

**55 Baker Street
London W1**

City of Westminster

An archaeological watching brief

National Grid Reference: 528000 181600

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Summary (non-technical)

This report has been commissioned by DP9, on behalf of their client London and Regional Property Fund, in order to record and assess the results of a watching brief carried out at 55 Baker Street.

Groundworks on the Rodmarton Street frontage were monitored between June and August 2006 during the development works at the former Michael House.

Archaeological deposits were recorded in three trenches. Natural gravel was observed at approximately 22.3m OD, and the highest survival of archaeological deposits occurred at approximately 22.9m OD.

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Fig 7 The trenches and walls overlain on the OS map of 1870.

1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The watching brief took place at 55 Baker Street, hereafter called 'the site'. The site is bounded by Baker Street to the east, Rodmarton Street to the west, Blandford Street to the south and Dorset Street to the north (see Fig). The centre of the site is at OS National Grid Reference 528000 181600. The ground floor of the building, from which all measurements were taken, lies at 25.00m above Ordnance Datum. This lies some 0.50m higher than the ground level of Rodmarton Street, adjacent to the groundworks. The site code is BKQ 05.

A desk top *Archaeological impact assessment* was previously prepared by MoLAS, which covers the whole area of the site (Cowan 2003). This document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site, and the initial assessment of its archaeological potential.

A field evaluation was also carried out by MoLAS between August and September 2005 and an *Evaluation report* written on the results (Howell 2005). This document, and the previous *Assessment*, informed the design (*Method Statement*) for the watching brief which was eventually carried out (Malcolm 2006). Only the area of the site along the Rodmarton Street frontage was monitored during the watching brief; the field evaluation had demonstrated that there was no archaeological survival within the footprint of the former Michael House building.

A small trench towards the northern end of the Rodmarton Street frontage was examined in March 2006. This only revealed 0.7m modern debris below the concrete slab. In May 2006 Trench 1 was recorded as the thin slot for sheet piling. Ground reduction in Trench 2 was recorded in June 2006. Excavation within Trench 3 was monitored in August 2006.

1.2 The planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Method Statement* which formed the project design for the watching brief (Malcolm 2006, Section 1.2).

1.3 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by DP9 and produced by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 2001).

The purpose of the watching brief was to determine whether archaeological remains or features were present on the site and, if so, to record the nature and extent of such remains. A number of more site-specific research aims and objectives were

established in the preceding *Method Statement* (Malcolm 2006, Section 2.2), and are outlined in the following section.

The purpose of the present report is to analyse the results of the watching brief against the original research aims, and to suggest what further work, including analysis or publication (if any), should now take place.

1.4 Aims and objectives

The following research aims and objectives were established in the *Method Statement* for the watching brief (Section 2.2):

- Do any remains for the 18th/19th-century buildings, especially those associated with the Life Guards stables, survive close to Rodmarton Street?
- If such remains do survive can they be dated, and their function/use determined from their structure, or associated artefacts?
- If any earlier remains are encountered during the watching brief, can they be dated and an interpretation arrived at from their nature?

All research is undertaken within the priorities established in the Museum of London's *A research framework for London Archaeology*, 2002.

2 The watching brief

2.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and recording during the watching brief was done in accordance with the *Method Statement* (Malcolm 2006) and the MoLAS Archaeological Site Manual (MoLAS, 1994).

The slab/ground was broken out and cleared by contractors under MoLAS observation. Trenches were excavated by machine by the contractors, and monitored by MoLAS personnel.

The locations of the areas of excavation were recorded by the MoLAS site archaeologist offsetting from adjacent standing walls and plotted on to an OS grid.

The heights of observations and/or archaeological remains were recorded relative to the ground floor of the existing building which lies at 25.01m above Ordnance Datum.¹ Measurements down from this surface were sufficient to record the limited remains encountered.

Where relevant, sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20; numbered contexts were allocated where appropriate.

The site has produced: 1 trench location plan; 23 context records and four 1:20 drawings. A few bricks were retained for dating by MoLAS specialists and then discarded.

The site records can be found under the site code BKQ05 in the MoL archive.

¹ As supplied by site engineers.

2.2 Results of the watching brief

In total, three separate interventions (trenches) were made for the purposes of reducing the ground to basement level. These have been numbered Trenches 1 to 3 consecutively. There follows a brief description of the archaeological deposits as recorded.

For all trench locations see Fig 2

2.2.1 Watching brief trench 1

<i>Watching brief trench 1</i>	
Location	Northernmost trench
Dimensions	0.5m by 8.3m
Modern ground level/top of slab	24.5m OD
Base of surface slab	(0.3m thick)
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	1.1m
Level of base of deposits observed	23.4m OD
Natural observed	N/A

Trench 1 in effect comprised only the northern part of the dig for the insertion of the sheet piling in the north-west part of the ‘trench’ area (Fig 3).

The ground surface, at 24.5m OD, comprised 0.4m of concrete. The bulk of the trench, 1m deep, contained mixed silts and rubble, but four brick walls were recorded. At the northern end was an east-west wall [19] which returned to the north as [20]. These two walls appeared to enclose some sort of refuse pit as the fill [21] contained a lot of ash, oyster and charcoal. Only part of the pit was exposed within the trench.

Further south within the trench were two further east-west walls, [22] and [23]. All the walls were of similar early 19th century build.

2.2.2 Watching brief trench 2

<i>Watching brief trench 2</i>	
Location	Central trench
Dimensions	7 by 22.5
Modern ground level/top of slab	24.5m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	22.3m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	0.3m
Level of base of deposits observed	22m OD
Natural observed	22.3m OD

Within this trench was revealed some 2m of modern rubble fill over a lower concrete slab at 22.5m OD which sealed archaeological and natural deposits. In the northern part of the trench there was a north-south aligned brick wall [8]. This was 0.36m wide, the bricks were in a dark red mottled fabric measuring 220 by 92 by 65mm, set in an off white mortar containing lime chips. The wall appeared to be founded at 22.3m OD, although there was a trace of a construction backfill on its eastern side [9], there were no associated finds and the base of the wall did not have any obvious corbelling, although another stretch farther to the south did reveal one course of corbelling on both sides. Near the centre of the trench, the wall was seen to turn westwards. This return was only seen for about a metre and its full extent westwards is not known. The wall appeared parallel to the line of the existing building, and therefore to Rodmarton Street, and was 3.15m west of the line of the west side of the superstructure to 55 Baker Street. The wall was of early 19th century date.

Running parallel to the north-south stretch of wall, about 0.15m to the west was a brick culvert [10]. This comprised two walls with a brick base and slightly arched top. Internally it measured 0.3m across and 0.2m in height. The brick and mortar being clearly the same type as used in the adjacent wall. Over the base of the drain was a 40 – 50mm thick deposit of organic black fill [11]. Areas of this were examined but revealed no artefacts. Above this material was a rubble fill suggesting that the drain had been out of use for some time.

This drain appears to have been founded slightly below the adjacent brick wall. It is presumed that it lay within – or below – the building represented by wall [8]. Due to the nature of the machining the drain was not seen at the southern corner of the wall, so it is not known if it continued south, or turned west with the wall. Modern disturbance to the south had removed any similar remains.

Natural coarse orange gravel [1] was recorded at an average of 22.3 – 22.4m OD.

The southern part of this trench had been truncated to a greater depth. No second concrete slab was revealed and modern fills were approximately 3m deep.

2.2.3 Watching brief trench 3

<i>Watching brief trench 3</i>	
Location	Southernmost trench
Dimensions	7 by 22.5
Modern ground level/top of slab	c 24.5m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	22.9m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	1m
Level of base of deposits observed	21.9m OD
Natural observed	21.9m OD

Archaeological deposits were only seen in the northern part of this ‘trench’, where brick walls and a small section of in situ deposits were recorded. The uppermost 2.12m however, comprised modern rubble fills. There were no clear stratigraphic relationships and it was difficult to establish exact sequence of development.

On typological grounds the earliest wall appeared to be a short 0.24m wide north-south wall [14] that was founded on a concrete ground beam at 21.96m OD. Toothed into its west side was a crude east-west wall of yellow stock brick [15] that was founded over a deposit of gravel at 22.32m OD, although this may have been redeposited. Abutting the east side of wall [14] was a 0.47m thick red brick wall with an eastern spur.

In the north-east corner of the trench a small area of horizontally stratified deposits survived in the south facing baulk. Here, natural gravel [1] was recorded at 21.91m OD. This was truncated by a 0.26m thick layer of redeposited light grey clay [18]. Over this was a 0.24m thick layer of mixed silt [17]. Sealing this was a 0.17m thick layer of clinker [16] that was truncated by modern rubble fills at 22.58m OD.

Although the walls were of different builds it was clear that they had formed a series of contemporary structures. The layers in section did not have any direct relationship to the walls and appeared to be dump layers. There was no evidence of any associated surfaces and no artefacts were found. Since even the earliest wall in the stratigraphic sequence was founded upon a concrete ground beam, all the features recorded in this trench were relatively modern in date.

2.3 Conclusions

There was no indication that any of the brickwork predated the 19th century. Map regression reveals that the remains were probably associated with the backs of buildings along the east side of Gloucester Mews, the predecessor of Rodmarton Street. The walls within Trench 1 may be related to the buildings facing on to Dorset Street and the reentrant in the east side of the Mews. The pit at the northern end was almost certainly a brick lined rubbish or cess pit in a back yard or garden.

The remains in Trench 2 may have been associated with the buildings where the Mews kinked westwards, though they did not match the map evidence exactly. The walls probably represented the south-east corner of a building with an internal drain.

The remains in Trench 3 were less homogenous and perhaps represented a continuous development. They could not however, be clearly identified with properties on 19th century maps, although the construction was clearly of 19th century date and must be related to the houses and yards at the corner of King Street (now Blandford Street) and Gloucester Mews.

There was no trace of any former ground surfaces, which had been truncated either in the 19th century or during the construction of the present building. The former buildings represented by the archaeological remains had been thoroughly demolished and there was no indication of space or function. Nothing, however, in the historical or cartographic record suggests that these properties were of any significance.

3 Potential of archaeology

3.1 Original research aims

- Do any remains for the 18th/19th-century buildings, especially those associated with the Life Guards stables, survive close to Rodmarton Street?

All trenches contained fragmentary brick walls of early to mid 19th century date. The remains revealed are all too far west for any association with the Life Guards stables.

- If such remains do survive can they be dated, and their function/use determined from their structure, or associated artefacts?

The walls found were almost certainly foundations. No associated surfaces were found though dump layers were recorded in Trench 3. In Trench 2 an associated drain was recorded. No artefacts other than brick samples were found. The walls are associated with ?domestic buildings along the east side of Gloucester Mews East, the predecessor of Rodmarton Street. Apart from walls at the northern end, only near, rather than exact matches can be made from map regression.

- If any earlier remains are encountered during the watching brief, can they be dated and an interpretation arrived at from their nature?

The aforementioned walls were founded within natural gravels. No other archaeological remains were present in the areas monitored.

3.2 Significance of the data

Whilst the archaeological remains are of some minor local significance there is nothing to suggest that they are of regional or national importance. The remains uncovered confirm the presence of residential buildings recorded on 19th century maps.

4 Publication and archiving

Information on the results of the excavation will be made publicly available by means of a database in digital form, to permit inclusion of the site data in any future academic researches into the development of London.

The site archive containing original records and finds will be stored in accordance with the terms of the *Method Statement* (Malcolm 2006) with the Museum of London within 12 months of the end of the excavation.

In view of the limited potential of the material (Sections 3) and the relatively limited significance of the data (Section 3.2) it is suggested that a short note on the results of the watching brief should appear in the annual round up of the *London Archaeologist*

5 Acknowledgements

The Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) would like to thank the DP9 for commissioning this report. In particular we should like to thank Mr Sam Hine and Messrs Peter Atkins and Peter Collins from the construction team.

MoLAS staff who variously monitored the groundworks included Portia Askew, Ian Blair and the author. Terence Smith examined brick samples.

6 Bibliography

6.1 Site specific

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7 Appendix: List of archaeological contexts

<u>Cont.</u>	<u>Trench</u>	<u>Descr.</u>
1	2,3	natural gravel
8	2	north-south brick wall
9	2	construction cut and backfill to [8]
10	2	north-south brick culvert
11	2	fill of culvert
12	3	north-south and east-west brick wall
13	3	north-south brick wall (destroyed)
14	3	north-south brick wall
15	3	east-west brick wall
16	3	silt deposit
17	3	clay silt deposit
18	3	clay deposit
19	1	east-west brick wall
20	1	north-south brick wall
21	1	fill
22	1	east-west brick wall
23	1	east-west brick wall

8 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

8.1 OASIS ID: molas1-18923

Project details

Project name	55 Baker Street, London W1
Short description of the project	watching brief on ground reduction programme. Early 19th century wall foundations were recorded. Truncated natural gravel was observed.
Project dates	Start: 14-03-2006 End: 18-08-2006
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	BKQ05 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	WALLS Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CITY OF WESTMINSTER WESTMINSTER 55 Baker Street
Postcode	W1

Study area 180.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 28000 81600 51.5183033210 -0.154969251196 51 31 05 N
000 09 17 W Point

Height OD Min: 21.00m Max: 22.00m

Project creators

Name of Organisation MoLAS

Project brief originator Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District
Archaeologist)

Project design originator MoLAS

Project director/manager Gordon Malcolm

Project supervisor JMC Bowsher

Type of sponsor/funding Developer
body

Name of DP9
sponsor/funding body

Project archives

Physical Archive No
Exists?

Physical Archive LAARC
recipient

Physical Archive ID BKQ05

Digital Archive recipient LAARC

Digital Archive ID BKQ05

Paper Archive recipient LAARC

Paper Archive ID BKQ05

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title 55 Baker Street, London W1: An archaeological watching brief report.

Author(s)/Editor(s) Bowsher, JMC

Date 2006

Issuer or publisher MoLAS

Place of issue or London
publication

Description unpublished client report

Entered by Julian Bowsher (JBowsher@museumoflondon.org.uk)

Entered on 5 October 2006



Fig 1 Site location



Fig 2 Trench location

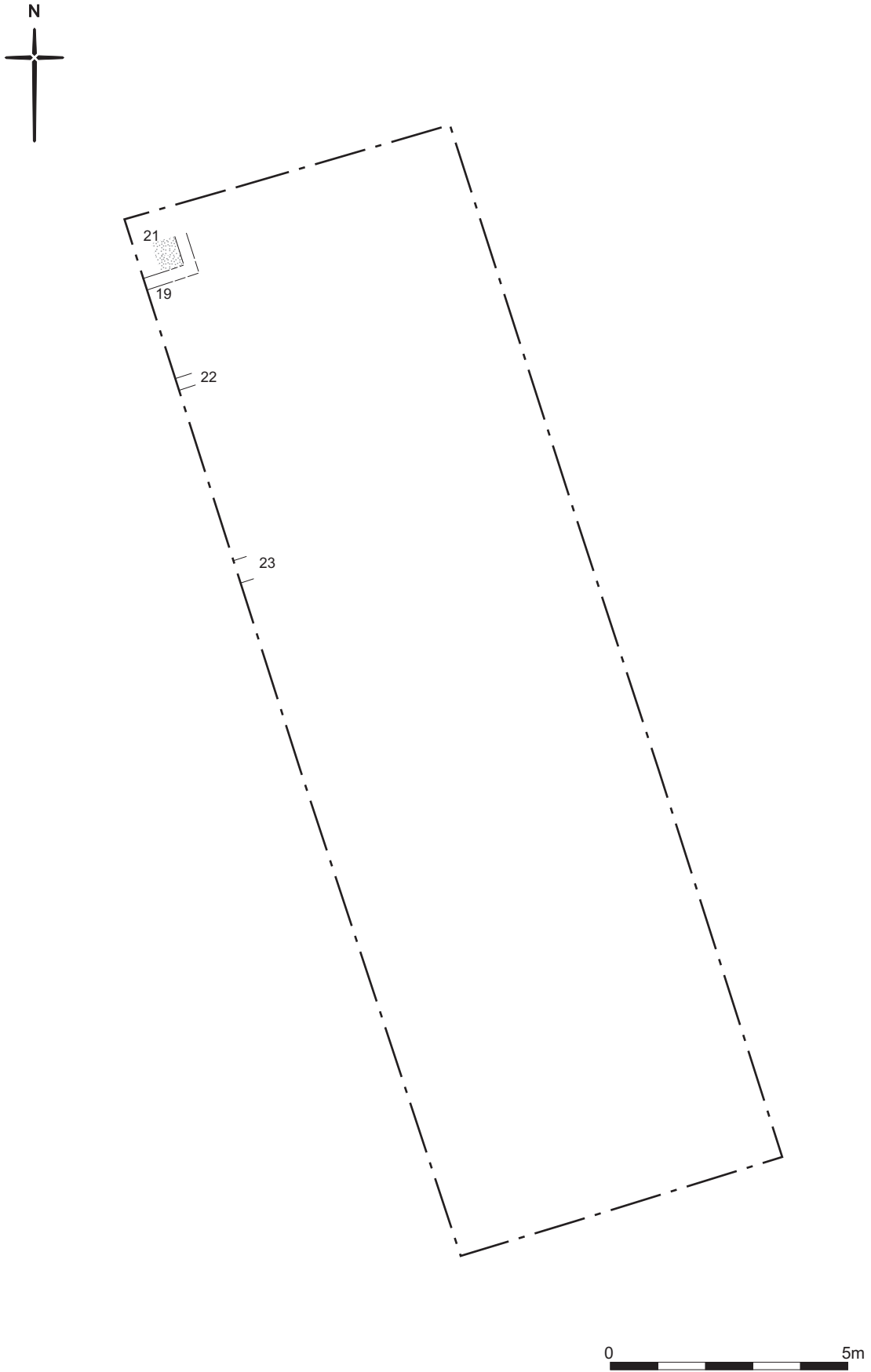


Fig 3 Trench 1 plan

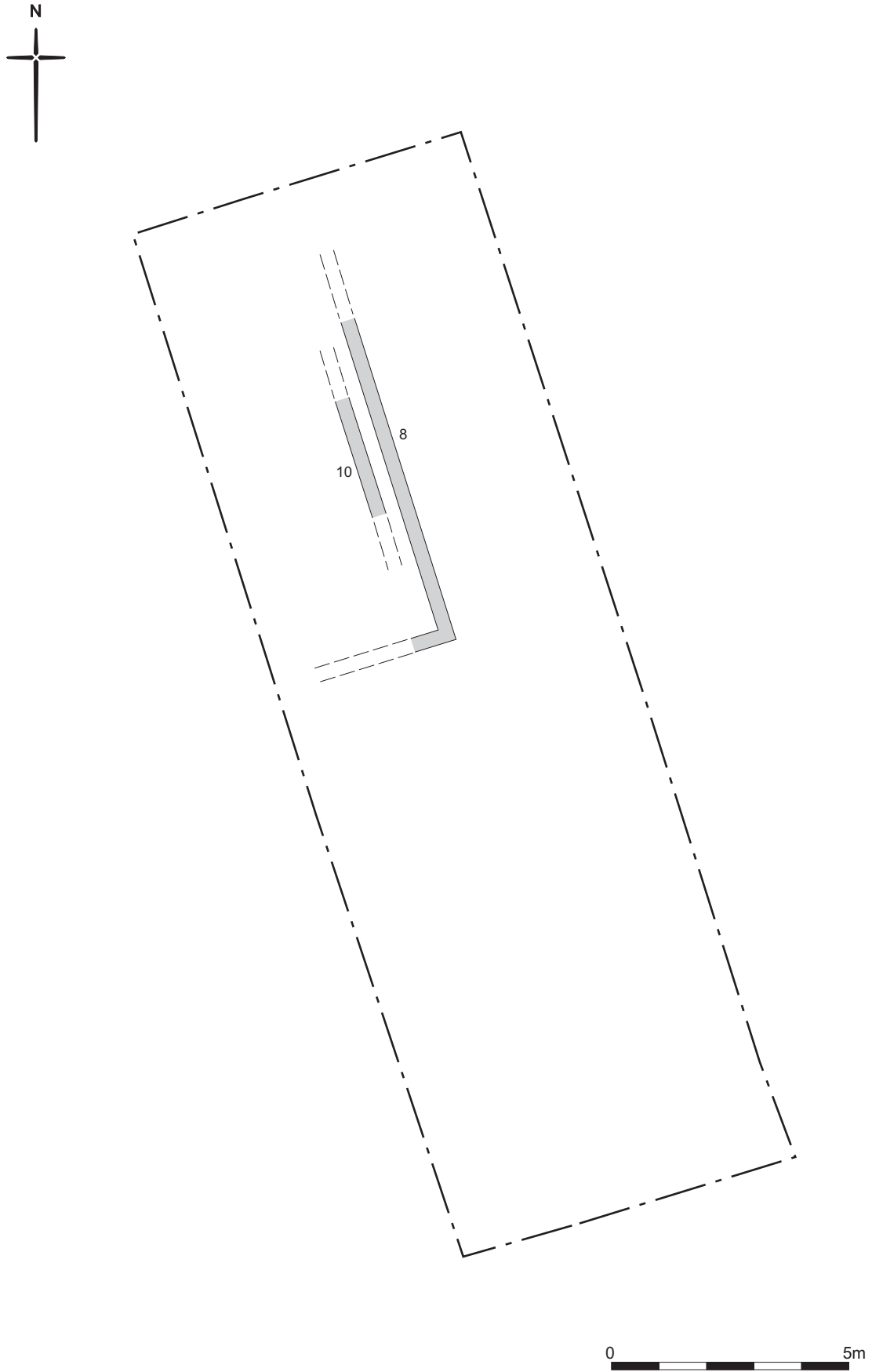


Fig 4 Trench 2 plan

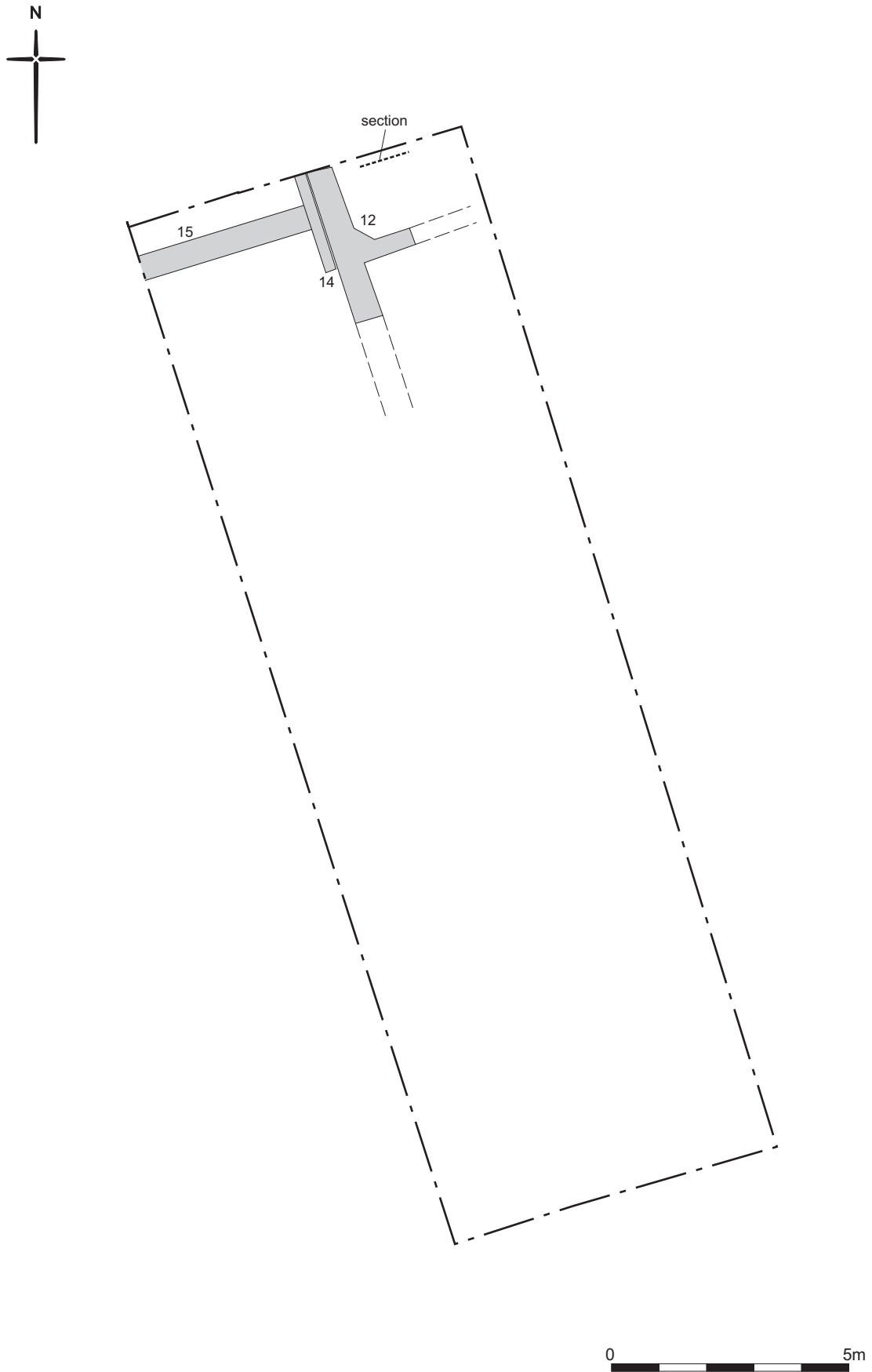


Fig 5 Trench 3 plan

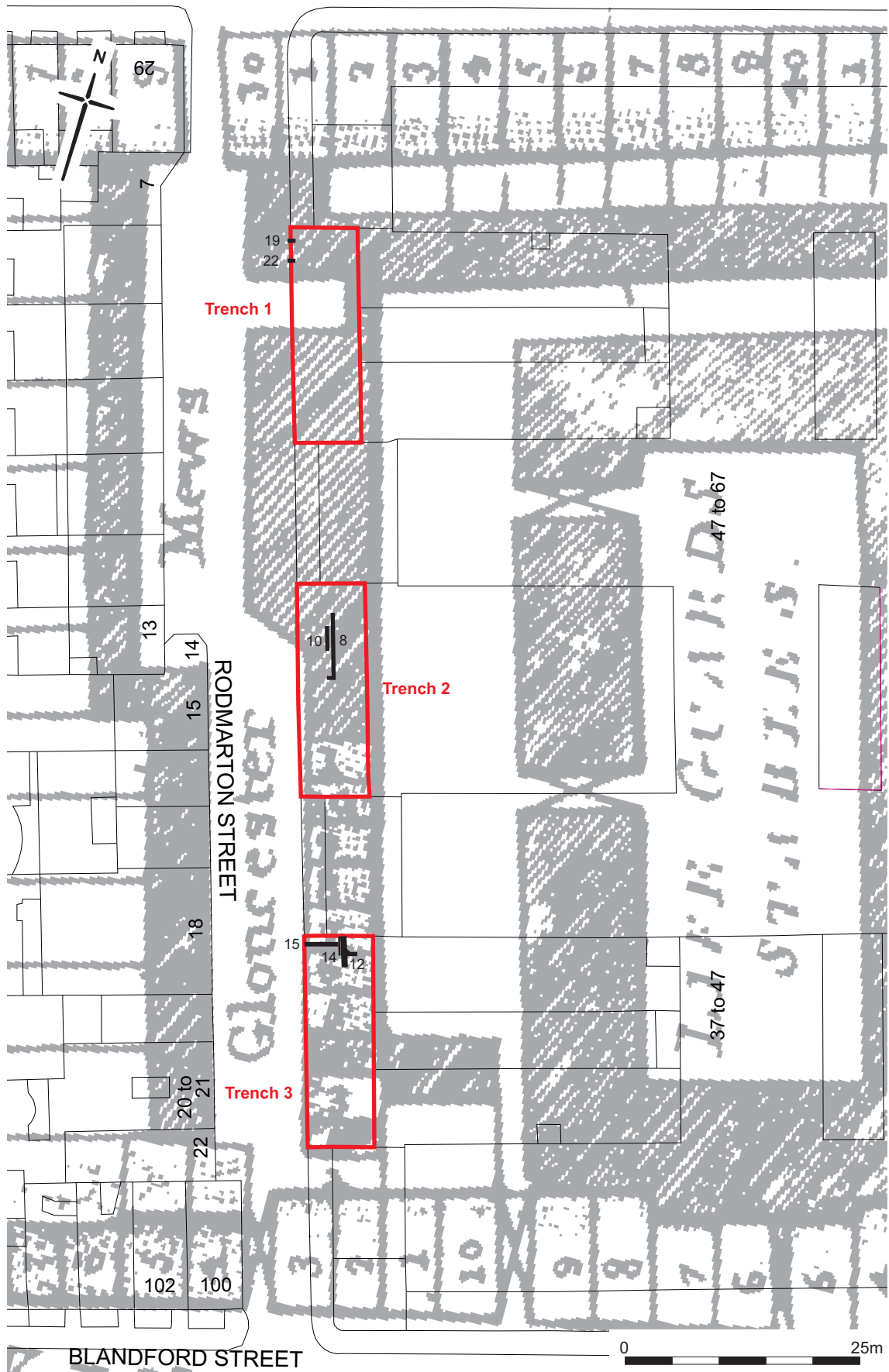


Fig 6 The trenches and walls overlain on Horwood's map of 1800

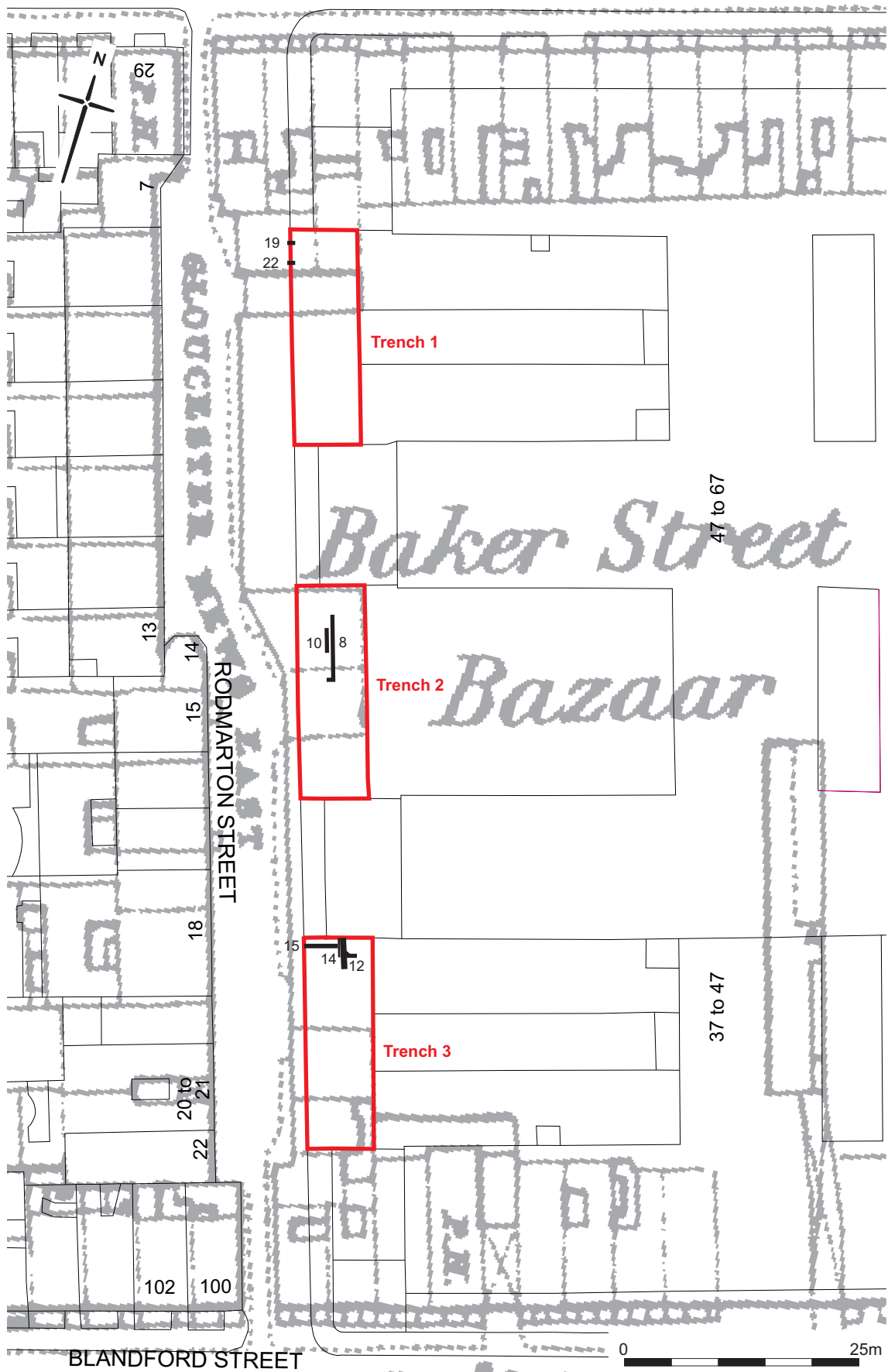


Fig 7 The trenches and walls overlain on the OS map of 1870