kensington Palace Gardens

Author(s)/Editor(s) Mulligan D editor Bradley T

Date 2007

Issuer or publisher Pre-construct Archaeology

Place of issue or publication Pre-construct Archaeology

Description Watching brief report

Entered by Denise Mulligan (dmulligan@pre-construct.com)

Entered on

8 August 2007