

28 KINGS MEWS London WC1

London Borough of Camden

Report on an archaeological evaluation

February 2017



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London Borough of Camden

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Report on archaeological evaluation

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Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by MOLA at 28 Kings Mews, London WC1. The report was commissioned from MOLA by FT Architects on behalf of the client Kingsettle Trust.

In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation a single evaluation trench was excavated on the site between 11/01/17 and 17/01/17.

The earliest deposits recorded are provisionally interpreted as being associated with quarrying activity, although this is undated. The horizontal stratigraphy above appears to represent some initial agricultural activity of indeterminate date, followed by post-medieval external yard or garden activity in the form of dumps, with some evidence for crude surfaces or pathways and to a lesser extent, garden soil. A brick-lined soakaway presumably relates to one of the properties shown on 18th-/19th-century maps as fronting onto Kings Mews or the open space that preceded it.

The results of the evaluation suggest that the depth of archaeological deposits where they survive on the site is likely to be between 1.55m (horizontal stratigraphy), extending to 2.9m or more in the localised areas of deeper cut features. Horizontal stratigraphy is likely to represent post-medieval external activity in the yards and gardens of 18th-/19th-century properties fronting on to Kings Mews and the open space that preceded it. Cut features may include post-medieval pits, brick structures such as soakaways, wells, cess pits and cellars and features representing earlier quarrying of uncertain date. Modern disturbance appears to be relatively limited and in the form of localised demolition activity prior to construction of the existing 1950s building and construction of the foundations themselves.

The report concludes that post-medieval and to a lesser extent potentially earlier undated archaeological remains may be impacted by the redevelopment. The newly proposed 4m deep basement would entail the removal of any surviving deposits and features within its footprint. The surviving remains are however considered to be of limited local significance.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was carried out by MOLA at 28 Kings Mews, London WC1 ('the site') between 11/01/17 and 17/01/17 (see *Fig 1*). This document is the Report on that work.
- 1.1.2 A written *Archaeological Assessment* was previously prepared, which covered the whole area of the site (MOLA 2013). This document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site, and the initial interpretation of its archaeological potential.

1.2 Planning background

- 1.2.1 The legislative and Planning framework in which the evaluation took place was fully set out in the *Archaeological impact assessment* (MOLA 2013, section 9) and the *Written Scheme of Investigation* which formed the project design for the evaluation (MOLA 2016, section 1.2).
- 1.2.2 The evaluation was carried out to fulfil a condition attached to the Planning Consent given by the London Borough of Camden (Consent reference 2013/4840/P; Condition number 11).

1.3 Scope of the evaluation

- 1.3.1 Evaluation is defined by Historic England as intended to provide information about the archaeological resource in order to contribute to the:
 - 1.3.2 - formulation of an appropriate response or mitigation strategy to planning applications or other proposals which may adversely affect such archaeological remains, or enhance them; and/or
 - 1.3.3 - formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigations within a programme of research
- 1.3.4 An archaeological evaluation is a limited fieldwork exercise designed to test the conclusions of preliminary desk based work. It is not the same as full excavation.
- 1.3.5 The evaluation was carried out within the terms of the relevant Standard for evaluation specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA, 2014).
- 1.3.6 All work has been undertaken within the research priorities established in the Museum of London's A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002.
- 1.3.7 All work was undertaken within research aims and objectives established in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* for the evaluation (Section 2.2)

2 Topographical and historical background

A detailed description of the geology, archaeology and history of the site was provided in the earlier Historic Environment Assessment (MOLA 2013). A brief resume of the archaeological potential of the site is provided here:

2.1 Topography

- 2.1.1 The site lies on Lynch Hill Terrace gravels (British Geological Survey sheet 256), just to the south of the boundary between the Lynch Hill Gravels (to the south) and the Hackney Gravels (to the north), overlying London Clay at depth. River alluvium associated with the River Fleet forms an arc to the east of the site, starting c 160m to the north-east and passing c 480m to the east of the site.
- 2.1.2 Based on current knowledge, the predicted level of natural geology within the site is as follows:
- Current ground level lies at c 20.5m OD;
 - the top of natural gravel, possibly untruncated, has been recorded close to the site at c 3.5-4.0m below ground level (bgl), ie c 17.0-17.6m OD.

2.2 Archaeology

- 2.2.1 *The site has a low potential to contain archaeological remains dated to the prehistoric period.* The site is located on the well-drained Lynch Hill and Hackney gravel terrace and in the prehistoric period was close to the predictable resources of the River Fleet, which would have made the area attractive for settlement. Despite this, there is no evidence for prehistoric activity within the study area. Although the Lynch Hill gravels are noted for occasional in situ Palaeolithic artefacts within the fine-grained interglacial lenses this is very rare, and no such finds have been recorded in the study area.
- 2.2.2 *The site has a moderate potential to contain archaeological remains dated to the Roman period.* In the area of the site a Roman road, possibly of pre-Roman origin, ran from Old Ford (in the east), by-passed London and then joined the Roman Silchester road to the west (VCH *Middlesex* i, 1969, 64–74). Two branches of this route have been inferred from past excavations: one followed Holborn c 350m to the south, and the other c 125m south of the site and may exhibit evidence of Roman roadside activity, such as ditches or roadside buildings. present. In addition, Roman agricultural features (such as field ditches) could be present beside the roadways as could quarry pits, to provide for the frequent repair/re-metalling of the nearby roads.
- 2.2.3 Roman law required the dead to be buried outside the city perimeter. Cemeteries were established alongside roads and were in use from the 1st to the 4th centuries AD. The Greater London Historic Environment Record (GLHER) identifies two Roman cremation burial urns found on Gray's Inn Road possibly at the Holborn end (GLHER 181781. There is potential in this area for Roman funerary evidence or other artefacts, although there is no clear evidence for an extensive cemetery alongside the section of the road that runs south the site. This may be a consequence of the destruction of burials without record during successive periods of development, but it is possible that the burials may have been more scattered, either focused on the road frontages, or set within a number of smaller cemetery enclosures.
- 2.2.4 *The site has a low potential to contain archaeological remains dated to the Saxon period.* During the early medieval (Saxon) period the site lay to the north-east of the

area normally associated with *Lundenwic* and is likely to have been in marginal land outside the town and no archaeological remains from the Saxon period have been recorded in the immediate vicinity of the site.

- 2.2.5 *The site has a moderate potential to contain archaeological remains dated to the later medieval period.* Archaeological excavation in 2013 adjacent to the site to the east at 39-45 Gray's Inn Road (site code GRY13) recorded a pit of 13th to 14th-century date at the south of this site (Coombe P and Grew F 2015, 49). This would place the pit relatively close to the 28 Kings Mews boundary and similar features or other evidence of later medieval activity may be present on the site. The site was most probably open ground in this period, and remains of agricultural features such as ditches or evidence of pitting similar to that found at 39-45 Gray's Inn Road may be present.
- 2.2.6 *The site has a moderate to high potential to contain archaeological remains dated to the post-medieval period.* Historic mapping suggests the site was most probably located in open ground until the early 18th century. Strype's 1720 map of St Andrew's Holborn parish (see front cover) shows that by this date the site was part of a row of buildings fronting onto an open area (corresponding to the location of King's Mews), with gardens or yards in the eastern part of the site. Horwood's map of 1799 shows much of the area to the west of the site built up, including King's Mews. According to the map key, the building in the western part of the site was stables, presumably for the larger house fronting Gray's Inn Road. The 1872 Ordnance Survey map shows the site as one of a row of terraced houses/mews buildings with small back yards arranged back-to-back and sharing boundary walls with the houses on Gray's Inn Road. Previous excavation adjacent to the site at 39-45 Gray's Inn Road (site code GRY13) recorded a number of 18th- to 19th-century features including wells and cess/rubbish pits associated with the earlier structures on this site and there may be similar evidence or remains associated with the previous uses of the site at 28 Kings Mews.

3 Evaluation methodology

3.1 Field methodology

- 3.1.1 A single evaluation trench c 2.15m by 2.28m was excavated in the central/eastern area of the site.
- 3.1.2 The slab/ground was broken out and cleared by contractors under MOLA supervision. The upper part of the trench was machine excavated then subsequently excavated by hand by the contractors, and monitored by a MOLA supervisor.
- 3.1.3 Archaeological excavation was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2016). Representative sections were drawn, where the archaeological sequence could be observed, as shoring was lowered to maintain a safe working environment.
- 3.1.4 The trench location was plotted in relation to the existing walls of the property using an 'offset methodology' and subsequently tied to the OS grid by MOLA Geomatics.
- 3.1.5 Where referenced in this report (eg '13.45m OD'), levels relate to OS Ordnance Datum and were calculated by measuring down from the existing slab. The level of the slab was calculated by traverse from a survey station with a known OS value (20.56m OD), located on Mount Pleasant, east of Gray's Inn Road. This information was supplied to MOLA in relation to an earlier project.

3.2 Recording methodology

- 3.2.1 A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2016).

3.3 Site archive

Number of trench record sheets	0
Number of overall location plans	1
Number of Context (SU) sheets	37
Number of photographs	23
Number of Plan sheets	2
Number of Sections	1

4 Results of the evaluation

4.1.1 For trench location see *Fig 2*. For the trench sections see *Fig 3*.

4.2 Trench 1

Location	Central/eastern part of site
Dimensions	2.15m by 2.28m by 3.28m max depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	21.44m OD
Base of modern slab & make-up	21.25m m OD
Depth of archaeological stratigraphy above natural (if any)	1.55m of horizontal stratigraphy; up to 2.9m in places including depth of cut features.
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	18.81m OD
Top of surviving natural observed at	18.81m OD
Level of base of trench	18.14m OD

- 4.2.1 The following deposits were recorded in section only, over limited areas where the shoring of the trench edges permitted.
- 4.2.2 Natural deposits were recorded in the form of sands and gravels [36] at a maximum height of 18.81m OD and confirmed to a depth of c 0.65m further in a small sondage. It is noted that at this level, there was some ingress of ground water into the trench. The upper zone of the gravels was extremely compacted and to some extent the surface was mixed with the overlying 0.44m thick deposit [30], a stiff, mottled pale grey/orange-brown clay with occasional flecks of dark red staining and tiny pebbles. Directly above was [15], another stiffly compacted deposit of brownish grey silty clay with dark red-brown flecking, up to 0.55m thick. The latter had a diffuse boundary with [14] above: 0.12m of grey-brown clay, which was very similar in texture, but contained inclusions in the form of moderate charcoal flecks occasional small flecks of shell and ceramic building material and pebbles. This may represent disturbance or reworking of the underlying deposit – perhaps as a result of agricultural activity. Both [30] and [15] were relatively sterile, but did not have the appearance of natural deposits that might be anticipated in this area and it is possible that they represent the infilling of a large feature such as a quarry pit, the edges of which may have been some distance beyond the limits of the evaluation trench.
- 4.2.3 Directly above [14] was a single deposit, recorded in two discrete areas ([13] in the north-east corner of the trench at 20.08m OD and [29] in the south-east at 20.01m OD): this stiffly compacted clay-silt contained significantly more occupation and demolition debris (oyster shell, charcoal, peg tile) than other deposits above and below and may represent a dump of waste material. In addition, deposit [13] produced a small amount of animal bone, including a complete sheep metatarsal with tool marks suggesting removal of the hide. This deposit was sealed by [12], a dark grey/black fine clay-silt that was relatively inclusion-free, containing only occasional very small flecks of ceramic building material; it was up to 0.18m thick, with the surface at 20.21m OD and was recorded further south as [28]; it was possibly a garden soil.
- 4.2.4 In the north-east corner of the trench, two thin lenses of orange brown clay-silt [11] lay directly above [12] and were in turn sealed by [10], mid-brown clay-silt up to 0.09m thick at 20.26m OD, below a clayey brickearth consolidation dump [9] at 20.44m OD (which was also recorded to the south as [27]). Above this, a further

external dump [8] containing frequent fragments of chalk and ceramic building material may have formed the base for an external surface or pathway of compacted gravel [7] at 20.74m OD. Directly above, a 0.13m thick deposit of fine, dark grey clay silt containing pebbles, ceramic building material, a small chalk fragment and very occasional decayed wood fragments [6] may represent the disuse of the surface. It was sealed by [5], a levelling spread of demolition debris (mortar, chalk and brick fragments in a matrix of grey sandy silt).

- 4.2.5 In the south-east corner of the trench, a slightly different sequence was observed above consolidation deposit [27]. Sealing it was a stiff clayey gravel [26] (top 20.50m OD), which lay below [25], a 0.14m thick clay-silt dump containing a small amount of occupation and demolition debris; this included a clay pipe stem, indicating a post-1580 date. Above it was a small area of horizontally laid peg-tile fragments [23], which appeared to be below [24], a 0.24m thick dump of grey-brown clay-silt with frequent small tile fragments and pebbles. It is however possible that the tiles were associated with [22] directly above - a 0.22m deep feature cut through [24] and filled with stiff clayey gravel and crushed demolition material. This feature may originally have formed the base for a structure or was perhaps a pathway. Its western extent was obscured by the trench sheeting. It was sealed at by [20], a deposit very similar to [24], but with fewer inclusions.
- 4.2.6 A thin (c 20mm) layer of charcoal-rich trample [19] at sealed both [5] and [20] at 20.96m OD and lay below [4]/[18], a mixed levelling dump containing pebbles and crushed demolition material. Above this to the south, [17], an area of brick fragments (some apparently laid horizontally) was probably the remnants of a crude (?external) brick surface or bedding layer at 21.13m OD. To the north, it was sealed by a spread of mortar-rich demolition material [3] with thin silty trample [2] above at 21.16m OD. The uppermost deposit [1] and its equivalent [16] to the south probably represented disturbed archaeological material forming a levelling deposit immediately below the concrete slab. The surface of the 0.20m thick slab was at 21.44m OD.
- 4.2.7 On the western side of the trench, part of a (presumably) rectangular brick-lined feature [34] was recorded (see *Fig 2* and *Fig 5*); its western limit lay beyond the limits of the evaluation trench. The bricks (dated 1550–1700) which had some original mortar adhering to their surfaces were clearly re-used and in this instance bonded only with grey clay-silt. Three brick-sized recesses were noted on the internal face of the southern wall. The base of the feature was unlined and lay directly above the natural gravel. The backfill consisted entirely of loose rubbly material associated with its demolition/robbing; at 20.64m OD was overlain by modern rubbly material containing concrete fragments. The brickwork had been removed above a level of 19.34m OD. It seems more likely that this feature was a soakaway, rather than a cess pit and was perhaps associated with the buildings shown in the western part of the site on Strype's map of 1720 (see front cover) and later maps.

4.3 The finds

Context	Material	Sherds/ Fragments	Period	Date	Brief Comments
0	POT	1	PM	1550-1700	One sherd of Frechen stoneware, part of a Bartmann jug
13	A.BONE	2			One is a small frag of sheep or goat tibia, no butchery marks. The second is a complete metatarsal (hind foot) of sheep (<i>Ovis aries</i>). Fully fused adult

					(animal in at least second year). Tool marks on the toe articulation suggesting removal of the hide. Good condition & measurable.
13	CBM	2	PM	1480-1800	Peg roofing tile
23	CBM	3	PM	1480-1800	2 peg tile fragments, one medieval roofing tile (possibly a nib tile)
25	CTP	1	PM	1580-1910	Stem fragment
29	CBM	2	PM	1480-1800	One fragment of peg roofing tile, one medieval roofing tile
34	CBM	1	PM	1550-1700	Brick sample. Mortar suggests used or re-used in a post-1666 structure, then used again.

Table 1 Summary of finds from KNM17

The evaluation produced only a small number of finds: these are summarised in Table 1. A single sherd of pottery was retrieved, dated 1550–1700; unfortunately this was unstratified, but is known to have come from a deposit below context [7].

4.4 The site as a whole

- 4.4.1 The single evaluation trench excavated on this site has provided a useful indication of the character and extent of surviving archaeological deposits. Aside from an area of modern disturbance in the western part of the trench, likely to be associated with demolition prior to construction of the existing building, archaeological deposits were observed immediately below the ground floor slab. Further disturbance of earlier structures can be anticipated locally in the areas of the existing foundations of 28 Kings Mews.
- 4.4.2 The earliest deposits are provisionally interpreted as being associated with quarrying activity, although this is undated. The horizontal stratigraphy above appears to represent possible agricultural activity (plough soil), again of indeterminate date, followed by post-medieval external yard or garden activity, in the form of dumps, with some evidence for crude surfaces or pathways and to a lesser extent, garden soil. The brick soakaway presumably relates to one of the properties shown on 18th-/19th-century maps as fronting onto Kings Mews or the open space that preceded it.

5 Archaeological potential

5.1 Answering original research aims

- 5.1.1 A number of broad objectives and research questions were identified for the evaluation in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (MOLA 2016).
- *What is the nature and level of natural topography?* Natural sands and gravels were recorded at 18.81m OD (probably truncated).
 - *What are the earliest deposits identified?* The earliest deposits were fairly sterile, stiffly compacted clays, directly above the natural gravels. These did not appear to represent natural deposits (and particularly those anticipated in the area). They are provisionally interpreted as local consolidation or infills of a large feature such as a quarry pit, the edges of which must be located beyond the limits of the evaluation trench.
 - *Roman cremations have been recorded the close to the site. Is there evidence for Roman activity on the site, particularly funerary activity?* There is no evidence for Roman activity on the site, although it is noted that if the earliest deposits represent quarrying activity, this is undated.
 - *The area of the site appears to be first developed by the early 18th century. What evidence is there for the post-medieval development of the site?* The horizontal stratigraphy recorded in the evaluation trench appears to represent external yard or garden activity, including dumping, possible crude surfaces or pathways and to a lesser extent, garden soil. The brick soakaway presumably relates to one of the properties shown on 18th-/19th-century maps as fronting onto Kings Mews or the open space that preceded it.
 - *What are the latest deposits identified?* The latest deposits appear to be associated with the demolition of nearby 18th-/19th-century structures pre-dating the existing building.
 - *What is the extent of modern disturbance?* Within the evaluation trench, modern disturbance was confined to the uppermost part of the western side of the trench, where concrete rubble was observed to a depth of c 20.64m OD. This overlay the demolition infill of the brick-lined feature [34]. Archaeological deposits survived directly beneath the concrete slab over much of the evaluation trench.

5.2 General discussion of potential

- 5.2.1 The evaluation has shown that the site has good potential for the survival of post-medieval horizontal stratigraphy on the site. Where observed, these deposits are external in nature and therefore limited in their significance.
- 5.2.2 There is also potential for the survival of cut features in the form of post-medieval brick structures such as soakaways, wells, cess pits and cellars. In addition, there is potential for cut features representing earlier quarrying activity of uncertain date.
- 5.2.3 Based on the results of this evaluation trench, the depth of archaeological deposits where they do survive is likely to be between 1.55m (horizontal stratigraphy) to at least 2.9m (including cut features).

5.3 Significance

- 5.3.1 The archaeological remains are of limited local significance and there is nothing to suggest that they are of regional or national importance.

5.4 Assessment of the evaluation

- 5.4.1 The size of the evaluation trench (c 7% of the total area of the site) means that a reasonable degree of confidence can be placed on the information which will provide the basis of the mitigation strategy. The depth to which the trench was excavated has allowed an adequate assessment of both surviving horizontal stratigraphy and cut features in terms of their character and extent.

6 Proposed development impact and conclusions

- 6.1.1 Taking into account the results of the single evaluation trench it appears that archaeological deposits survive to depths between 1.55m (horizontal stratigraphy) to at least 2.9m (including cut features) in those areas of the site not affected by construction of the foundations of the existing building. The majority of these appear to be post-medieval in date.
- 6.1.2 It is understood that the proposed redevelopment at the site involves the construction of a basement extending to a depth of 4m below existing ground floor slab level. The impact of this will be to remove any surviving archaeological deposits or features within the new basement footprint.
- 6.1.3 The significance of the archaeological deposits investigated and recorded is considered as low and, based on the results of the evaluation, further investigation on this small site would appear unlikely to reveal archaeological remains of greater significance.
- 6.1.4 The decision on the appropriate archaeological mitigation to the deposits revealed rests with the Local Planning Authority.

7 Acknowledgements

- 7.1.1 The author would like to thank FT Architects for commissioning the evaluation on behalf of the client, Kingsettle Trust, and the attendance contractor Knowles for their practical assistance on site during the evaluation.

8 Bibliography

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9 OASIS archaeological report form

9.1 OASIS ID: molas1-275786

Project details

Project name	28 Kings Mews, London WC1
Short description of the project	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by MOLA in 2017. The earliest deposits are provisionally interpreted as associated with quarrying activity (undated). The overlying stratigraphy comprised possible agricultural activity (plough soil) of indeterminate date, followed by post-medieval external yard or garden activity, in the form of dumps, with some evidence for crude surfaces or pathways and to a lesser extent, garden soil. A brick-lined soakaway presumably relates to one of the properties shown on 18th-/19th-century maps as fronting onto Kings Mews or the open space that preceded it. Modern slab level lies at 21.44m OD. Natural gravels were recorded at 19.29m OD (likely to be truncated).
Project dates	Start: 11-01-2017 End: 17-01-2017
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	KNM17 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial
Monument type	FIELD Uncertain
Monument type	BACKYARD Post Medieval
Monument type	SOAKAWAY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	PEG TILE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BRICK Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BARTMANN JUG Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	"Test Pits"
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CAMDEN HOLBORN 28 Kings Mews, London WC1
Postcode	WC1
Study area	69.4 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3014 8199 51.521318489468 -0.123996208584 51 31 16 N 000 07 26 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 18.73m Max: 18.81m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MOLA
Project brief originator	FT Architects
Project design originator	MOLA
Project director/manager	Derek Seeley
Project supervisor	Lesley Dunwoodie
Type of sponsor/funding body	Private developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Kingsettle Trust

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Archive ID	KNM17
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive ID	KNM17
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Archive ID	KNM17

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	28 Kings Mews, London WC1: Report on archaeological evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Dunwoodie, L

Date	2017
Issuer or publisher	MOLA
Place of issue or publication	LONDON
Description	Unpublished client report
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Entered by	Lesley Dunwoodie (ldunwoodie@mola.org.uk)
Entered on	9 February 2017

Fig 1 Site Location

Fig 2 Location of evaluation trench

Fig 3 South-east, south-west and north-west facing sections of evaluation trench

Fig 4 Archaeological deposits recorded in the north-east corner of the evaluation trench

Fig 5 Brick-lined feature [34] recorded in the western part of the trench (view looking south-east)



Fig 1 Site location

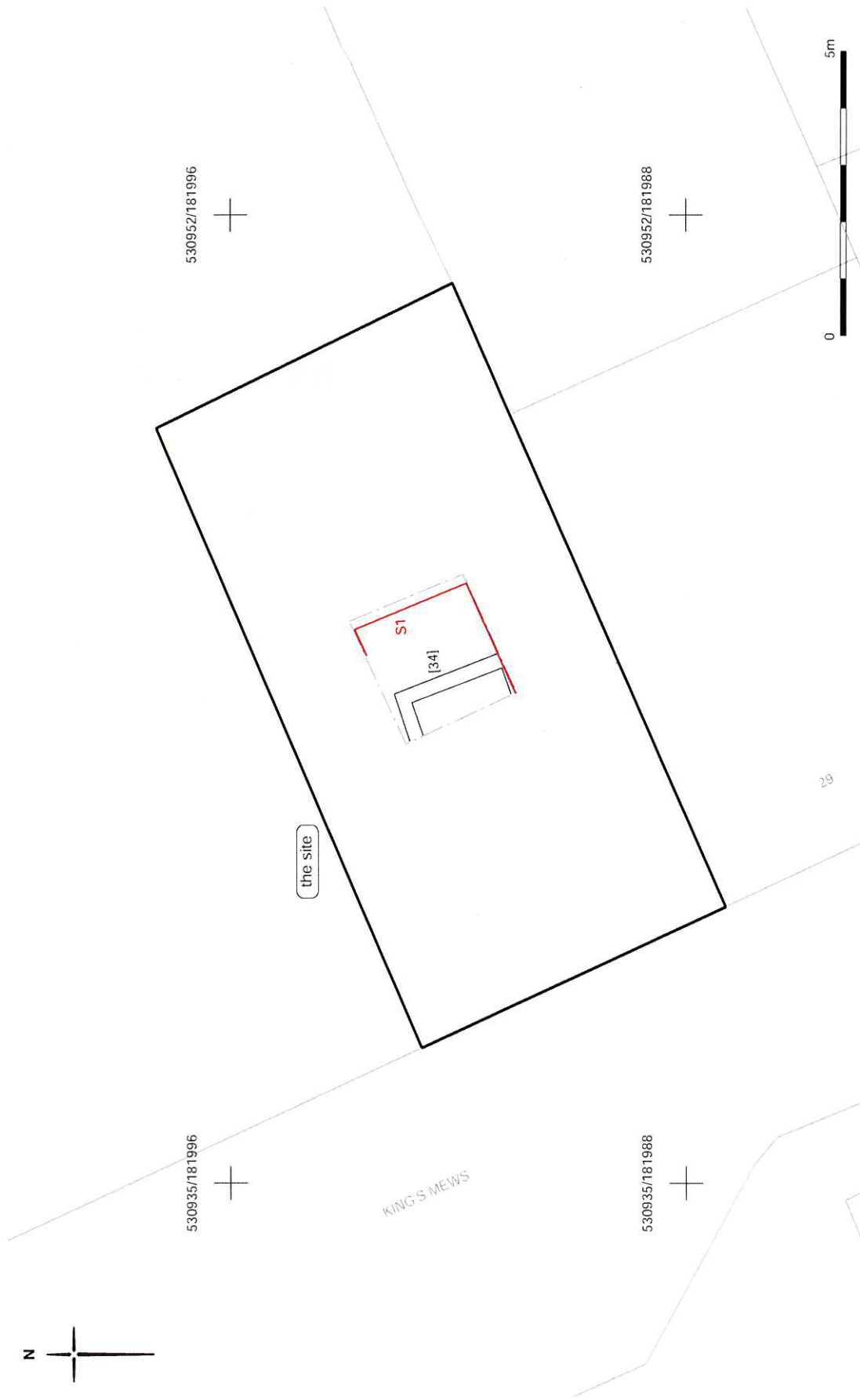


Fig 2 Location of evaluation trench

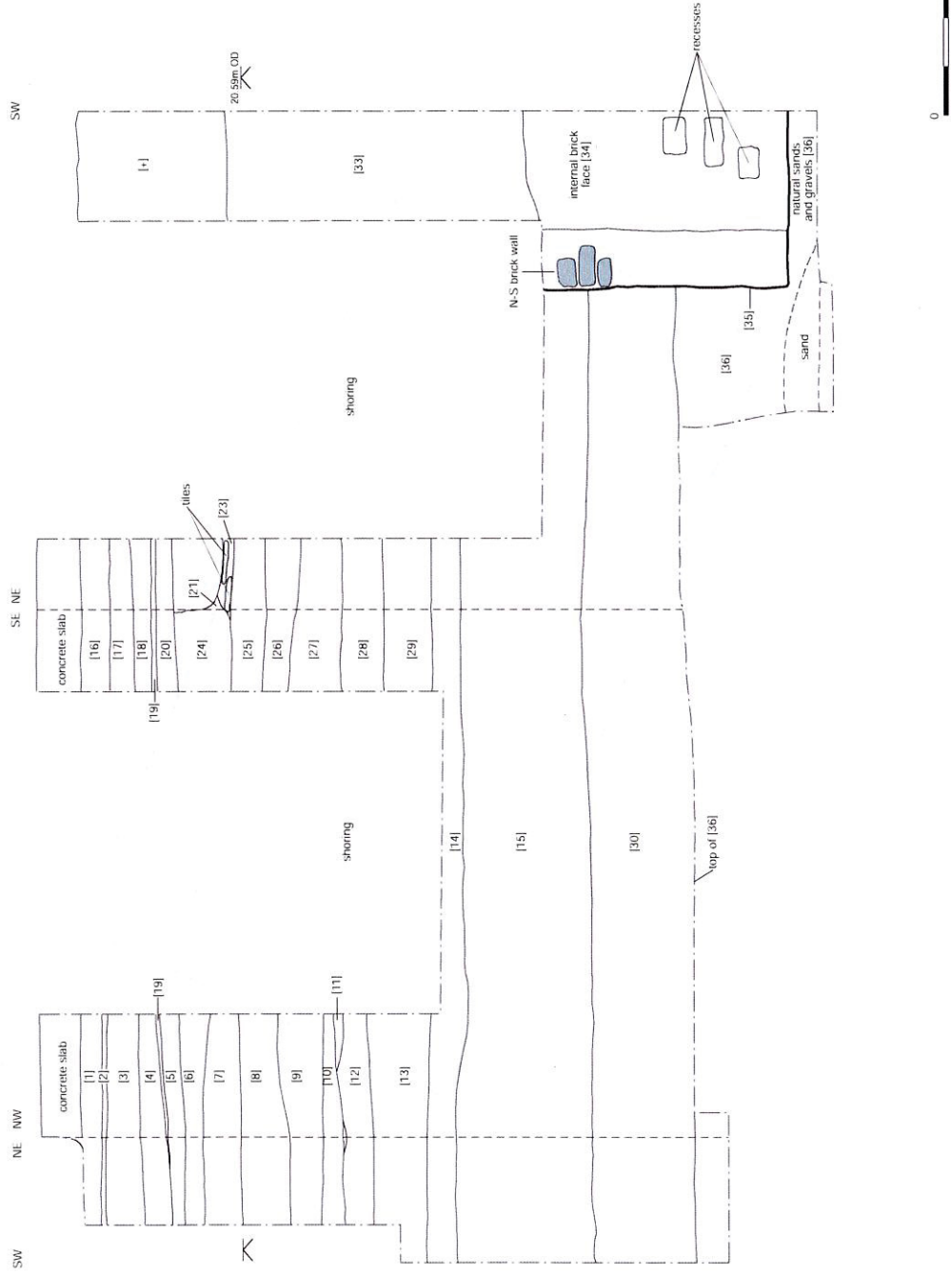


Fig 3 South-east, south-west and north-west facing sections of evaluation trench



Fig 5 Brick-lined feature [34] recorded in the western part of the trench (view looking south)



Fig 4 Archaeological deposits recorded in the north-east corner of the evaluation trench