

An Archaeological Watching Brief at 50 Page Street, City of Westminster, SW1P 4HA

Site Code: PGA 09

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 2985 7887

Written and Researched by Neil Hawkins

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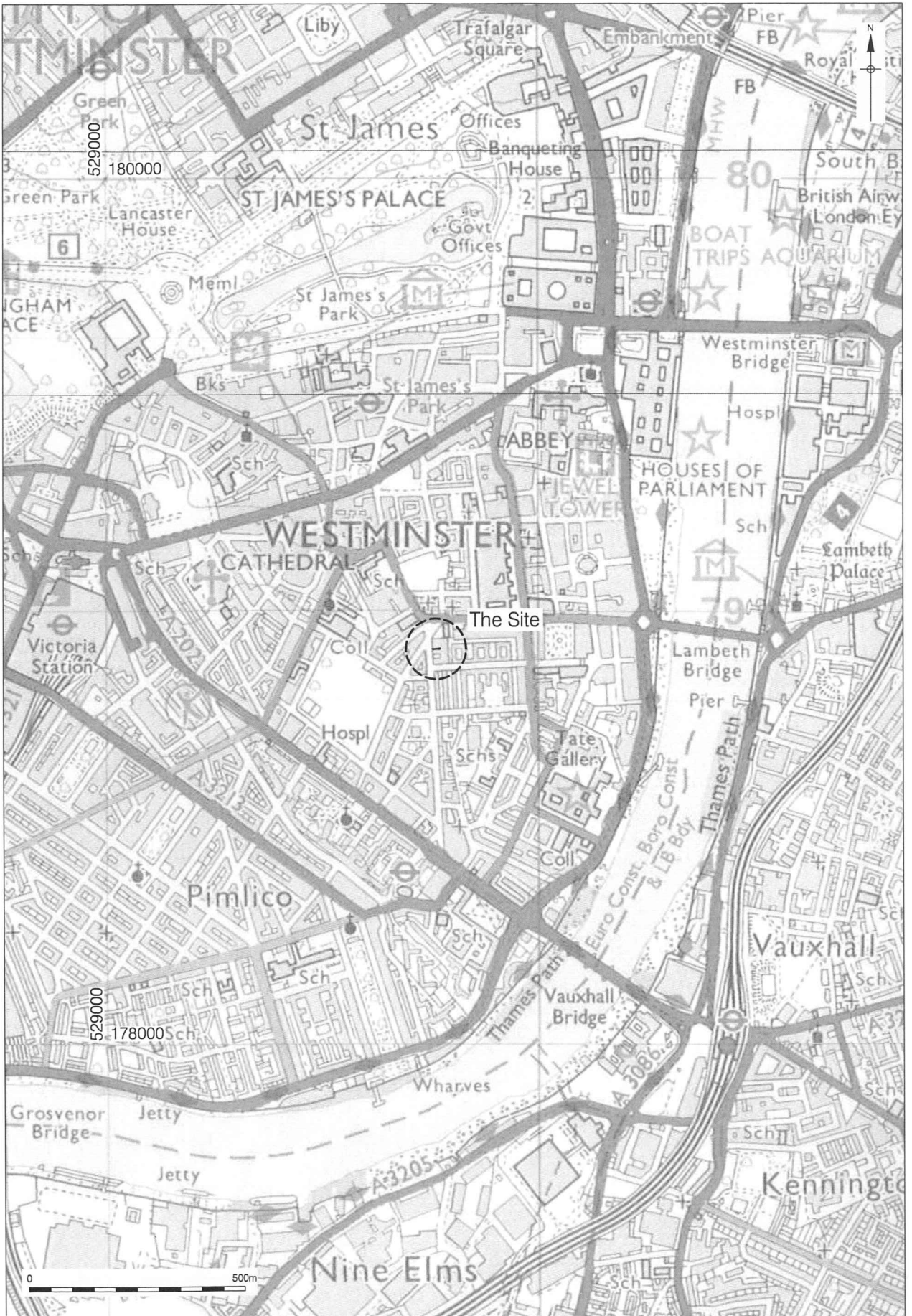
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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief at 50 Page Street, City of Westminster, undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. on behalf of Hyder Consulting. The project was managed by Helen Hawkins and supervised by Neil Hawkins, both of Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd., and monitored by Diane Abrams of English Heritage (GLAAS) on behalf of Westminster Council.
- 1.2 The watching brief was located in an access alleyway between properties fronting onto Regency Street which connected through to the main building of 50 Page Street to the east and consisted of the monitoring of ground reduction to 0.35m below ground level.
- 1.3 The watching brief recorded late twentieth century made ground and concrete which was present throughout the area.
- 1.4 A number of modern service shafts and associated pipes were also recorded within the excavation area, truncating any underlying deposits.

2 INTRODUCTION

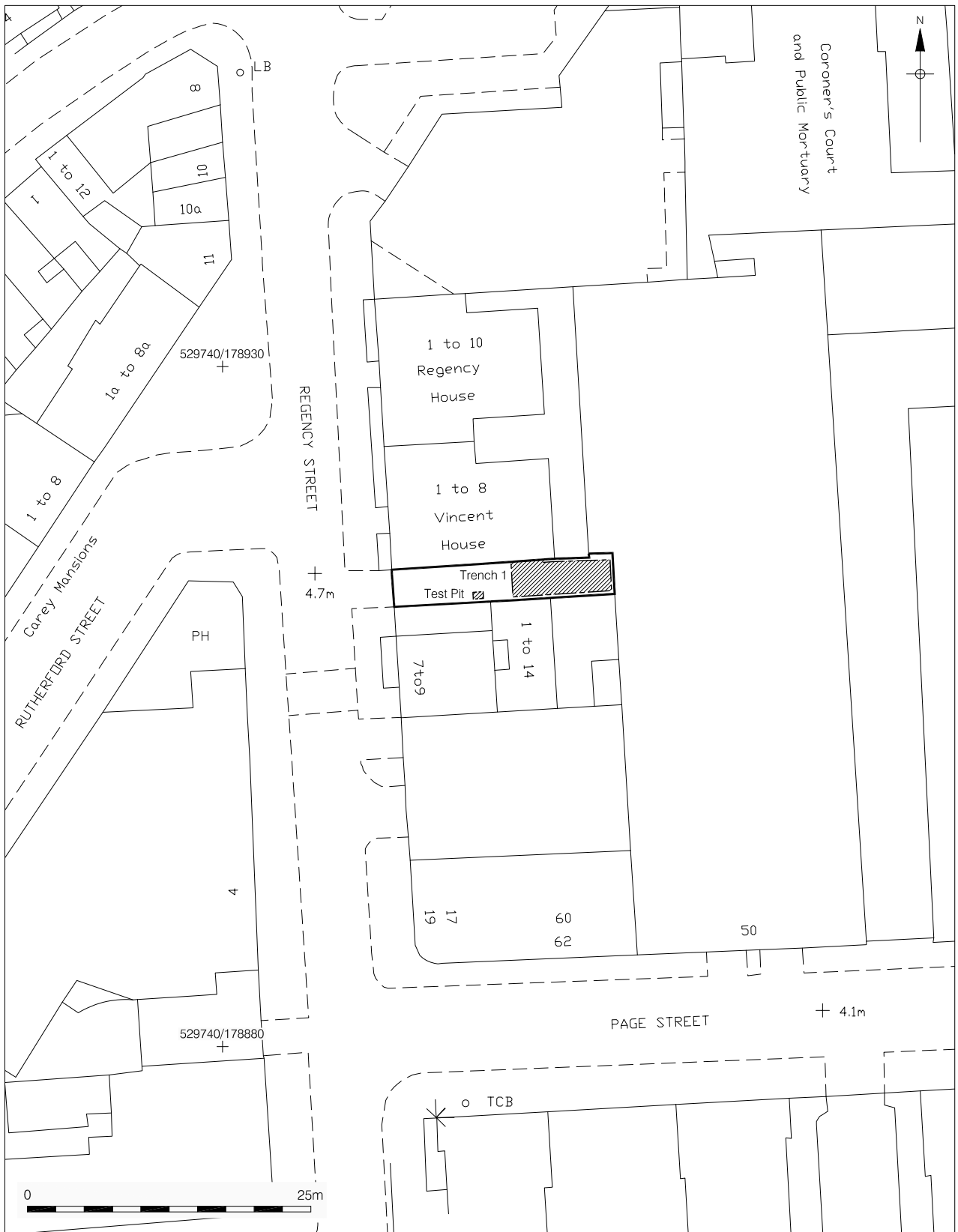
- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was conducted by Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd. at 50 Page Street, City of Westminster, in advance of redevelopment. The watching brief was conducted between 28th August and 2nd September 2009 on behalf of Hyder Consulting.
- 2.2 The site is bounded to the north by Vincent House which fronts onto Regency Street, to the east by the main building of 50 Page Street, to the south by properties fronting onto Regency Street and to the west by Regency Street itself.
- 2.3 The National Grid Reference of the site is TQ 2985 7887.
- 2.4 The site was given the code PGA 09.
- 2.5 The project was monitored by Diane Abrams of English Heritage, project managed by Helen Hawkins and supervised by the author.



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Figure 1
 Site Location
 1:12,500 at A4



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Figure 2
Trench Location
1:500 at A4

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND

3.1 In November 1990 the Department of the Environment issued Planning Policy Guidance Note 16 (PPG16) "Archaeology and Planning", providing guidance for planning authorities, property owners, developers and others on the preservation and investigation of archaeological remains.

3.2 In short, government policies provide a framework which:

- Protect Scheduled Ancient Monuments
- Protect the settings of these sites
- Protect nationally important un-scheduled ancient monuments
- Has a presumption in favour of in situ preservation
- In appropriate circumstances, requires adequate information (from field evaluation) to enable informed decisions
- Provides for the excavation and investigation of sites not important enough to merit *in situ* preservation

3.3 In considering any proposal for development, the local planning authority will be mindful of the policy framework set by government guidance, in this instance PPG16, of existing development plan policy and of other material considerations.

3.4 Chapter 9 of City of Westminster's Unitary Development Plan (UDP) contains several clauses in relation to archaeological practice within the Borough. This includes the following:

POLICY DES 11: SCHEDULED ANCIENT MONUMENTS, AREAS AND SITES OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL PRIORITY AND POTENTIAL

(B) Areas and Sites of Special Archaeological Priority and Potential Permission will be granted for developments where, in order of priority:

- 1) all archaeological remains of national importance are preserved in situ.**
- 2) remains of local archaeological value are properly, evaluated and, where practicable, preserved in situ**
- 3) if the preservation of archaeological remains in situ is inappropriate, provision is made for full investigation, recording and an appropriate level of publication by a reputable investigating body.**

Policy application

10.148 There are three categories of archaeological remains. In order of importance they are:

- a) Scheduled Ancient Monuments: nationally important remains which are scheduled under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979

b) Areas of Special Archaeological Priority: areas rich in archaeological remains, where ground works are likely to reveal archaeological remains

c) Sites of Archaeological Significance and Potential: areas where archaeological remains are known or thought likely to exist.

10.149 These locations are listed in the Sites and Monuments Record maintained by English Heritage. The Areas of Special Archaeological Priority are Lundenwic and Thorney Island; Paddington and Lillestone Villages; Marylebone Village; Tyburn Settlement and Ebury Village. The archaeological data produced by the Museum of London and English Heritage provide more detailed information, including further sites and areas of archaeological significance and potential within Westminster. Information on these and other sites of archaeological priority and potential are available from the Greater London sites and monuments record maintained by English Heritage.

10.150 In considering applications for development of land with archaeological potential, the City Council will require an archaeological assessment detailing the potential impact of development upon surviving archaeological remains. Should archaeological evaluation and investigation be required, it must be undertaken in accordance with a written scheme of investigation approved by the City Council. The Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service provides guidance papers detailing these procedures. With respect to policy DES 11 B (3), investigation may include a watching brief and, or, a full excavation.

10.151 The City Council will seek professional archaeological advice as appropriate and will encourage applicants proposing development to do the same. Where development may affect land of archaeological priority or potential, the City Council will expect applicants to have properly assessed and planned for the archaeological implications of their proposals. In this way the Council and the applicant will have sufficient information upon which an informed planning decision, incorporating appropriate archaeological safeguards, may be based. Such safeguards normally consist of design measures to ensure the permanent preservation of archaeological remains in situ or, where that is not appropriate, archaeological rescue investigations in advance of development. The results and finds from archaeological investigations also need to be analysed, interpreted, presented to the public and curated for future use. Attention is drawn to the advice contained within the code of practice prepared by the British Archaeologists' and Developers Liaison Group.

Reasons

10.152 Archaeological remains are important evidence of the City's past and are a valuable historical, educational and tourist resource. They are finite and fragile; once lost, they cannot be recovered. The City Council considers that the archaeology of Westminster is a national as well as a local asset and that its preservation is a legitimate objective, against which the needs of development must be carefully balanced and assessed. The destruction of such remains should be avoided wherever possible and should never take place without prior archaeological excavation and record.

10.153 The most important archaeological remains are scheduled and are protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Where works to such sites and their setting are proposed, including repair, scheduled ancient monument consent is required.

10.154 The London Plan states at Policy 4.C.10 that boroughs “should give careful consideration to the relationship between new development and the historic environment including archaeological areas, including tidal foreshores...”. National planning guidance is set out in PPG16: Archaeology and Planning, issued in November 1990.

10.155 The preservation of Westminster's archaeological heritage is a material planning consideration and applicants will need to show that proposed development is compatible with the objectives of the City Council's archaeological policy. The Council will wish to implement that policy under relevant legislation and statutory guidance and by means of legal agreements and planning conditions.

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/environment/planning/unitarydevelopmentplan>

- 3.5 The proposed development does not lie within an Area of Archaeological Potential as defined by the local authority.
- 3.6 There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments within the development site.
- 3.7 In accordance with the conditions laid down in the City of Westminster's UDP, a watching brief on the ground reduction under archaeological supervision was designed (Hawkins, 2009) and carried out in consultation with Diane Abrams of English Heritage.

4 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

4.1 Geology

- 4.1.1 According to the British Geological Survey of England and Wales (Sheet 270, South London) the site's geology consists of Eocene London Clay overlain by Thames alluvium, mostly comprised of sand, silt and clay.

4.2 Topography

- 4.1.2 The watching brief was located in an access alleyway between properties fronting onto Regency Street which connected through to the main building of 50 Page Street to the east. This alley was concreted, the western half being flat at c. 4.70m OD. The eastern half however sloped down to c. 4.50m OD at the eastern end.
- 4.1.3 The river Thames lives approximately 500m east of the site.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

5.1 Prehistoric

- 5.1.1 There is no evidence for Palaeolithic activity in the vicinity of the site and although the open landscape of the area would have provided an ideal environment for the subsistence strategies employed by Mesolithic societies, there is no evidence for occupation during this period either.
- 5.1.2 There is only limited evidence for activity in the area during the Neolithic period. A Neolithic flint flake in the Hilton Price Collection is broadly provenanced as being from Westminster.
- 5.1.3 There is little evidence of Bronze Age activity in the vicinity of the study site. Three finds of this date are broadly recorded as having been found in Westminster. These comprise a bronze dagger, cut down from a sword, a bronze rapier and a curved bronze knife.
- 5.1.4 The evidence for the Iron Age is even more tenuous, the only record being a possible Ptolemaic coin "found somewhere in Westminster".
- 5.1.5 There is however, evidence of more broadly dated prehistoric activity within the vicinity of the site. An archaeological evaluation at 1, Elverton Street recovered a quantity of residual worked flints. There is also evidence of prehistoric activity at Thorney Island, an area now occupied by Westminster Abbey, some distance to the northeast of the site. However, much of the area in the vicinity of the site would have been occupied by marshland in the later prehistoric period, so the lack of finds is perhaps unsurprising.
- 5.1.6 Borehole evidence such as that from 21 Vincent Square, west of the site has shown that fine-grained alluvial deposits are present in the vicinity of the site, and may preserve palaeo-environmental remains.

5.2 Roman

- 5.2.1 During the Roman period, the area around the site was probably dominated by marshland, and located some distance to the west of Roman Londinium. Evidence of activity in the vicinity of the site during the Roman period is therefore slight. Residual sherds of Roman pottery were recovered from an evaluation at 1, Elverton Street. A little further afield, six Roman bronze coins were found in 1928 at Buckingham Gate, some distance to the northwest of the site, and a 'T-shaped' Roman iron key is broadly provenanced as being from Westminster.

5.3 Saxon

5.3.1 The area around the site continued to be dominated by marshland into the post-Roman period. The name of Westminster originated during the Saxon period, and almost definitely refers a monastery church or 'minster' that stood on Thorney Island, on the site of the present Westminster Abbey. There was probably a focus of activity during this period, between the Abbey and Millbank, to the south.

5.3.2 There is one entry on the GLSMR in the vicinity of the site, dating to the Saxon period. It is believed that a defensive beacon may have been located on Regency Street. The identification is based on a number of factors. Firstly the place-name evidence, primarily its vicinity to Tothill Street ('tot-hyl' meaning literally 'watch-hill'). Secondly the charter evidence; a tot-hyl is first recorded in the area in the late 12th century, although a *hlawe* or artificial mound is referred to in a document of 979-1016. Finally, limited topographic evidence suggests there is a slight rise in surface elevation in Regency Place, the site having been located in the late Saxon period on a sandy island or eyot.

5.4 Medieval

5.4.1 During the medieval period the focus of activity in the Westminster area continued to be on the raised ground in the vicinity of the Abbey. Expansion followed the establishment of Westminster as the permanent seat of the monarchy and government and comprised the development of a number of aristocratic and ecclesiastical palaces, mansions, and town houses. There were also other incomers to the area, attracted by trade and employment opportunities. However, the site probably lay in relatively open ground at this time.

5.4.2 Nevertheless, there are a small number of entries on the GLSMR in the vicinity of the site, dating to this period. Vincent Square formerly occupied part of Tothill Fields and it is believed this area included medieval plague pits, presumably located away from settlement areas. It is believed that up to 1200 Scottish military prisoners and their wives were buried in this area. Pest houses in Tothill Fields standing at the beginning of the 18th century were erected in 1642 over the disused burial ground. A medieval horse burial ground is believed to be located not far away at Abbey Orchard Street.

5.4.3 The later medieval period also saw the development of St. James' Park some distance to the north of the site. A leper hospital had existed here in the 13th century and it was this that gave the park its name. In 1532 the land was acquired by Henry VIII as a deer park.

5.5 Post-Medieval

5.5.1 Westminster gained city status in 1540, and has remained as such ever since. City status was affirmed by Royal Charter in 1899. By the mid 17th century Westminster and surrounding neighbourhoods had become London's political and cultural focus, the relationship with the Royal Court being a particularly important one.

- 5.5.2 The Vincent Square area is believed to have housed defensive structures dating to the time of the English Civil War. Elsewhere, geoarchaeological monitoring at 21 Vincent Square recorded substantial dumping and consolidation deposits of 18th century date, demonstrating that much of the area was low-lying marshland, still susceptible to flooding.
- 5.5.3 The Horwood map of 1813 shows the site lying in open ground to the west of Mr Copland's Yard. Regency Street has been constructed and is labelled 'Regent Street'. Page Street has been partially constructed. Stanford's map of 1862 shows that Page Street has been fully constructed although the site still lies in open ground. The Bacon map of 1888 shows buildings fronting onto Regency Street and Page Street with open ground behind.

6 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (Hawkins 2009) , an archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the removal of concrete and underlying deposits to a level of 350mm below the existing ground level. The watching brief aimed to identify and quantify any archaeological remains and assess the nature of any disturbances or in intrusions.
- 6.2 The area of the site excavated under archaeological supervision measured c. 8m east-west by 3m north-south. The original methodology involved the reduction of 350mm throughout the alleyway area (c. 50m²) however it was decided on site by the client to only excavate half of this area, the eastern side. The final excavated area measured approximately 24m² (Figures 2 and 3).
- 6.3 A single small test pit, measuring 0.90m east-west by 0.60m north-south, was also excavated to 350mm below the existing ground level. This was located in the central western area (Figures 2 and 3).
- 6.4 The concrete floor of the alleyway was broken out by hand using a compressed air drill. All subsequent excavation after concrete removal was undertaken using hand tools until a level of 350mm below existing ground level was reached. All groundwork was conducted under the supervision of the attendant archaeologist.
- 6.5 The sides and bases of the trenches were hand-cleaned before recording.
- 6.6 The recording systems employed during the evaluation were fully compatible with those most widely used elsewhere in London, which 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 digital photographic record of the investigation was carried out.
- 6.7 Levels were extrapolated from a spot height, 4.70m OD, located on the road directly west of the site. The excavation area was located by hand using a detailed plan of the surrounding buildings and 30m tapes. It was then tied into the Ordnance Survey grid.

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL PHASE DISCUSSION

7.1 Phase 1: 20th Century

- 7.1.1 The earliest deposit encountered was a 20th century made ground horizon [1]. This was comprised of a mixed, dark brown sandy-silt which had frequent inclusions of brick and concrete fragments. This deposit was uniform throughout the watching brief and was recorded between 0.35m and 0.22m below ground level (c. 4.48m OD to 4.35m OD).
- 7.1.2 A number of modern intrusions comprising service shafts and a drain pipe cut the 20th century made ground (Figure 3).
- 7.1.3 Modern concrete sealed deposit [1] and the modern intrusions across the area excavated. It varied in thickness between 0.22m at the western end, and 0.15m at the eastern end. The concrete was encountered at c. 4.70m OD and sloped down to c. 4.50m to the east.

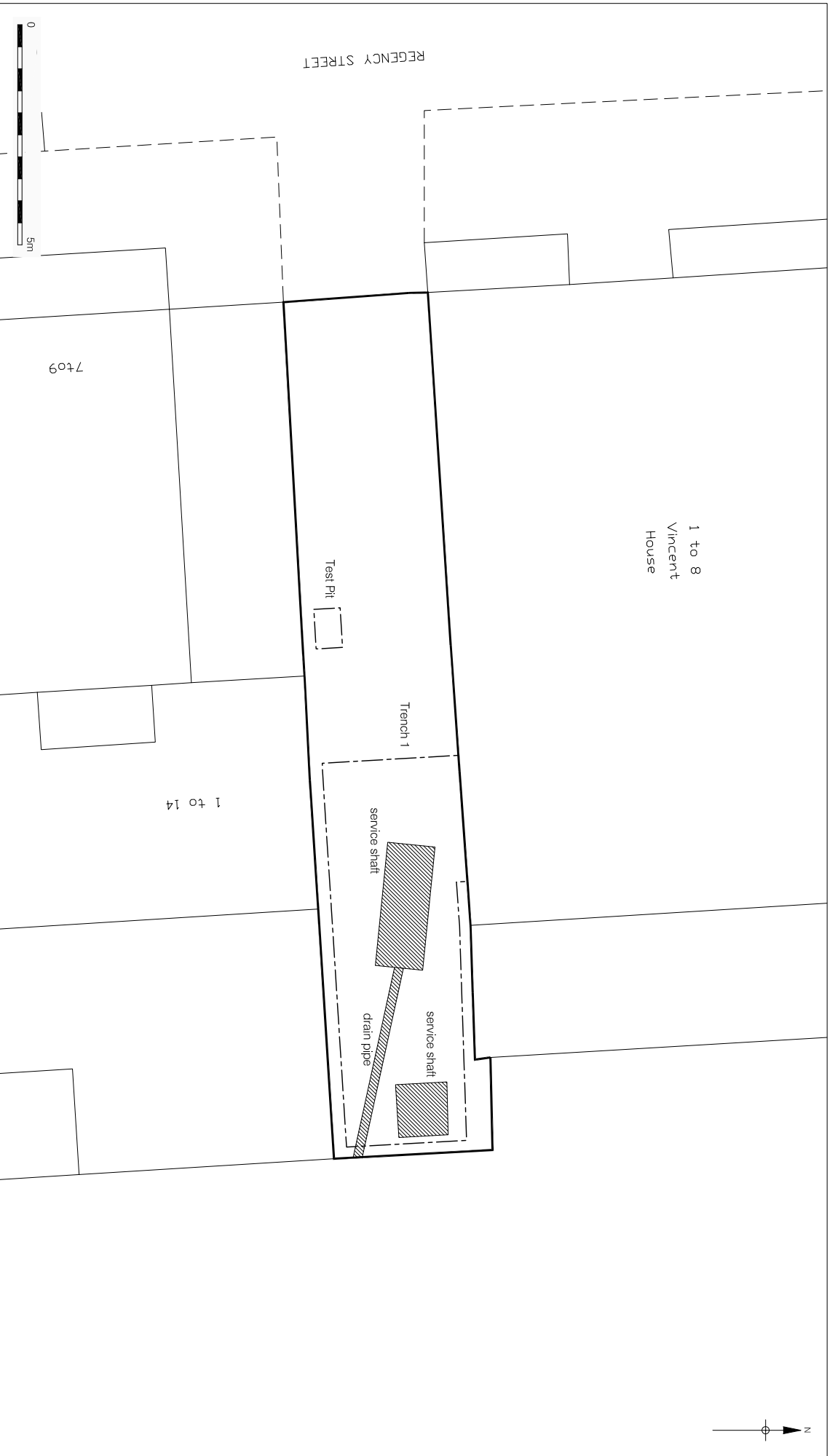


Figure 3
 Location of modern intrusions
 1:125 at A4

8 INTERPRETATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The general aims of the watching brief were to determine the location, extent, date, character, condition and significance of any surviving archaeological deposits. The earliest remains recorded across the site comprised a deposit of 20th century made ground. The very recent nature of these remains is a reflection of the shallow depth which the area was excavated to. It therefore cannot be accurately determined if any earlier, and more significant archaeological deposits survived extant below.
- 8.2 The watching brief also attempted to clarify the nature and extent of existing disturbances and intrusions and hence assess the degree of archaeological survival. Recorded within the excavation area of the watching brief were four existing manholes covering service shafts along with interconnecting buried pipes. These clearly truncated any underlying deposits but to what extent cannot be determined for sure. It is assumed however that the service shafts would have had a major impact on any underlying archaeological deposits albeit in a localized position.
- 8.3 No deposits or features of archaeological or palaeo-environmental significance were unearthed during the evaluation.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited would like to thank James Booth of Hyder Consulting for commissioning the project. The author would also like to thank Paul Holdstock and the crew on site from F. M. Conway who undertook the groundworks.
- 9.2 The author would like to thank Helen Hawkins for her project management and Jennifer Simonson for producing the illustrations. Thanks also go to Diane Abrams of English Heritage for monitoring the archaeological works.

10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Westminster Council Unitary Development Plan

<http://www.westminster.gov.uk/environment/planning/unitarydevelopmentplan>

APPENDIX 1: CONTEXT INDEX

Context No.	Section	Type	Description	Date	M OD	Phase
1	1	Layer	Sandy-Silt Made Ground with freq. Brick & Conc. inclusions	20 th Century	4.48 to 4.35	1

APPENDIX 2: OASIS FORM

OASIS ID: preconst1-64071

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 50 Page Street, City of Westminster, SW1P 4HA
Short description of the project	An Archaeological Watching Brief at 50 Page Street, City of Westminster. An area of c. 24 square metres was excavated by hand to 350mm below the existing ground level. The earliest deposit recorded was 20th century made ground which was overlain by modern concrete.
Project dates	Start: 28-08-2009 End: 02-09-2009
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	PGA09 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 4 - Storage and warehousing
Methods & techniques	'Test Pits','Visual Inspection'
Development type	Building refurbishment/repairs/restoration
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	Not known / Not recorded

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CITY OF WESTMINSTER WESTMINSTER 50 Page Street, City of Westminster
Postcode	SW1P 4HA
Study area	50.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 2985 7887 51.4933438124 -0.129323313752 51 29 36 N 000 07 45 W Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
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Project brief originator	Hyder Consulting
Project design originator	Helen Hawkins
Project director/manager	Helen Hawkins
Project supervisor	Neil Hawkins
Type of sponsor/funding body	Hyder Consulting
Name of sponsor/funding body	Hyder Consulting

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	'none'
Digital Media available	'Survey','Text'
Paper Contents	'none'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Drawing','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Survey','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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