

**YORK HOUSE, SION ROAD, TWICKENHAM,
LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND-UPON-
THAMES**

**RESULTS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING
BRIEF**

National grid Reference (NGR): TQ 1773 2135

*Planning application: **06/2103/LBC***

On Behalf of: The London Borough of Richmond-Upon-Thames

JULY 2007

National Grid Reference: TQ 1760 7475

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RESULTS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

SUMMARY

Archaeological recording was undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group during June 2007 adjacent to the rear wall of York House, overlooking the sunken garden. York House is Grade II listed, and the work involved the recording of two light wells and a brick foundation.*

1 INTRODUCTION

Site Location (Figures 1 & 2)

- 1.1 The area of the Watching Brief was situated at the rear of York House, to either side of a set of Portland stone steps that lead down to a garden terrace overlooking a sunken garden. The terrace is oriented northeast-southwest, and is limited by York House to the northwest and a sunken garden to the southeast. The site is located at NGR (National Grid Reference) TQ 1657 7346 (Fig 1).
- 1.2 At the start of the Watching Brief, the site was in use as a raised platform overlooking the gardens. The proposal affects a set of Portland Stone steps that lead down from the house to the garden terrace: they shall be relocated closer to the house.

2 PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The local planning authority for the area is the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames. Archaeological advice to the council is provided by Mark Stevenson, the Archaeological Advisor to the London Borough of Richmond-Upon-Thames.
- 2.2 A planning application has been submitted to develop the site (Application No.: 06/2103/LBC). The archaeology advisor to the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames has recommended that an archaeological condition is placed on any planning permission to secure a programme of archaeological work. The first stage in the Archaeological Investigation was the production of a Desk Based Assessment (AOC 2003b). A Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared as a requirement of the Conditional Planning Permission (AOC 2007).
- 2.3 In accordance with *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning* (PPG 16) issued by the Department of the Environment in 1990 (DoE, 1990) and the recommendations of the archaeological advisor, archaeological recording out was carried out on either side of the stone steps, where structural elements relating to an earlier configuration of the house were revealed.

Geology and Topography

- 2.4 The site is situated near the north bank of the River Thames, east of the centre of Twickenham. The local topography slopes down from the northwest to the southeast as it approaches the bank of the Thames. The British Geological Survey map (BGS Sheet 270) indicates that the site is situated upon Brickearth.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prehistoric (before c. AD 43)

- 3.1 There are nine entries in the SMR record for prehistoric sites dating from the Mesolithic period through to the Iron Age. Three entries account for Mesolithic evidence in the area; another three sites produced evidence of Neolithic occupation, and there is one entry for Bronze Age material and one for Iron Age material. Although there is no clear evidence of prehistoric settlement, the finds are indicative of human activity close to the watercourse of the River Thames throughout the prehistoric period.

Romano – British (c.AD 43-450)

- 3.2 The site is situated at a significant distance from the bounds of the Roman settlement of *Londinium*. Little is known of Roman activity in the area; there are only three entries in the SMR for Roman finds.

Saxon (c.AD 450-1066)

- 3.3 The earliest evidence of Twickenham, then spelt *Twicanhom* (Simpson 1998), is from 704 AD and mentions a grant of land in a Saxon charter:

‘On the east and south it is terminated by the River Thames, on the north by a flooded plain, the name of which is Fishbourne...’

- 3.4 Other later documents also refer to Twickenham, with a variety of spellings. A number of suggestions have been put forward as to the meaning of the name, one of which is that it is Old English for ‘land in a river bend, dry ground in marsh, river meadow’. The Thames would have been an important means of transport. At Ham, on the opposite bank of the river, a probable Saxon burial has been excavated, and this is the nearest evidence of Saxon occupation.

Medieval

- 3.5 Although Twickenham is not mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, it was included in the Manor of Isleworth. Excavations in the area have identified medieval remains at several locations. In 1988 an excavation at Church Street to the southwest of the site identified a ten-metre long drainage ditch dating from the 14th century to the mid 16th century. The Church of St Mary was also established at around this time, approximately 100m to the west of the site.
- 3.6 Yorke’s Farm existed on the site of York House during the medieval period. The York family was first mentioned in 1381 and are thought to have inhabited the house until the 15th century.

Post Medieval (c.1485 – 1900)

- 3.7 The post-medieval history of the site is dominated by the house and gardens of York House. York House was originally built in the 17th century by Andrew Pitcairne, and was known as “Yorke Farme”. The central block is a symmetrical three-storey building with shuttered windows. The wings are later additions dating from the 18th – late 19th/early 20th century and have been supported to prevent subsidence by iron straps. The listing includes garden walls, wrought-iron gates and boundary walls along Sion Road on the east side and the Riverside on the south. The listed building description reads:

‘Now Municipal Offices. Present building dates to 1690-1700, being a partial re-building of the earlier house, which was the home of James II before his accession. At the restoration it was given to the Earl of Clarendon, father of James’s first wife who was the mother of Queen Anne, who was born here, and Queen Mary. The house is of red brick with steep hipped and flat slated roof with modillion eaves which extends into the 2-storey wings at either end. Ground floor has rusticated cement facing, with central door with enriched surround with cornice on carved brackets and open scrolled pediment with cartouche and crown in tympanum. Garden front has central pedimented doorcase and is rusticated as on the front elevations with later single-storey wings. There are modern and later alterations.’

- 3.8 The Parliamentary Survey dated 16th June 1650 gives a description of the property:

“...all that capital messuage called Yorke Farms in Twickenham, houses, buildings structures, granaries, stables, dovecots, gardens, orchards, flower gardens, lands, meadows, pastures...hereditaments of all sorts...”

This indicates that the property was very much a working estate rather than a pleasure garden as it is now.

- 3.9 In 1661 the ownership of ‘Yorke Farme’ changed. It was conveyed to ‘Sir Henry Hyde...Lord Cornbury sonne and heir apparent of the right honourable Edward Earle of Clarendon, Lord Chancellor of England’ for £3,500. It was described as;

“all that capitall messuage or dwelling house called Yorke Farme and all those two closes of pasture lying and being there adoyning unto the said capitall messuage conteyning by estimacion six acres of pasture ground...”

- 3.10 Less is known of the ownership of York House in the early 18th century for although some of the names of the owners and occupiers are recorded; there is a good deal of uncertainty and lack of detailed information about them. York House’s first notable foreign resident was Ludwig, Count von Starhemberg (1762-1833). He came to London as Ambassador for Austria in 1793, acquiring York House three years later. He seems to have retained York House until 1818: its sale was advertised in *The Times* on 3rd July 1817.

- 3.11 Other residents of note who lived in York House are Mrs Anne Seymour Damer (1748-1828), a famous sculptress of her day and Sir Alexander Johnston, co founder of the Royal Asiatic Society. The Johnstons made only limited use of York House and on several occasions let it out. Amongst their tenants was the Dowager Duchess of Roxburgh and William Lowther, Earl of Lonsdale, who died at York House on 18th March 1844.
- 3.12 York House eventually became the property of the Comte de Paris. Both the Comte and Comtesse de Paris were grandchildren of King Louis Philippe. All of their children were born at York House. The Comte de Paris left York House in 1871 and it stood empty until acquired in 1877 by the Right Honourable Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff. A keen botanist, he was particularly successful in growing orchids and he constructed a special house for them which was opened on 1st November 1889.
- 3.13 The gardens to York House cover an area of 4 hectares. They date from the late 18th-early 19th century when estate maps show a formal kitchen garden, a gravel terrace walk and a small formal garden. Between 1864 and 1871 additions to the gardens included the Winter Garden [27].
- 3.14 In 1897 Grant Duff sold York House to the Duc d'Orleans. The Duc made many changes to the house before he occupied it and was responsible for the walling up of the Riverside. He left England in 1900, but retained the ownership of the house until 1906 when it was acquired by its last private occupier, Sir Ratan Tata, the Indian merchant Prince who was knighted in 1916. He also installed the fountain with its flamboyant statue on the Riverside [20]. Substantial changes to the gardens were also made by Sir Ratan Tata from 1906. His additions included a sunken garden, a Japanese Garden and a formal garden with a rosary [27].
- 3.15 Since 1965 it has been the municipal offices of the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames.

4 STRATEGY

Aims of the Investigation

- 4.1 The aims of the evaluation were identified in the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 2007) as being to:
- Determine the presence of any remains of prehistoric date.
 - Determine the presence of any remains of medieval date on the site.
 - Identify and record earlier features of the house, now exposed by the latest programme of development.
 - Assess the potential of the site to inform on the post-medieval development and chronology of Twickenham.
- 4.2 The final aim is to make public the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

Scope of Works

- 4.3 The recording was conducted upon either side of the steps to the rear of York House. Two pits had been excavated in 2003 or earlier, and boarded over. This recording followed the re-opening of the pits, and much information was only recorded from the sections revealed.
- 4.4 The ground reduction was up to 0.72m in depth. All archaeological features seen were recorded.

Methodology

- 4.5 Archaeological recording, where not precluded by Health & Safety considerations, consisted of:
- Limited hand cleaning of archaeological sections and surfaces sufficient to establish the stratigraphic sequence exposed.
 - The collection of dating evidence from *in-situ* deposits and spoil scans.
 - A scaled photographic recording of representative exposed sections and surfaces, along with sufficient photographs to establish the setting and scale of the groundworks.
 - A record of the datum levels of archaeological deposits.
- 4.6 Records have been produced using *pro-forma* context record sheets and by the single context planning method and will be compatible with those published by the Museum of London (MoL 1994)
- 4.7 A record of the full sequence of all archaeological deposits revealed have been made. Plans were drawn at an appropriate scale of 1:20, with sections drawn at 1:10.
- 4.8 A unique site code (**YKH 07**) for the project was obtained from the Museum of London.

5 RESULTS

Trench 1

- 5.1 The lowest deposit revealed was yellowish brown sandy clay (1/009) which was notably compact. This may be naturally-lain brickearth, but given its proximity to York House and its basement, this is most likely redeposited. Two brick structures were situated atop this deposit, and are likely to be of different dates. One structure is oriented parallel to the rear wall of York House (1/007), and is a brick wall built in English Bond. The bricks are soft red bricks and measure 244mm by 110mm by 57mm. They are bonded with coarse lime mortar with small pieces of chalk within the mix. This wall stands only three courses high: 0.18m above the limit of investigation, and may survive beneath the extant steps. At the northeastern end of this wall, it seems to return northwest towards York House, possibly defining an earlier structure.
- 5.2 Next to the foundation is a small spread of lime mortar and brick rubble (1/008). This is localised on the southeast side of the foundation and is most likely the remains of a construction deposit: a patch of building material.
- 5.3 The second brick structure in the trench is a rectangular block (1/004) extending to the southeast of the main wall of York House (1/005). It appears to be contemporary with the main wall in that the bricks are of an identical size and the brick coursing is bonded in. Each brick measures 241mm by 101mm by 57mm, slightly smaller than the wall foundation also seen in this trench. It is strongly suspected that this structure is a light well for the cellar level of York House. It measures 1.85m northeast-southwest and 0.62m wide. It continues below the limit of excavation. Within the compartment formed by the brickwork is a secondary deposit of cement, and the wall at this point has a grill. This shows that the opening behind has been blocked. In direct association with the lightwell and the main wall is a spread of pinkish brown silty clay with high rubble content (1/006), and is thought to be a scatter of building materials left during construction.
- 5.4 All structures were sealed beneath a thick layer of silty clay (1/003) that contained the only find from the site, a clay pipe bowl manufactured between 1680 and 1710. The sequence was sealed by a layer of hardcore and sand (1/002) beneath Portland stone slabs which form a platform at the rear of York House.

Trench 2

- 5.5 The lowest deposit seen was at 0.72m below the finished slab level at the top of the steps, and was brown sandy clay (2/006) that was very firm. Atop the sandy clay was a small remnant of a wall foundation (2/007), oriented northeast-southwest and parallel to the house. This is a continuation of the foundation seen in Trench 1 (1/007).
- 5.6 The other significant feature in the trench is the basement wall of York House (2/003), also seen in Trench 1. This is built in a random or functional bond, dominated by headers. Spreading southeast from the wall was a layer of pinkish brown sandy clay with a high proportion of brick rubble (2/009). This

structure and the wall foundation were sealed by a thick layer of silty clay (2/008). This seemed to have been dumped as a single action.

- 5.7 The made ground (2/008) was cut by a steep sided intrusion (2/004) that was filled with concrete (2/005). This intrusion continues to a vertical edge in the wall of York House's basement that strongly suggests that a lightwell or similar has been removed. The intrusion has been backfilled with concrete and an air-brick inserted. An examination of the inside wall of the basement shows a recess where the light well had been.
- 5.8 The topmost deposits in the trench were Portland Stone slabs that sealed a bedding layer (2/001 over 2/002).

Finds

- 5.9 Very few finds were collected from the site. A single clay tobacco pipe-bowl was collected from the made ground in Trench 1 (1/003) and dates to the late 17th/ early 18th century. Brick samples were taken from the lightwell in Trench 1 and the wall foundation (1/007). These both have mortar attached, which can be analysed should the need arise.

6 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The two areas recorded offer a very small window into the changing layout of York House; and such a small sample offers little in the way of identifying different phases or different ownerships.
- 6.2 The earliest structure revealed in the trenches is assumed to be the basement levels of York House itself. On each side of the extant central steps is evidence for lightwells for the basement. The cause for their infilling and modification may be one of two reasons: either the lightwells were structurally unsound, and needed such repair that the best method was to fill them, or the requirements of the building as council offices meant that these parts had to be blocked up.
- 6.3 The wall that runs parallel to York House and survives as little more than a foundation may mark the line of an earlier garden terrace that fell from use. It appears to return back towards the house, indicating a potential earlier terrace around the rear door. Possibly, the addition of the wings to the southeast side of the building removed the practicalities of having a garden terrace here.
- 6.4 The lack of any apparent evidence for phasing within the silty clay overlying the structures in the trenches may be the result of either a single phase of deposition, or the deposit slumping gently enough to show no sudden stratigraphic changes.

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PLATES



Plate 1: Early wall, obscured by current terrace platform.



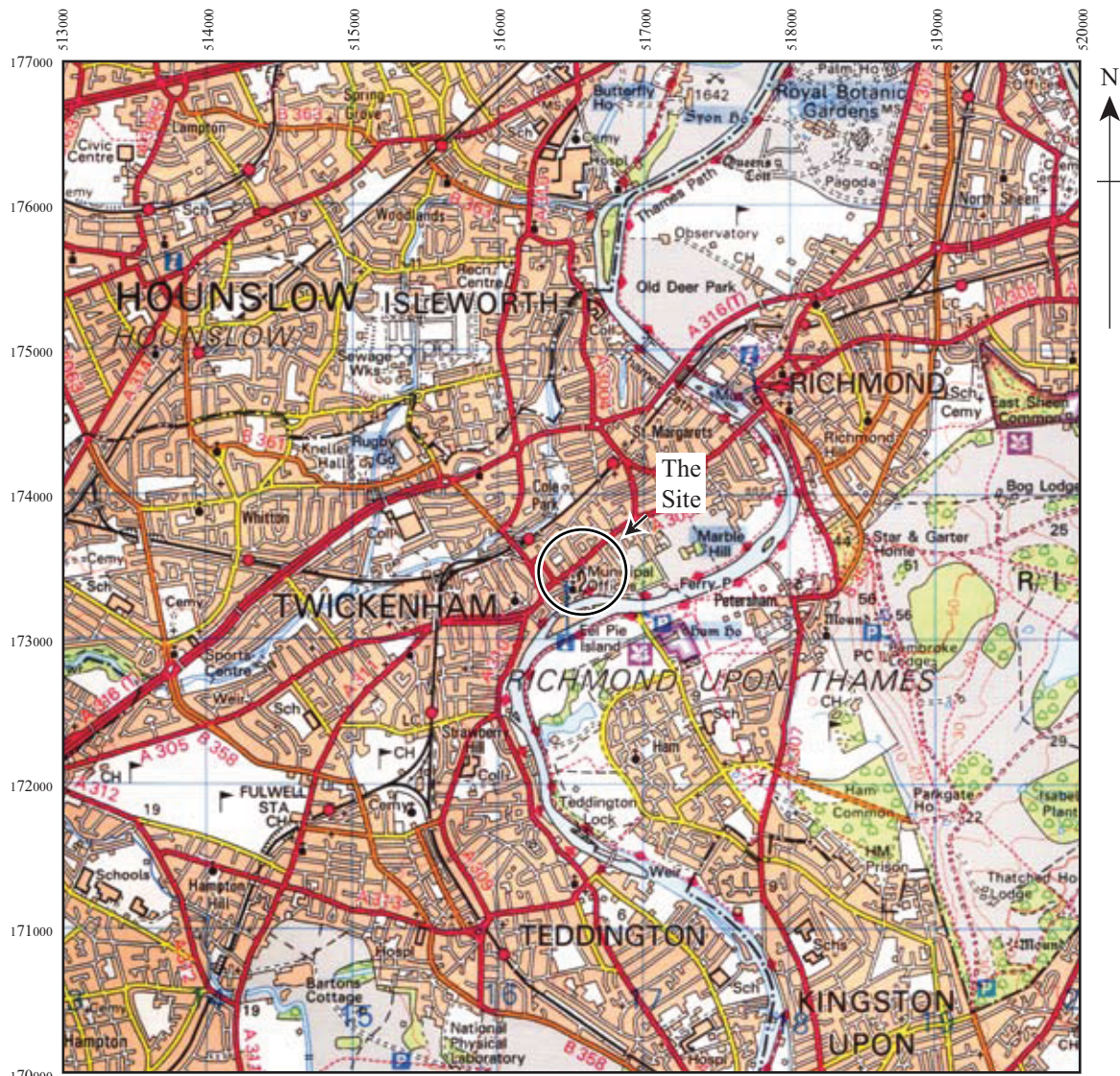
Plate 2: Profile of early wall



Plate 3: Remnant of Lightwell 1/004, Trench 1



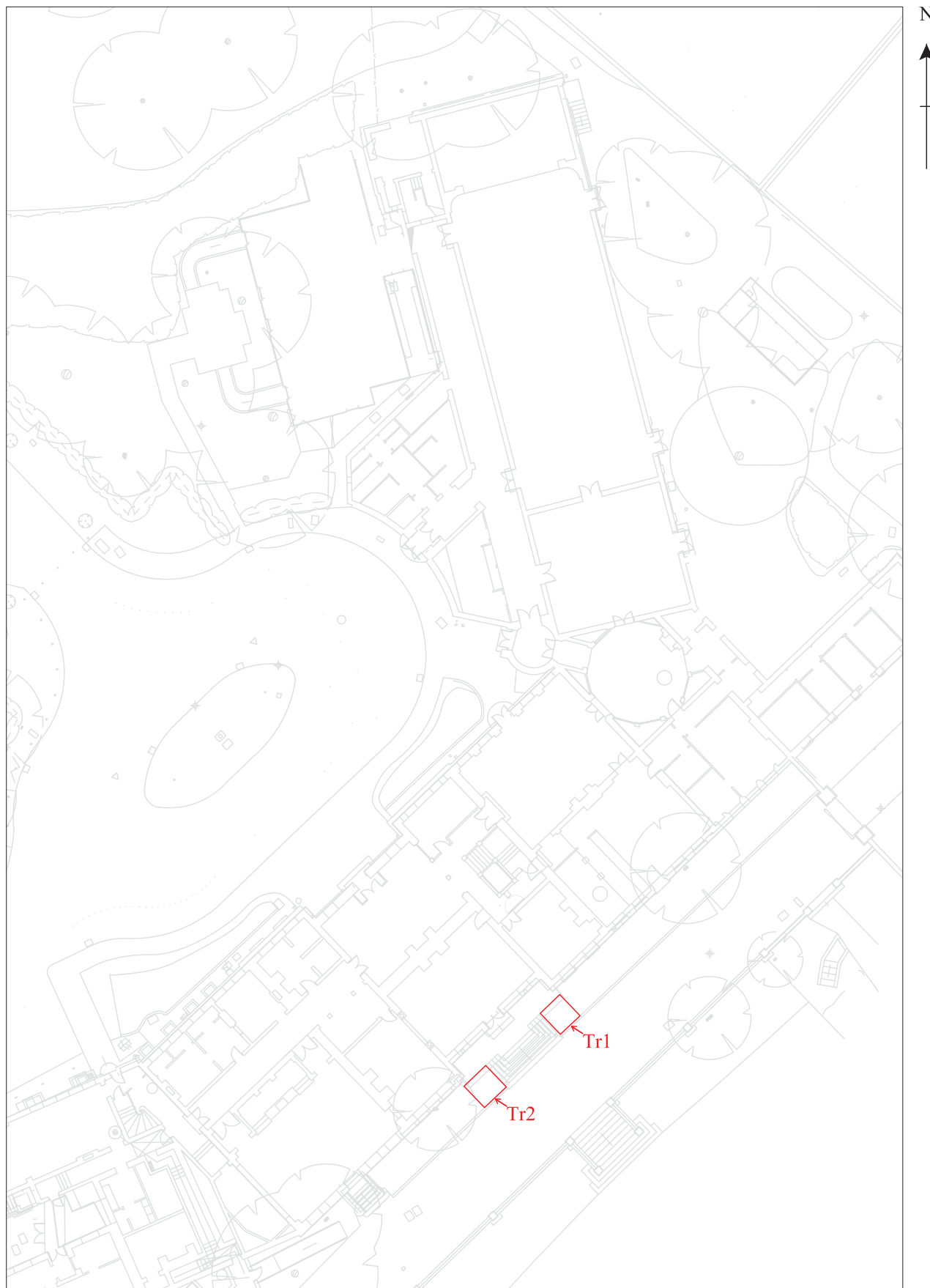
Plate 4: Concrete-filled lightwell, Trench 2



Based on the Ordnance Survey's 1:50 000 Landranger map of 1999 with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright. Licence No. AL 1000 16114



Figure 1: Site location



Based on the Survey Conducted by Donald Insall Associates Limited



1:400

Figure 2: Detailed Site Location



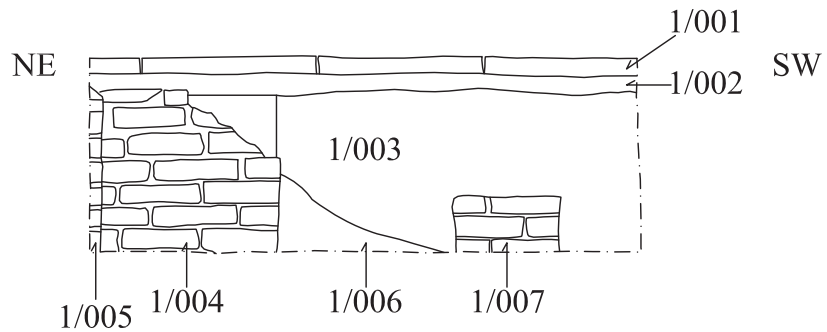
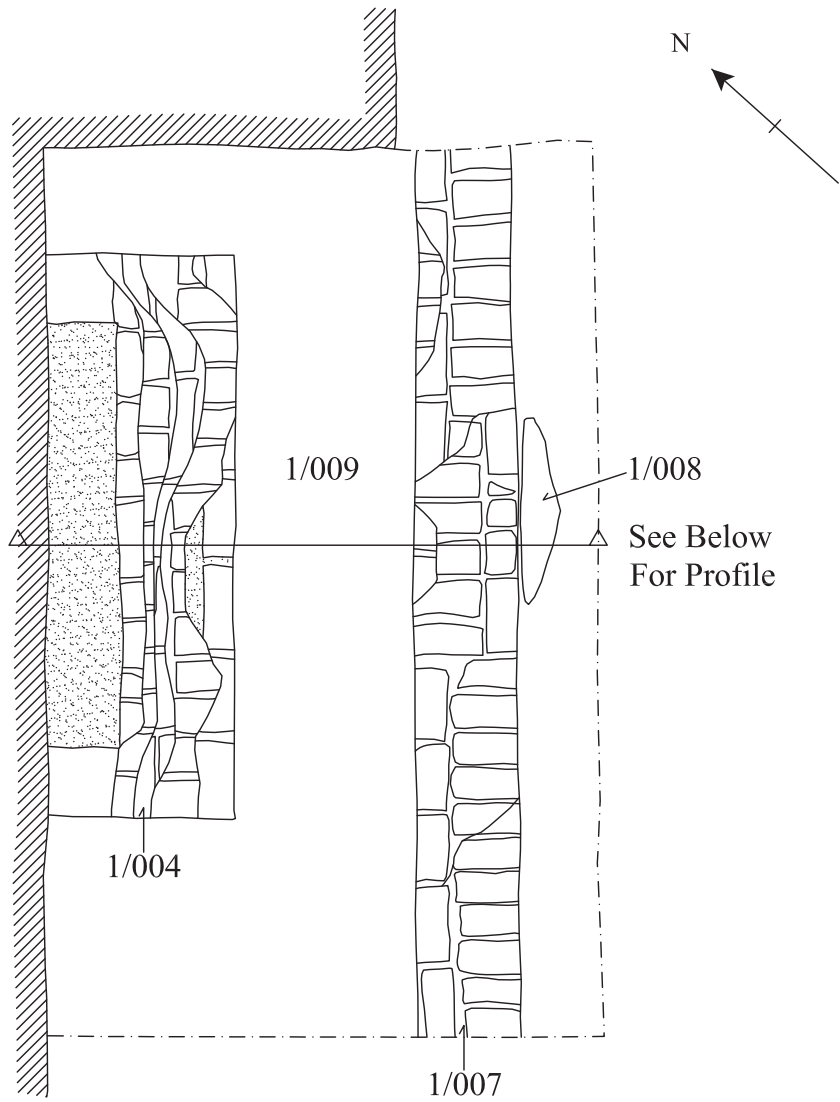


Figure 3: Trench 1: Plan & Profile



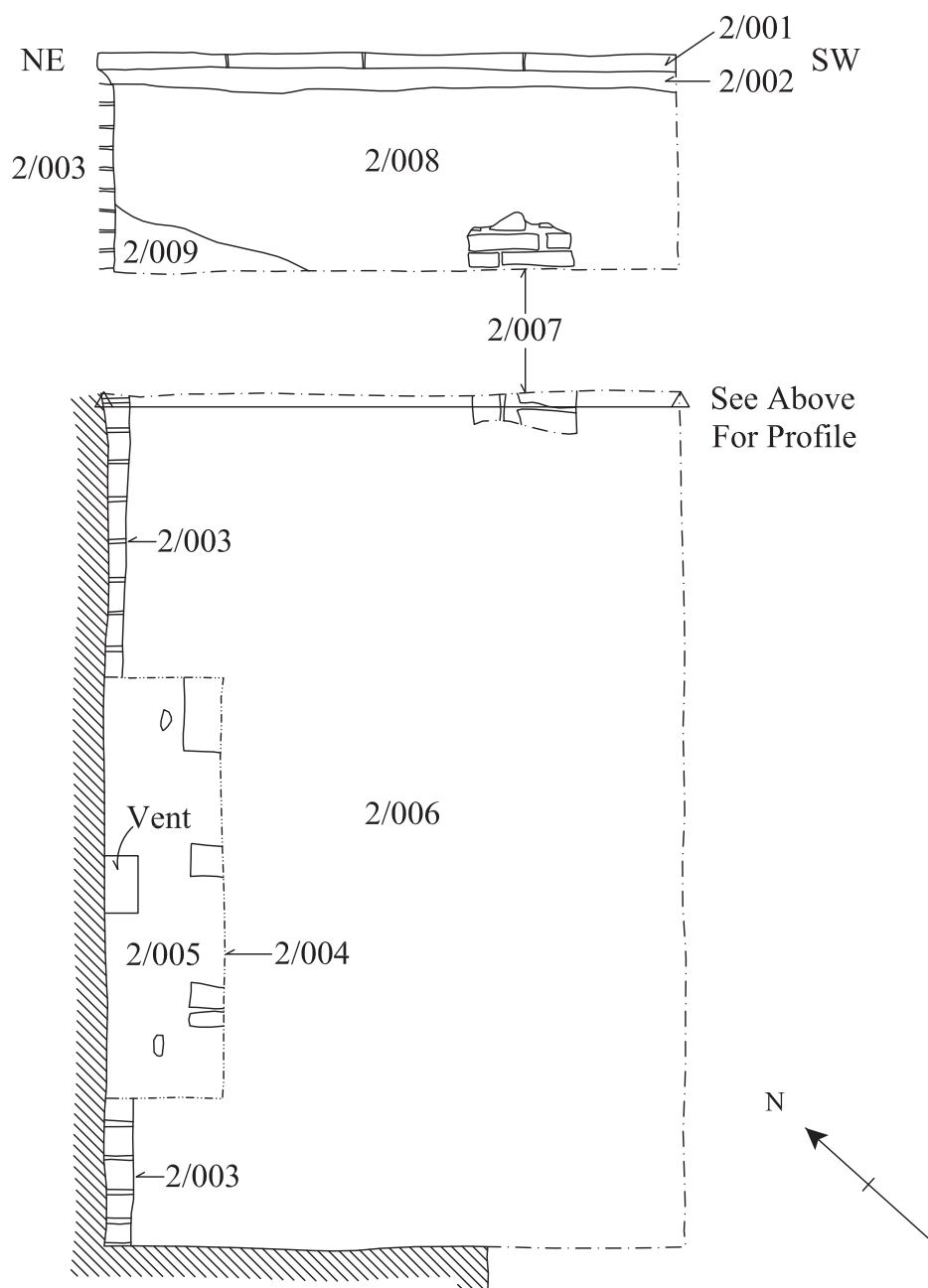
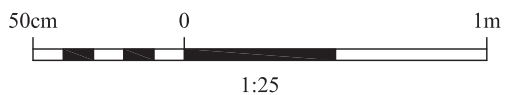


Figure 4: Trench 2: Plan & Profile



APPENDIX A – CONTEXT REGISTER

Context Number	Description	Length/ m	Width/ m	Depth/ m	Findings
Trench 1		2.96	1.84	0.64	
1/001	Portland stone slabs	2.96	1.84	0.05	
1/002	Bedding layer for 1/001	2.96	1.84	0.08	
1/003	Fill sealing 1/007 and 1/004	2.96	1.84	0.53	CTP
1/004	Brick lightwell	1.86	0.62	0.54	CBM sample
1/005	Brick wall of York House	2.96	0.05	0.64	
1/006	Scatter of rubble and mortar	2.96	0.40	0.25	
1/007	Brick foundation	2.96	0.35	0.18	CBM sample
1/008	Construction deposit	0.61	0.15	0.10	
1/009	Brickearth deposit?	2.96	1.84	NFE	
Trench 2		2.82	1.92	0.72	
2/001	Portland stone slabs	2.82	1.92	0.05	
2/002	Bedding layer for 2/001	2.82	1.92	0.10	
2/003	Brick wall of York House	2.82	0.05	0.72	
2/004	Intrusion for remodelling lightwell	1.40	0.40	0.72	
2/005	Concrete fill of 2/004	1.40	0.40	0.72	
2/006	Silty clay	2.82	1.92	NFE	
2/007	Brick Foundation	0.31	0.35	0.19	
2/008	Fill over structures	2.82	1.92	0.58	
2/009	Construction deposit	0.50	0.30	0.15	

APPENDIX B: OASIS Form