

CHISWICK HOUSE, LONDON BOROUGH OF HOUNSLOW REPORT ON THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION TRENCH IN THE CAMELLIA GARDEN

CHISWICK HOUSE FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT PROJECT,
PROJECT 4584

David Fellows



Painting by Pieter Andreas Rysbrack (c 1730) © Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth

Research Department Report Series 52/2007

**Chiswick House, London Borough of Hounslow
Report on the Archaeological Evaluation Trench
in the Camellia Garden**

David Fellows

© English Heritage 2007

ISSN 1749-8775

The Research Department Report Series, incorporates reports from all the specialist teams within the English Heritage Research Department: Archaeological Science; Archaeological Archives; Historic Interiors Research and Conservation; Archaeological Projects; Aerial Survey and Investigation; Archaeological Survey and Investigation; Architectural Investigation; Imaging, Graphics and Survey, and the Survey of London. It replaces the former Centre for Archaeology Reports Series, the Archaeological Investigation Report Series, and the Architectural Investigation Report Series.

Many of these are interim reports which make available the results of specialist investigations in advance of full publication. They are not usually subject to external refereeing, and their conclusions may sometimes have to be modified in the light of information not available at the time of the investigation. Where no final project report is available, readers are advised to consult the author before citing these reports in any publication. Opinions expressed in Research Department reports are those of the author(s) and are not necessarily those of English Heritage.

Chiswick House, London Borough of Hounslow Report on the Archaeological Evaluation Trench in the Camellia Garden

David Fellows

Summary

As part of the preliminary landscaping works for the Chiswick House and Grounds Regeneration Project, limited planting and tree removal works were proposed for the Camellia Garden. This is an area of high archaeological importance as it was originally part of the relatively little-studied Moreton Hall Estate (Moreton Hall being the 17th-century Thames-side villa constructed for Sir Stephen Fox adjacent to the Chiswick Estate).

To enable an informed archaeological response to be made to the landscaping proposals, an archaeological evaluation was undertaken in late February 2006, with the excavation of a single evaluation trench measuring 9.7x1m positioned across the boundary between two of the early garden compartments.

Much evidence for the later landscaping works were seen during the excavation, with levelling layers and planting cuts recorded. It was apparent that this part of the estate had been re-landscaped and the ground level raised approximately 0.5m above the 18th-century ground surface levels.

The evaluation trench showed that the depth of cultivation proposed for the 2006 tree works in the Camellia Garden would not damage the surviving archaeological remains, allowing the planting to go ahead as planned and the regeneration project to continue.

Keywords

Excavation
Post Medieval
Gardens, Parks and Urban Spaces

Author's Address

English Heritage, Fort Cumberland, Fort Cumberland Road, Eastney, Portsmouth, PO4 9LD
Telephone: 02392 856709

Contents

Contents	1
Summary	2
1 Background to project	3
1.1 Historical Background	3
1.2 Archaeological Concerns	3
1.3 Curation	4
2 Evaluation Aims and Objectives	4
3 Trench Location	4
4 Excavation Results	5
5 The finds	6
6 Statement of potential for further analysis of the stratigraphic record	7
7 Archive summary	7
8 Acknowledgements	7
9 Bibliography	7
Appendix I List of contexts allocated, by type	8
Illustrations	
1 Map showing the location of Chiswick House	9
2 Plan showing the proposed cultivation depths in the Camellia Garden	10
3 Plan showing the location of the evaluation trench superimposed on the 1743 Moreton Hall Estate Survey	11
4 Plan showing the location of the evaluation trench superimposed on the 1812 Moreton Hall Estate Survey	12
5 Plan showing the detail of the excavated features superimposed on the 1812 Moreton Hall Estate Survey	13
6 Section drawings of trench showing the excavated features	14
7 Stratigraphic matrix of the excavated contexts	15
Plates	
1 General view of the evaluation trench, looking north-east	16
2 View of the north-western section of the evaluation trench showing the robber trench cut	17
3 View of the south-eastern section of the evaluation trench showing the buried path surface	18

The Camellia Garden Evaluation Trench - Summary

As part of the preliminary landscaping works for the Chiswick House and Gardens project, limited planting and tree removal works were proposed for the Camellia Garden. This is an area of high archaeological importance as it was originally part of the relatively little-studied Moreton Hall Estate (Moreton Hall being the 17th-century Thames-side villa constructed for Sir Stephen Fox adjacent to the Chiswick Estate).

To enable an informed archaeological response to be made to the landscaping proposals, an archaeological evaluation was carried out in late February 2006, with the excavation of a single evaluation trench measuring 9.7x1m.

The trench was located across the boundary between two of the early garden compartments. These were shown on the early estate survey as being separated by an apsidal wall with an opening to the south-east, although inaccuracies in the original survey allowed only a 'best-fit' position for the wall line to be established. Later 18th-century works had removed the south-eastern half of the wall, and by the early 19th century this area had been completely re-landscaped by the 6th Duke of Devonshire following his purchase of Moreton Hall in 1812.

Much evidence for the later landscaping works was seen during the excavation, with levelling layers and planting cuts recorded. It was apparent that this part of the estate had been re-landscaped and the ground level raised approximately 0.5m above the 18th-century ground surface levels.

An early surface, presumably a garden path, was excavated at the south-western end of the trench at a depth of 0.47m. Towards the centre of the trench there was a large cut through the early levelling deposits on the approximate 'best-fit' alignment of one of the early garden walls. The cut was excavated to a depth of 0.93m (although it was not bottomed) and is interpreted as being the robber trench that removed the garden wall in the early 19th-century works. One of the fills of the robber trench consisted of a mix of brick fragments and mortar that may have come from the demolition of the garden wall itself.

Locating the robber trench of the wall and the path surface has allowed the 'best-fit' position of the walling and garden features to be plotted with a much greater degree of accuracy than was previously possible using the original survey drawings. The excavation has also shown the excellent level and nature of the surviving archaeological deposits in this part of the site. Although the 19th-century works have removed some of the 'hard' archaeological remains (the upper levels of the walls), much evidence for the historical layout of the gardens (the paths) and features within them survives, and the levelling deposits have protected the remains from further disturbance during the more recent planting and landscaping works.

The initial findings of the evaluation trench showed that the depth of cultivation proposed for the 2006 tree works would not damage the surviving archaeological remains in this part of the Camellia Garden.

I Background to Project

As part of the Chiswick House and Grounds Regeneration Project, re-landscaping works were proposed in the grounds of the Chiswick Estate in an area to the east of the House known as the Camellia Gardens. Although now part of the Chiswick Estate, this area was originally part of the Moreton Hall Estate (Moreton Hall was the neighbouring 17th-century Thames-side villa to the Jacobean Chiswick House).

The proposed works included the removal of a number of misshapen, damaged or diseased trees; the subsequent shrubbery underplanting; the creation of an extended lawn area; and the re-alignment of a path across the lawn area.

In preparation for the replanting of this area there was a requirement for deep cultivation. This was down to a depth of 300mm beneath the proposed borders and 150mm beneath the lawn (*see Figure 2*), and the preferred method for achieving the deep cultivation was mechanical rotavation, with manual digging used only where this was not possible.

Following an impact assessment on the proposed works, a small-scale archaeological evaluation was carried out to inform the archaeological response to the landscaping proposals, and the following report details the results of the evaluation.

I.1 Historical Background

The proposed works were located in the south-eastern corner of the Moreton Hall Estate. To the east of the Hall were two enclosed 'garden' areas, with the brick surrounding walls shown on an Estate survey drawing from the mid 18th century (c1743) (*see Figure 3*). This drawing shows the main pillared gateway through to the eastern enclosed area to be stepped back from the road frontage. The access route between the eastern area and the western enclosed area is shown as an opening through the semi-circular (apsidal) section of wall in the dividing wall between the two areas. Once in the western area, only two small gate openings are shown, one to the west leading to the front of the Hall, the other to the north out to the paddock area. There is no direct access shown linking this area to the road to the south.

The plan of the Moreton Hall Estate produced for the bill of sale in 1812 shows the changes that had been made to this part of the Estate (*see Figure 4*). The land to the front and to the east of the house had been reorganised, creating a new entranceway to the Hall from the road through a new gateway. The western wall of the western of the two enclosed garden areas had been removed opening up the area in front of the Hall for a new drive. A wall had been constructed partitioning the eastern quarter of the area, with the land between this wall and the Hall's drive shown quite densely planted with trees.

By 1812 the eastern area had also been modified and is shown on the plan as the 'Farm Yard'. A building had been constructed in the south-eastern corner, and the eastern boundary wall had been re-aligned. The southern half of the original dividing wall to the west had been removed (to the south of the centre of the semi-circular\apsidal section of wall) joining this area with the partitioned eastern end of the western garden area.

I.2 Archaeological Concerns

Prior to these works the level of survival of the elements of the Moreton Hall Estate on this part of the site had not been established, although it was possible that significant archaeological deposits had survived.

It was recognised that there was a high likelihood that any surviving deposits would have been disturbed by previous planting schemes, either by the shrubbery border works (planted within the last c20 years), or by the established specimen trees.

Other than the details shown on the plan from the particulars of the sale of Moreton Hall in 1812, very little is known of the use of this part of the estate. The original functions of the two enclosed areas to the east of Moreton Hall itself are not known. Were these areas the Hall's formal gardens? What was the function of the semi-circular\apsidal section of wall – was this a garden focal point, perhaps for statuary? It is also not known how extensive the Sixth Duke of Devonshire's landscaping works were in this area following his purchase of the Moreton Hall Estate in 1812.

The proposed cultivation in the Camellia Shrubbery area may therefore have encountered previously-unseen archaeological remains, and this archaeological evidence would be of great importance in establishing the former use of this part of the estate. The main archaeological concern was that the use of a mechanical rotavator may have damaged the upper levels of the surviving archaeological deposits.

1.3 Curation

Chiswick House is a property that is in Guardianship and is Grade I listed (LB Ref I45054). The area beneath and immediately to the north-east of the house (including the demolished Stable Block) is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM 85).

The gardens are Grade I listed on the Historic Gardens Register (GD1005), and are owned and curated by the London Borough of Hounslow.

2 Evaluation Aims and Objectives

The main aim of the project was to establish the level and nature of survival of the archaeological remains in the part of Camellia Garden that was the subject of the proposed planting and cultivation works. The results of the evaluation trench would enable the Inspector of Ancient Monuments (IAM) to give the informed archaeological advice that was required in response to the request.

The aims and objectives sit fully within the following of English Heritage's Research Themes as set down in the English Heritage Research Agenda (2005):

- A** Discovering, studying and defining historic assets and their significance
- E** Studying historic assets and improving their presentation and interpretation

3 Trench Location

To limit the level of disturbance to the archaeological deposits, a single evaluation trench located across the position of the semi-circular wall was thought to be adequate to assess the deposits within both of the enclosed garden areas. It was hoped that this would also give a good indication of the level of survival of the walls following their early 19th-century removal.

The site work consisted of one week of excavation, between 23rd February and 28th of February 2006, and the excavation team consisted of two members of English Heritage's Archaeological Projects Team.

4 Excavation Results

The following section summarises the results of the evaluation trench. The numbers referred to in the text are the unique context numbers that were assigned on site to each of the archaeological features encountered.

A NE-SW-aligned trench measuring 9.7m x 1m was excavated by hand across the lawn of the Camellia Garden (for location plan, *see Figure 2*; for general overview, *see Plate 1*).

Following the careful removal of the turf (to allow re-instatement) and removal of the topsoil, archaeological features were observed surviving very close to the surface (at less than 0.15m depth).

In the north-eastern half of the trench the upper soil deposits consisted of a 0.28-0.43m thick layer of a dark-brown-silty material (context 455). This layer contained occasional brick and tile fragments, along with numerous plant roots, and appeared to be imported material building up and levelling this part of the garden. The upper levels of this deposit had been mixed with organic material (a shredded tree-bark mulch) that had been brought in and used on the plant borders, and had been heavily disturbed by root and animal action.

Beneath layer 455 was a 0.29m thick silty deposit (context 458), dark-yellowish brown in colour, and this was interpreted as a levelling layer of imported landscaping material. This layer overlaid a layer of dark-greyish-brown silt, context 465, that was approximately 0.53m below the surrounding lawn surface. The excavation was stopped at this interface as the depth investigated was at a level beneath the level that would be disturbed by the proposed rotavation and re-planting works.

The south-western half of the excavation trench revealed a more complex sequence of archaeological remains. Cutting across the centre of the trench was a linear steep-sided cut running NW-SE – context 463 (*see Plate 2*). Only the north-eastern edge of this cut was seen, the south-western edge having been obscured or removed by later works. The cut was filled by a very clean, dark-yellowish-brown sandy material, context 464, and was excavated down to a depth of 0.93m, although at this depth its base had not been reached. Excavation was halted as the trench was deeper than the proposed cultivation depth, and the final extents of this cut remain unknown.

The nature and position of this cut suggest that this was the robber trench for the removal of the garden or yard wall shown on the early surveys of the Moreton Hall estate. The location of this wall could not be accurately plotted from the early surveys (although a 'best-

fit' of its position was established) and the location of the cut appears to match the 'best fit' of the wall line shown on the 1812 survey (*see Figure 5*). A degree of caution is required when comparing the excavated evidence with the features shown on the survey drawing as the 1812 survey has been scaled far beyond the scale of the original data capture. It is encouraging to be able to make a tentative match between the robber trench cut and the yard wall, although the evidence can not be taken to be conclusive.

By the time of the 1812 survey of the estate for the bill of sale, the southern half of the apsidal wall had been demolished and a new range of buildings had been constructed to the south east.

A further fill of cut 463, a loose reddish-coloured deposit containing brick and mortar fragments (context 456 – wall demolition material that may have been from the robbing of the apsidal wall) was banked up against fill 464, and to the south-west above this was a short length of the later levelling layer, context 457 (*see Figure 6* showing the section drawings of the trench).

This levelling layer extended to the south-west to the end of the evaluation trench as a 0.30m thick dark-brown deposit that contained occasional brick and mortar fragments. It appeared to consist of demolition material and is thought to have been imported to this part of the site as a levelling and build-up deposit as part of the early 19th-century landscaping works.

At the south-western corner of the trench the levelling layer 457 overlaid a 0.04m thick layer of clinker path material, context 460 (*see Plate 3*). The path was aligned NE-SW, and a 1.44x0.23m section of the path was excavated. The path was laid on top of a dark-grey-brown silt deposit (context 459), an early landscaping or levelling layer that extended across the whole of the evaluation trench (recorded as context 465 to the east of the robber trench - cut 463).

The upper surface of the path was at a depth of 0.47m below the present ground level, and dates from the early garden works of the Moreton Hall Estate (17th-18th century in date).

There were several later features encountered during the excavation that were presumably from later planting and landscaping works. Cutting through the upper south-western part of the fill of the robber trench (context 464) was a steep-sided, 'V'-shaped, linear feature (context 451). This cut was 0.70m wide and 0.44m deep, and was filled with a clean yellowish-brown sandy fill (context 452).

Further to the south-west was a 2.26m wide 'U'-shaped cut (context 461) through the latest of the levelling deposits (context 455). This was filled with a dark-grey deposit containing brick and tile fragments (context 462), which in turn had been cut by a later linear feature, context 453. This 1.13m wide cut was aligned NW-SE and was filled with a dark-yellowish-brown silty-clay deposit.

5 The finds

A total finds retention policy was followed, although the only finds recovered were of ceramic building material, consisting of a number of brick and tile fragments. These were

assessed on site and were re-buried as the trench was backfilled. No other finds were recovered.

6 Assessment of potential for further analysis of the stratigraphic record

There is no potential for further analysis of the stratigraphic record of this evaluation.

7 Archive Summary

The archive consists of the following:

- 15 Context records
- 4 A3 sheets of polyester draughting film with 4 drawings
- 7 Colour photographs

8 Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank all colleagues involved in the successful completion of this stage of the project, with special thanks to Tom Cromwell. Thanks also to Jeremy Ashbee, EH Inspector for Chiswick, for his support and advice during the course of the project, and to Adrian Cook of Hounslow Borough Council for his help and advice, both in preparation for and during the site works.

9 Bibliography

Centre for Archaeology, 2004 *Centre for Archaeology Recording Manual* Portsmouth: English Heritage.

Fellows, D 2006 *Chiswick House Facilities Development Project. Project Number 4584. Archaeological Evaluation Assessment Report.* Research Department Report Series 4\2006: English Heritage.

Harris, J 1995 *The Palladian Revival – Lord Burlington, His Villa and Garden at Chiswick.* Yale University Press

Hewlings, R 1989 *Chiswick House and Gardens.* English Heritage Guidebook

White, R 2001 *Chiswick House and Gardens.* English Heritage Guidebook

Appendix I List of Contexts Used

Context	Category	Date (century)
450	Deposit;Layer;Topsoil	20
451	Cut;Feature	20
452	Deposit;Fill	20
453	Cut;Feature	20
454	Deposit;Fill	20
455	Deposit;Layer	20
456	Deposit;Fill	19
457	Deposit;Layer	19
458	Deposit;Layer	17-18
459	Deposit;Layer	17-18
460	Deposit;Surface	17-18
461	Cut;Feature	20
462	Deposit;Fill	20
463	Cut;Feature	19
464	Deposit;Fill	19
465	Deposit;Layer	17-18



Figure 1. Maps showing the location of Chiswick House.

© Crown Copyright and
 database right 2013. All
 rights reserved. Ordnance
 Survey Licence number
 100024900

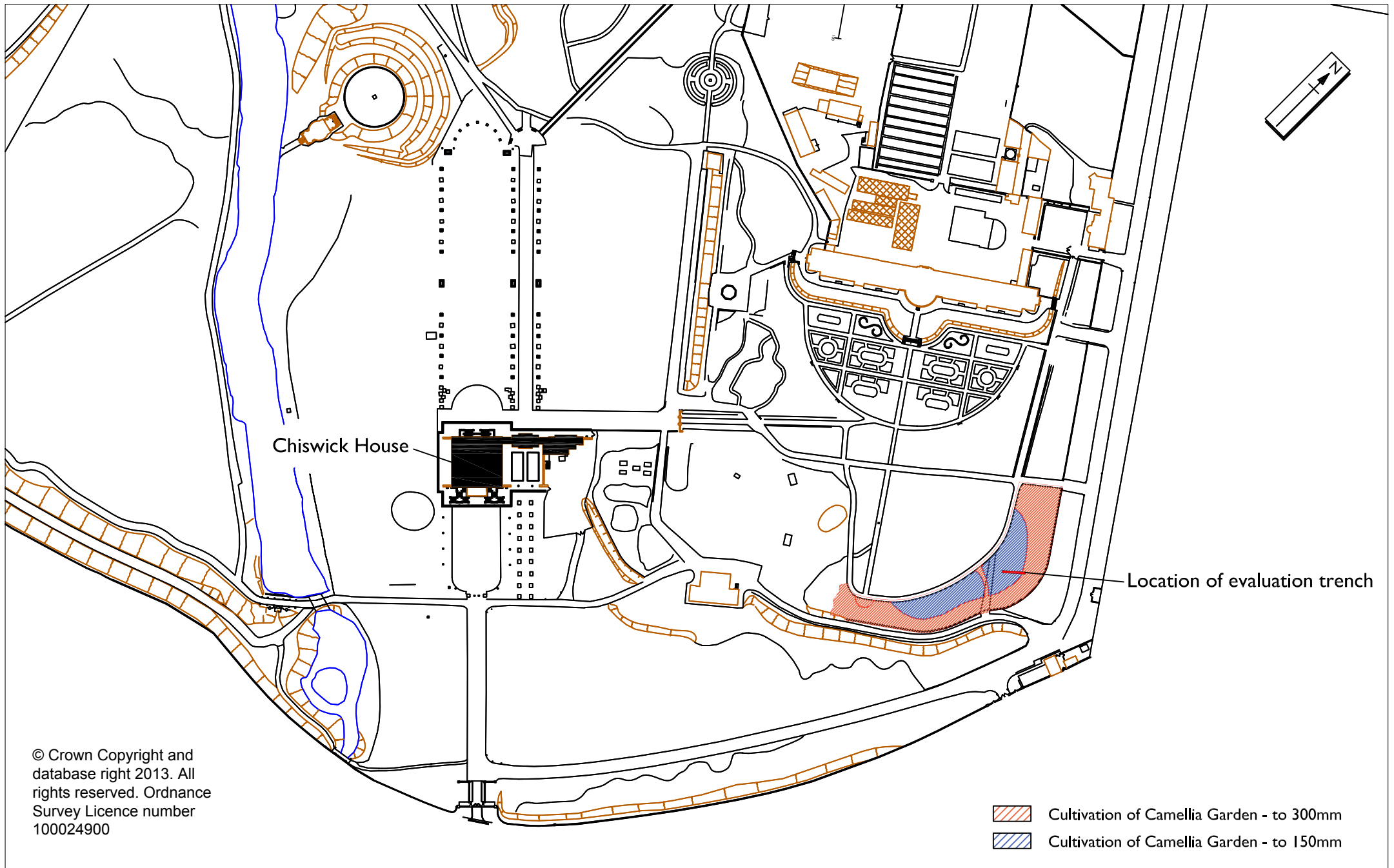


Figure 2 Chiswick House, Camellia Garden Evaluation trench location superimposed on the modern estate survey and showing the proposed cultivation depths in the Camellia Garden

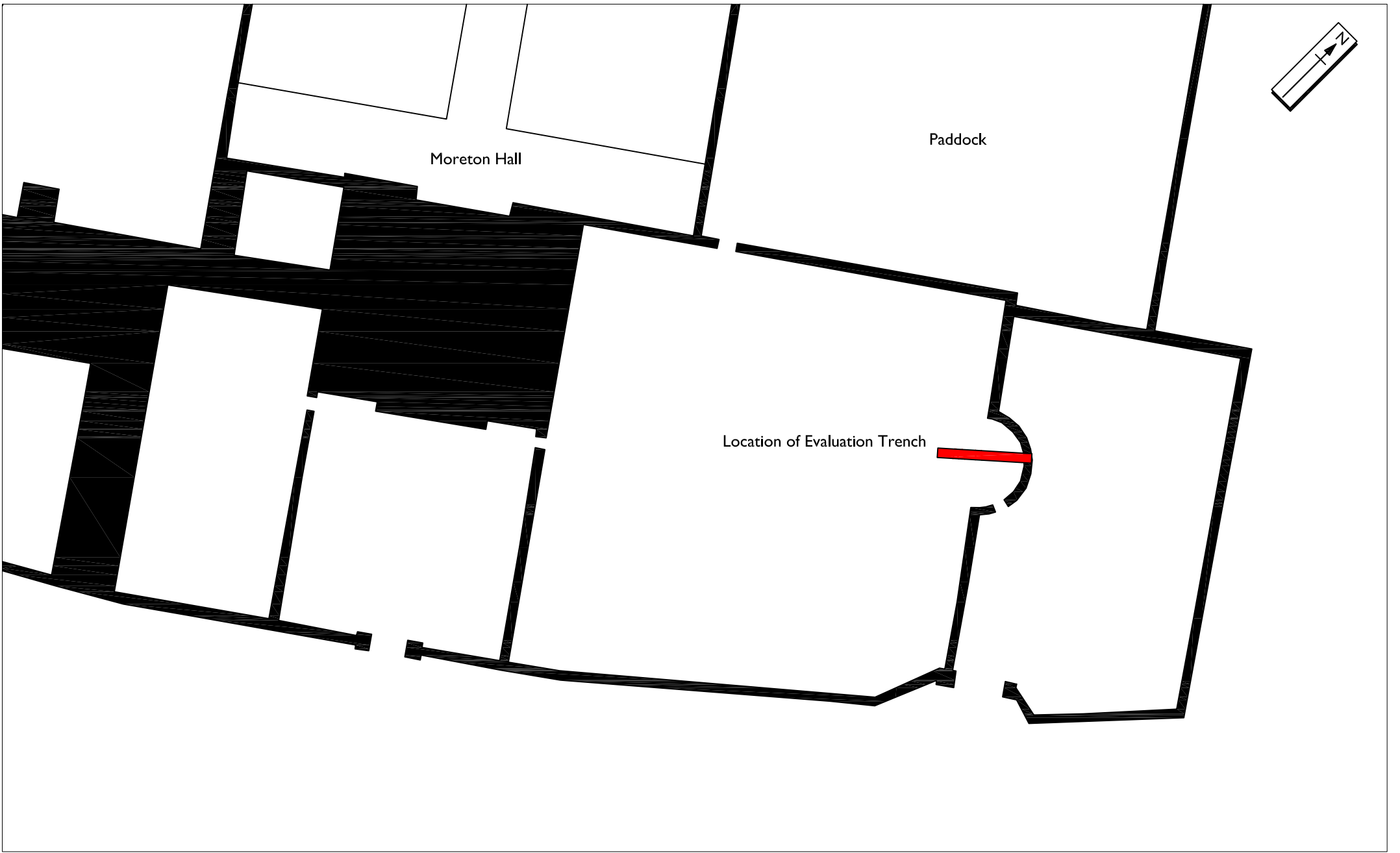


Figure 3 Chiswick House, Camellia Garden Evaluation Trench Location superimposed on the c1743 survey of the Moreton Hall Estate



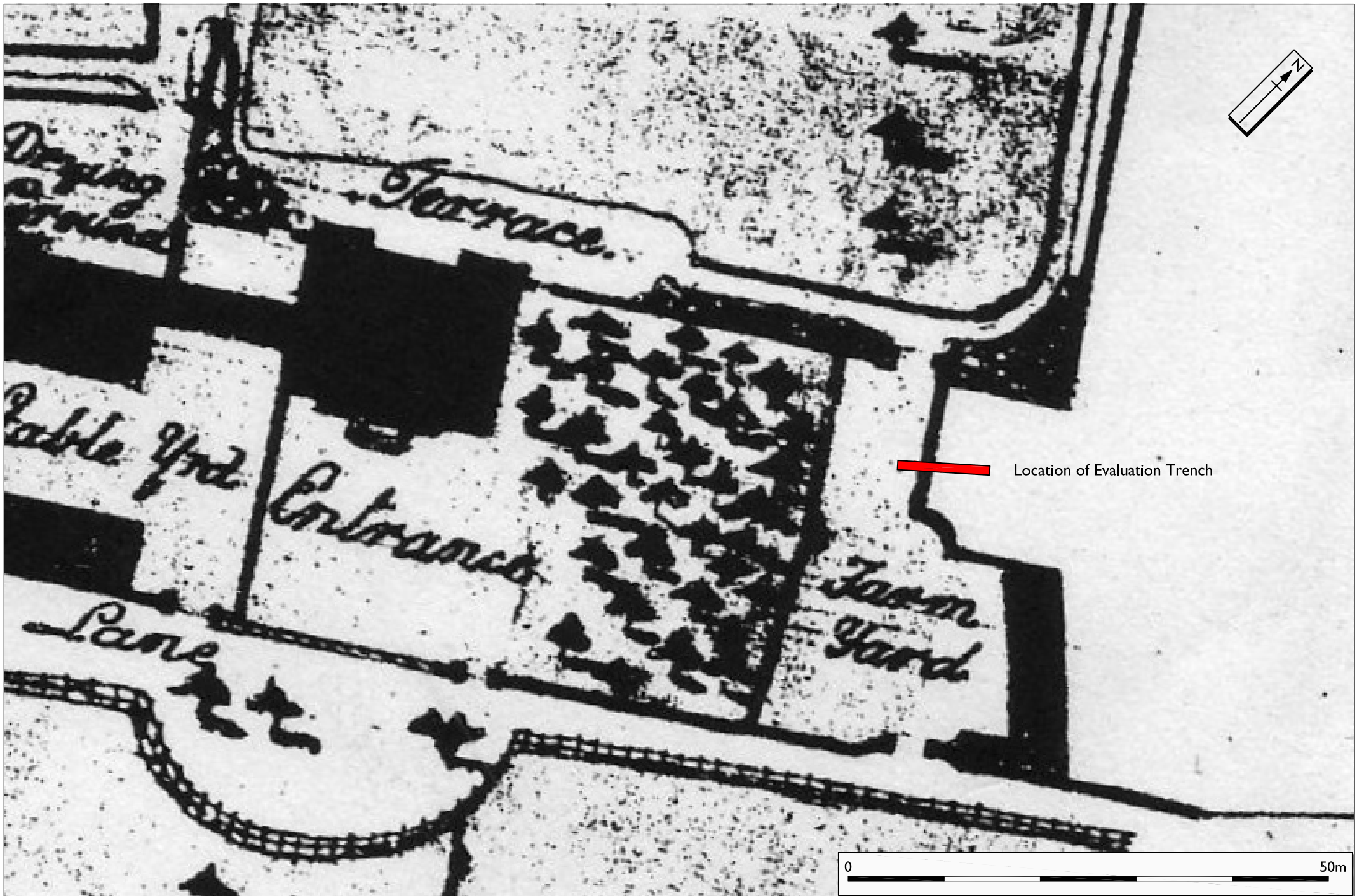


Figure 4 Chiswick House, Camellia Garden Evaluation Trench Location superimposed on the 1812 survey of the Moreton Hall Estate

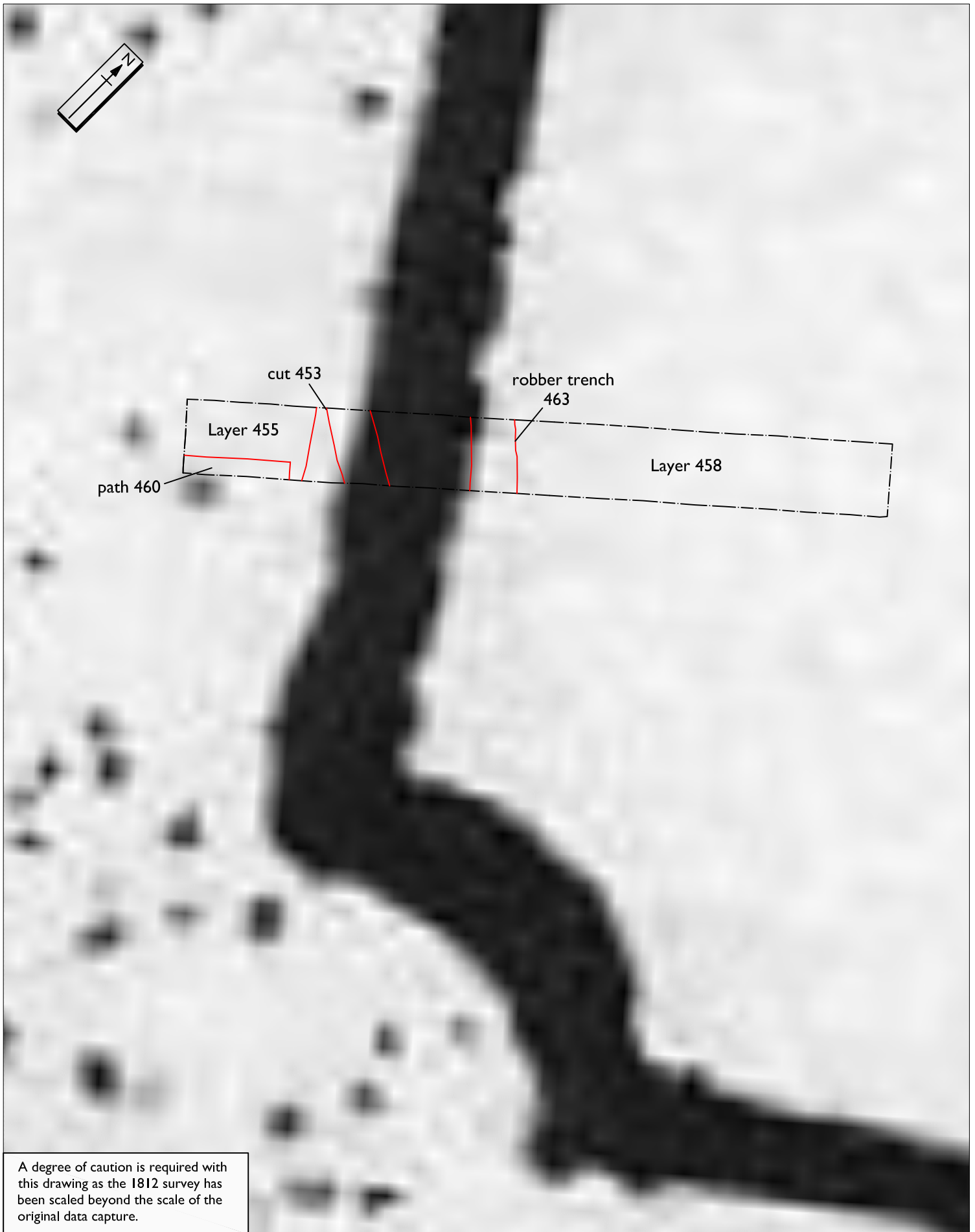


Figure 5 Chiswick House, Camellia Garden Evaluation Trench - Excavated features superimposed on the 1812 survey of the Moreton Hall Estate

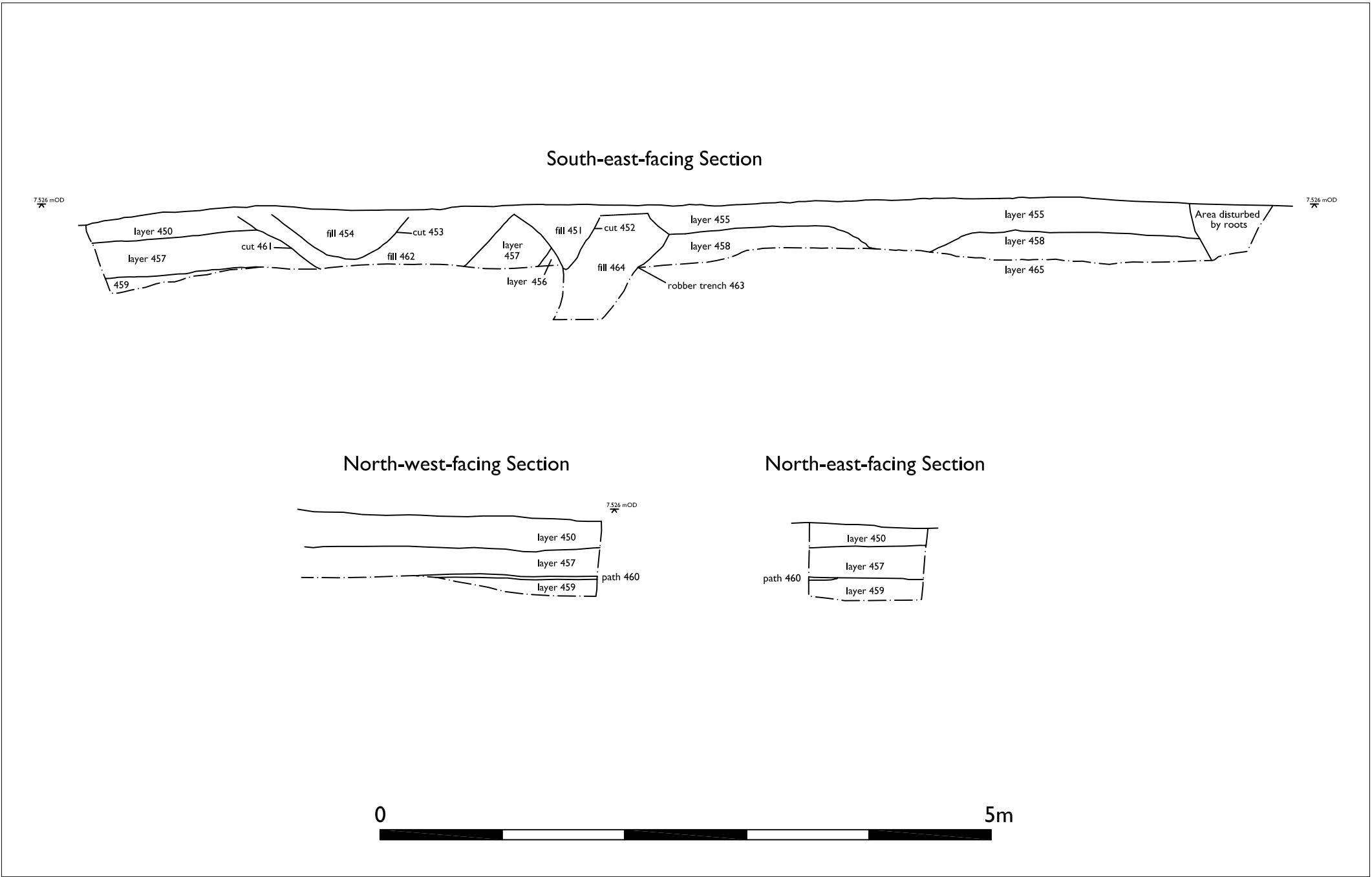


Figure 6 Chiswick House, Camellia Garden Evaluation Trench Section drawings showing excavated features

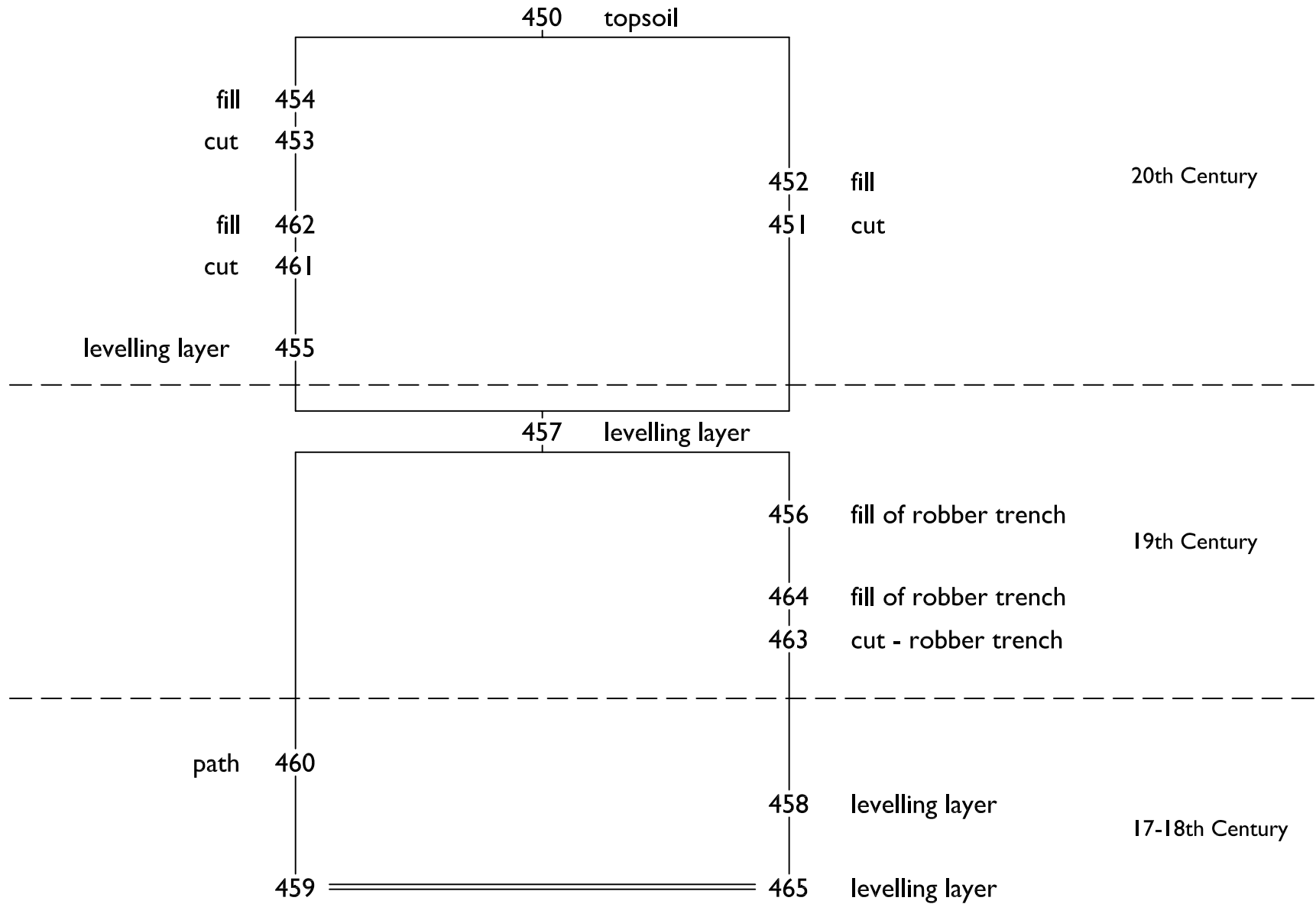


Figure 7 Chiswick House, Camellia Garden Evaluation Trench
Stratigraphic matrix of the excavated contexts



Plate I General view of evaluation trench, looking north-east
(2m and 0.5m scale)



Plate 2 View of north-western section of the evaluation trench, showing the robber trench cut (context 463)
(2m and 0.5m scale)



Plate 3 View of south-eastern section of the evaluation trench, showing the buried path surface (context 460)
(0.5m scale)