

**CHARLTON HOUSE, HORNFAIR ROAD, CHARLTON SE7**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF GREENWICH**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSRVATION OF CONTRACTOR'S GROUNDWORKS**

**NORTH TERRACE DISABLED ACCESS RAMP**

**SITE CODE: HFG 07**

**SITE CENTRE NGR: TQ 41538 77736**



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## 1. Introduction

This report describes archaeological observations that were made during a visit to Charlton House, Charlton SE7, on Monday 15 January 2007.

The visit took place during the course of contractor's groundworks for a new disabled access ramp, located at the northwest corner of the House and rising alongside the north terrace (Fig 1). Some brickwork and/or brick rubble had been observed within the removed ground and in the exposed sections.

## 2. Background summary

Charlton House was built between 1607 and 1612 and is regarded as one of the finest surviving Jacobean manor houses. The structure is of brick with stone decoration, comprising three storeys and cellar, and is located on high but fairly level ground at about 46m OD. The property is now owned and operated as a Community Centre by Greenwich Council.

The House itself faces west and stands on a slightly raised terrace, approximately 1m above the surrounding lawns and drive. Prior to the current works this was accessed by steps in front of the main entrance and at the northern end of the building. Elsewhere there is a sloping grassed bank between the two levels, surmounted by low yew hedge that has been temporarily removed in the area of the groundworks. The hedge itself replaced an earlier stone balustrade, constructed *circa* 1900 and of which only the base plinth and corner pillar (as seen in Fig 3) now survive.

However, the general arrangement of the raised terrace and sloping grass bank appear to have remained unchanged since the 17<sup>th</sup> century. This is reflected in a series of historic illustrations from this date up to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (*cf.* Burford, B [ed.] 2002 *Images of Charlton House. A Pictorial History*: also Charlton House – Conservation Plan).

## 3. Observations & interpretation

The contractor's groundworks had cut back into the sloping grassed bank at the northwest corner of the House, continuing along the line of the terrace some 15m to the east and for a shorter distance to the south (see Fig 2). The visible base of excavation was just below the surrounding ground level.

- 3.1 On the north side of the House the long section cut into the bank had exposed a topsoil layer some 200mm thick, overlying a lighter-coloured sandy silt with frequent brick rubble and loose mortar inclusions. This material was present to the base of the trench, and although not bottomed localised investigation suggested that it continued for at least a further 150mm. The brick fragments appeared similar to those used in the construction of the house, and the deposit itself clearly represents dump or made ground.

- 3.2** At the northwest corner of the groundworks the remains of an east-west brick wall were exposed in plan and section. A total length of 0.8m was recorded, comprising at least six courses of brickwork although the base was not determined. The upper four courses formed a wall some 340mm thick, and below this level the brickwork was stepped out to the north by up to 110mm. The bricks were red, bonded with lime mortar and once again similar to those used in the construction of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century House.

The deposits visible in section on either side of the wall were quite different. To the north was the mixed sandy silt with frequent brick and mortar rubble that is described above (3.1). However, to the south was a clean mid brown sand/silt with frequent pebbles but almost no other inclusions that probably represents redeposited natural.

- 3.3** A small area at the southern limit of the groundworks was also briefly examined. To the east the exposed surface and section appeared to be a continuation of the probable redeposited natural noted above. However, to the west this was broken by a darker, more friable material, which then became slightly lighter and more mixed. It is *possible* that this represents a further wall line, at right angles to the extant brick base and wholly robbed out.

- 3.4** The observations indicate that the terrace on which Charlton House stands was originally retained by a continuous brick wall. The east-west section of wall is well preserved, with the clean deposit to the south representing the contemporary build-up of the terrace (probably with material excavated during construction of the House foundations and cellars). To the north the mixed ground with its frequent brick rubble probably dates to the demolition of the standing wall, and forms the base for the subsequent sloping bank.

The evidence for a robbed wall further to the south is very limited. However, it is likely that a wall did exist in this area and that it continued along the frontage of the House, though it may not have been removed at the same time as the northern wall. Inspection of any future groundworks that cut into or cross the line of the bank would clearly help to resolve this question.

#### **4. Acknowledgements**

The archaeological visit and report were commissioned on behalf of Greenwich Council by Mr Geoff Pearce of the Property Services Division.

Mr Pearce also provided a range of background information on the history of the House, and took the photographs that appear as Figures 3 and 4 of this report.

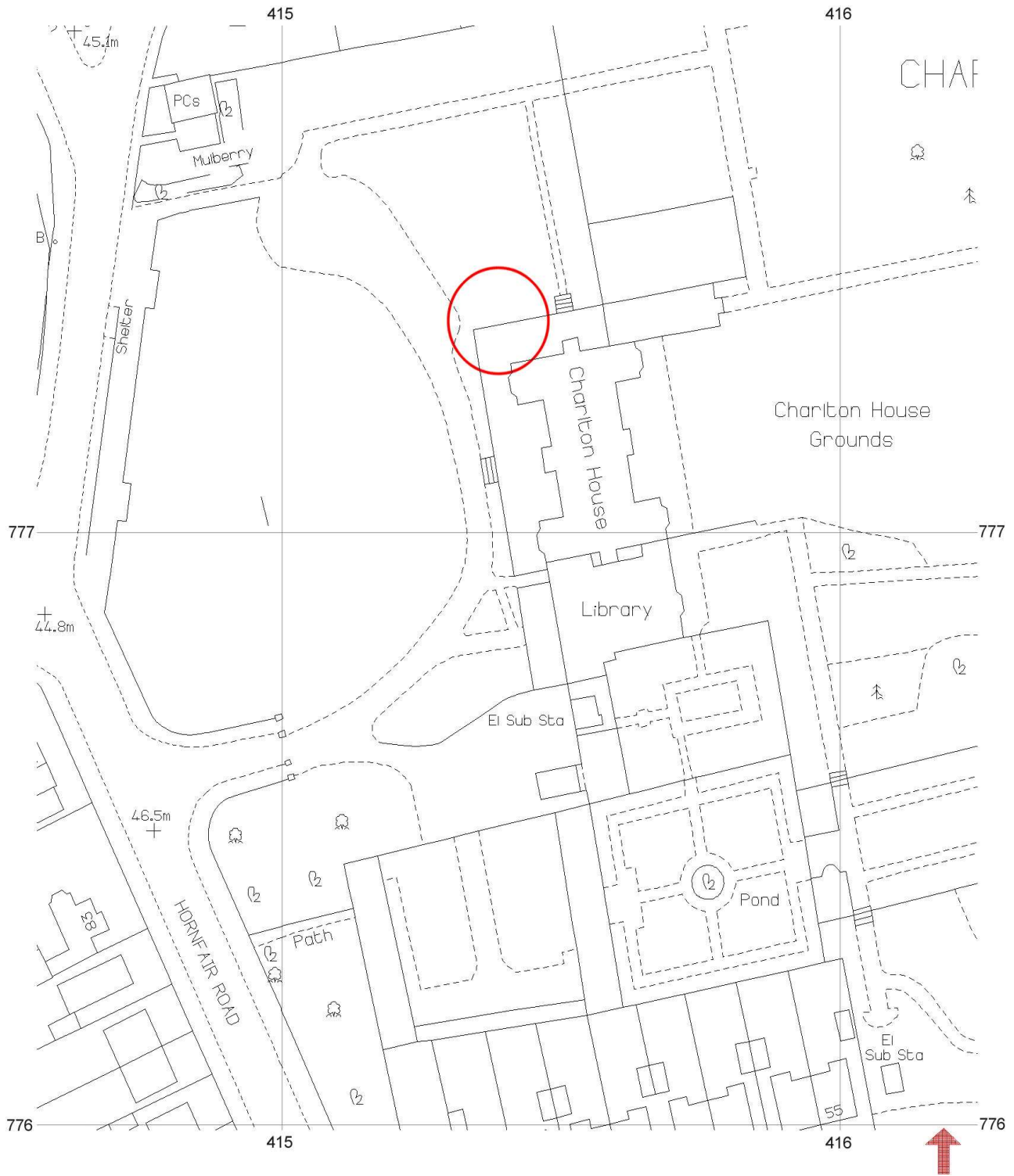


Fig 1 General location of groundworks in relation to the 2007 Ordnance Survey map

Map base provided by Greenwich Council & reproduced with the permission of the Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of HMSO ©Crown Copyright 2007. All rights reserved. Compass Archaeology Ltd., licence no. AL 100031317

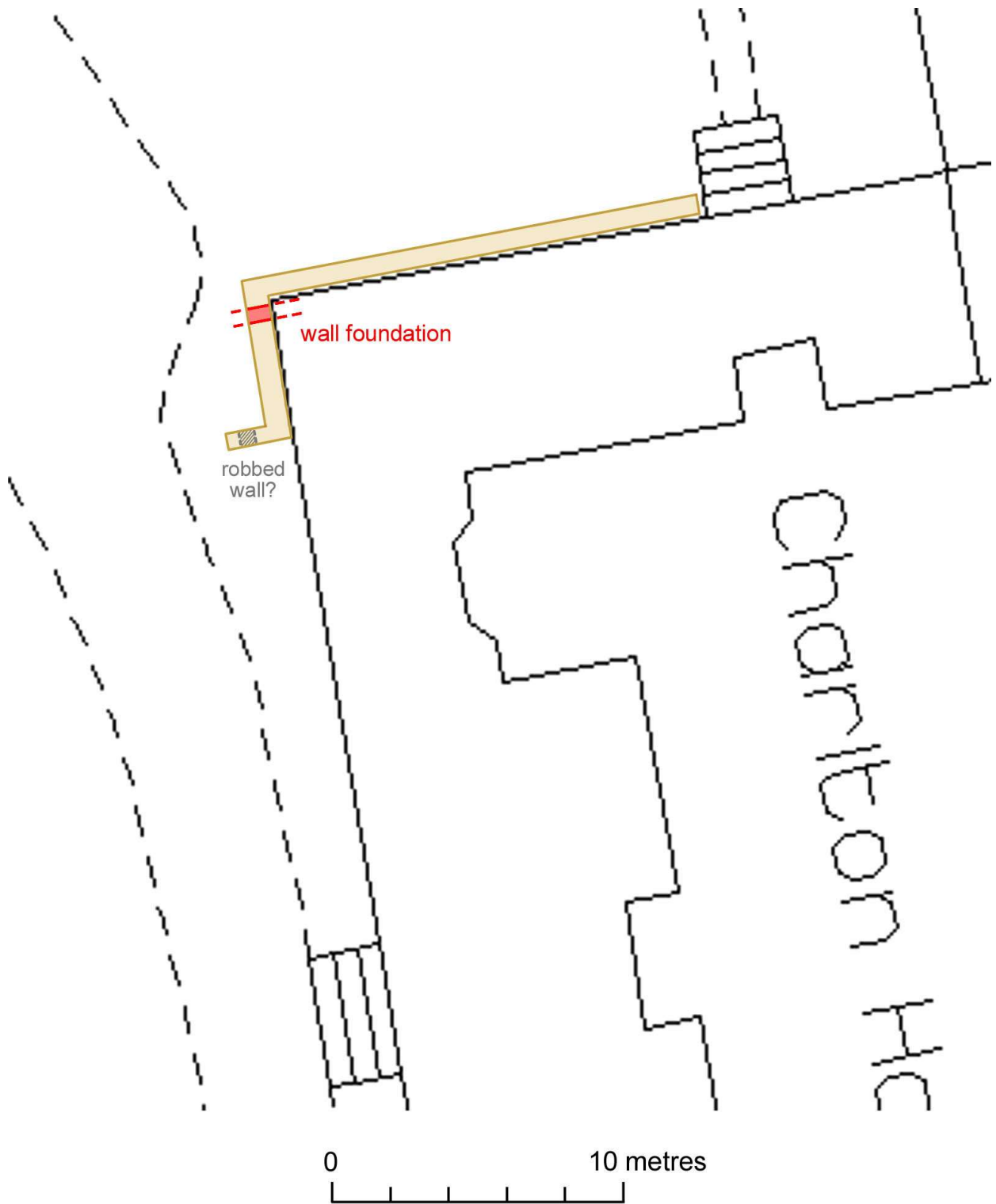


Fig 2 1:200 plan based on an enlargement of the OS map (Fig 1), showing the approximate area of open groundworks plus the locations of the east-west brick wall base and the possible north-south wall trench



Fig 3 General view of the site area looking northeast, with the exposed brick wall base in the foreground

*Photo by Geoff Pearce, Property Services Division, Greenwich Council*



Fig 4 Detailed view of the brick wall base and adjacent deposits

*Photo by Geoff Pearce, Property Services Division, Greenwich Council*



## Appendix I. OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: England

Printable version

OASIS ID: compassa1-23347

### Project details

Project name	Charlton House
Short description of the project	Observation during groundworks for a disabled access ramp at the northwest corner of this early 17th century house. Excavation into the raised terrace on which the House stands revealed the remains of an original east-west retaining wall. This was of brick with at least six courses surviving, and was 340mm thick stepping out to 450mm+ at base. Adjacent deposits to the south represent contemporary infill to construct the terrace, whilst those to the north probably date to the demolition of the wall in the ?later 17th century. Natural deposits were not exposed.
Project dates	Start: 15-01-2007 End: 15-01-2007
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	HFG07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Current Land use	Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings
Monument type	BRICKWORK Post Medieval

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON GREENWICH GREENWICH Charlton House, Hornfair Road, Charlton
Postcode	SE7
Study area	13.50 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 41538 77736 51.4803412196 0.03849471923590 51 28 49 N 000 02 18 E Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Compass Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Property Services Division
Project director/manager	Geoff Potter
Type of sponsor/funding body	Borough Council

### Project archives

Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London archive
Digital Archive ID	HFG07
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London Archive
Paper Archive ID	HFG07
Paper Media available	'Plan', 'Report'

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Charlton House, Hornfair Road, Charlton SE7. Observation of contractor's groundworks, N Terrace disabled access ramp
Date	2007
Issuer or publisher	Compass Archaeology
Description	10 page spiral bound in-house report
Entered by	Geoff Potter (mail@compassarchaeology.co.uk)
Entered on	5 February 2007

## **Appendix II. *London Archaeologist* publication summary**

Charlton House, Hornfair Road, Charlton SE7. TQ 41538 77736. CA (Geoff Potter). Observation. January 2007. London Borough of Greenwich. HFG 07.

### **Summary**

Observation was made during groundworks for a disabled access ramp at the northwest corner of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century House.

Excavation into the raised bank on which the House stands revealed the remains of an original east-west brick retaining wall, of at least six courses and 340 to 450mm thick. Deposits to the south represent contemporary infill to construct the bank, whilst those to the north probably date to the demolition of the wall in the ?later 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Undisturbed natural deposits were not exposed.