



**DIANA CAR PARK  
Hyde Park  
London W1**

City of Westminster

Report on an archaeological watching brief

January 2018



# Diana Car Park Hyde Park London W1

Site Code WCD17  
NGR 526896, 180039  
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Report on an archaeological watching brief

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## Summary

*This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by MOLA at Diana Car Park, Hyde Park, London W1. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Transport for London.*

*In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2017) a watching brief was carried out on the site between 17th October and 4th December 2017.*

*The general monitoring of the groundworks in advance of improvements to the car park provided limited opportunity to observe beneath the modern subsurface deposits. However a section of a substantial wall was recorded in a tree planting pit. It is highly likely that this wall was part of the southern bastion of the 18th-century Kensington Gardens, which formed part of its boundary with Hyde Park.*

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Site background

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- 1.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was carried out by MOLA at the Diana Car Park, Hyde Park in the City of Westminster (hereafter 'the site') (see Fig 1).
- 1.1.2 A desk top Archaeological Assessment (HEA) was previously prepared which covers the whole area of the site (AECOM 2015). 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).
- 1.1.3 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by MOLA (2017). All archaeological work has been carried out in accordance with that WSI.
- 1.1.4 The watching brief was carried out intermittently between 17th October and 4th December 2017.
- 1.1.5 This document is the Report on the watching brief, which was commissioned by Transport for London (TfL).

## 1.2 Planning background

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- 1.2.1 Although the overall development scheme took place under a Local Authority Planning Consent, the archaeological watching brief was carried out as "best practice".

## 1.3 Scope of the watching brief

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- 1.3.1 An archaeological watching brief is normally a limited fieldwork exercise. It is not the same as full excavation, though individual features may be fully excavated.
- 1.3.2 The watching brief consisted, in practice, of the monitoring of the contractors ground breaking activities, including the expansion of the area of the car park, changes to the layout of the car park, drainage works and the excavation of tree planting pits, etc. (See Fig 2).
- 1.3.3 The watching brief was carried out within the terms of the relevant Standard for watching brief specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA 2014).
- 1.3.4 All work has been undertaken within the research priorities established in the Museum of London's A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002.
- 1.3.5 All work was undertaken within research aims and objectives established in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the watching brief (MOLA 2017, Section 2.2)

## 2 Topographical and historical background

This section is a resumé of the data presented in the *Archaeological Impact Assessment* (AECOM 2015).

### 2.1 Topography

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- 2.1.1 Historically, the site was located in a shallow valley formed by the River Westbourne, a tributary of the Thames. It used to run through Hyde Park but was adapted in the medieval period to feed a string of fish ponds for Westminster Abbey. These ponds were linked up to form the current Serpentine Lake in 1731. On leaving the park it becomes the Ranelagh Sewer where it joins the now diverted Tyburn River.
- 2.1.2 The underlying geology is London Clay Formation comprising Clay, Silt and Sand. This is overlain by superficial geology comprising river estuarine deposits of Sand and Gravel belonging to the Lynch Hill Gravel Member ([www.bgs.ac.uk](http://www.bgs.ac.uk)). However, an archaeological watching brief, evaluation and excavation at the proposed Site of the Diana, Princess of Wales, Memorial Fountain found that gravels exist only within isolated pockets. In general, brickearth or made ground was found to overlie the London Clay (Hulka 2002, 28).

### 2.2 Archaeology

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- 2.2.1 The potential archaeological interest on the site is for multi-period remains including evidence for prehistoric activity, Romano-British activity and an 18th-century ha ha (sunken wall).
- 2.2.2 Archaeological investigations at the Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain, c 50m east of the Site, recorded residual worked flints which possibly date to the Mesolithic period and evidence for Early Iron Age activity (Bradley 2003).
- 2.2.3 Evidence for a possible farmstead has been recorded at the site of Princess of Wales Memorial Fountain. Here remains included quarry pits, a post-built building, a rectangular enclosure and boundary ditches with occupation of the site dating from the 2nd to 4th centuries AD (Bradley 2003).
- 2.2.4 The Site would be part of the manor of Hyde, which in turn formed part of the manor of Eia recorded in the Domesday Survey of AD 1086. The manor was held by Geoffrey de Mandeville who later passed it to the Abbey of Westminster. In 1536 at the Dissolution of the Monasteries, the manor of Hyde was acquired by Henry VIII and enclosed and stocked with deer. It was enclosed and stocked with deer to form part of the royal hunting parks which extended from Whitehall to Hampstead Heath.
- 2.2.5 In 1630, during the reign of Charles I, the park was first opened to the public with the circular ride known as the Ring becoming fashionable.
- 2.2.6 In 1642 during the Civil War, fortifications were constructed on the eastern side of the park to protect the city against Royalist attack.
- 2.2.7 Land held by the Crown was subsequently seized by Parliament and in 1652, the park was sold by the Commonwealth as three plots and much of the surviving medieval woodland was felled. Following the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660, the park reverted to Charles II who replaced the former park pale with a wall.
- 2.2.8 In 1689 William III acquired Nottingham House at the western edge of the park and began developing it as Kensington Palace. Rotten Row was constructed in 1690 to link the king's new palace with Whitehall and so formed a new formal alignment for

the park.

- 2.2.9 Landscaping began in 1728 when Charles Bridgeman, the Royal Gardner, laid out the formal paths in Kensington Gardens, taking almost 300 acres from Hyde Park. In 1730, the Serpentine was made by damming the Westbourne, but little else was done in Hyde Park until Buckingham House (1705) was extended by John Nash to become Buckingham Palace in 1825–30.
- 2.2.10 Queen Anne further extended Kensington Gardens into Hyde Park until, in 1730, Queen Caroline formally enclosed the gardens with a ha ha, designed by Bridgeman. It consisted of a ditch with a retaining wall built against its steeper edge (that facing onto the gardens), to prevent animals straying into the gardens to its west, while providing an unobstructed view of the eastern part of the park from the gardens.
- 2.2.11 In addition to the ha ha, three bastions were constructed that extended into Hyde Park: two to the north of the Serpentine and one to the south (within the site; see Plate 1).
- 2.2.12 In 2002 the South Bastion wall and ditch were identified during archaeological investigations by Pre-Construct Archaeology undertaken in advance of the construction of the Princess Diana memorial (Hulka 2002; Bradley 2003). These features were found to correlate almost exactly with the John Rocque's Plan of the bastion from 1762; the main difference being that that the bastion was slightly more rounded in plan than that that depicted by Rhodes. The structure was highly ornate, punctuated by apsidal niches and clad in Portland Limestone.

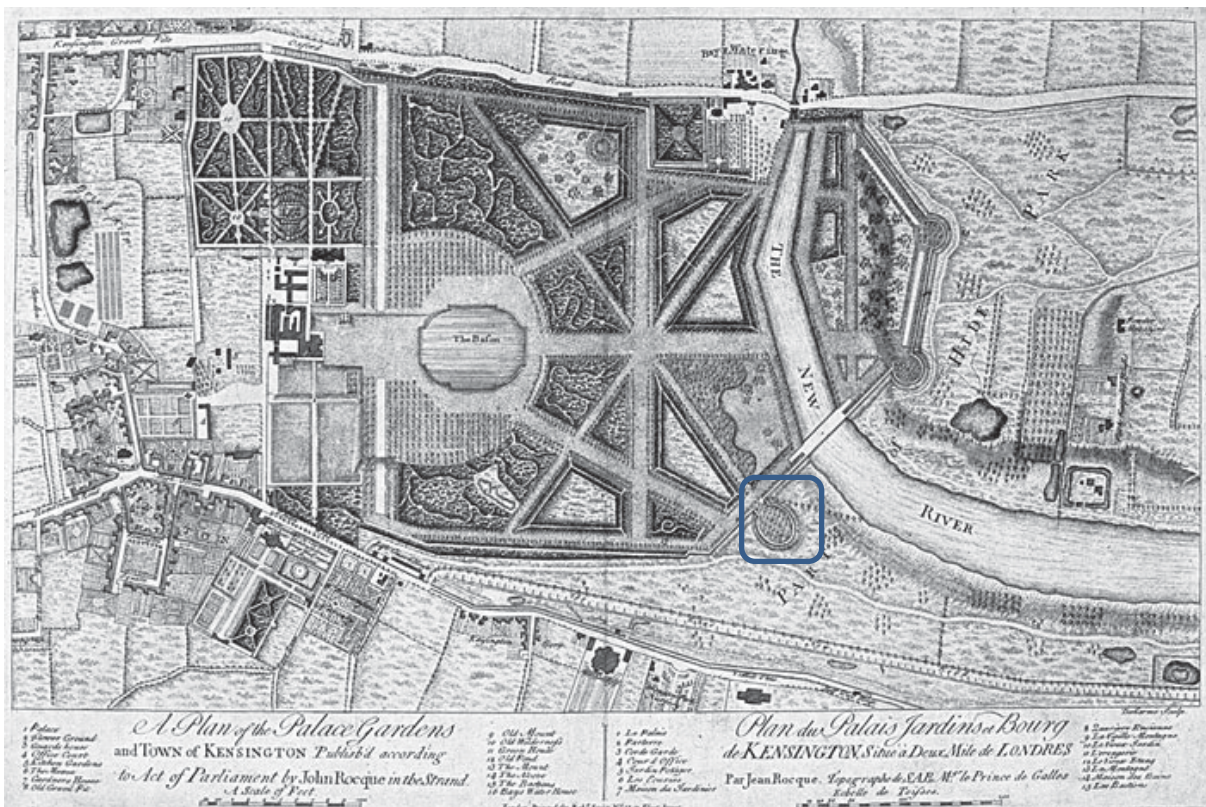


Plate 1 John Rocque's 1756 plan (south bastion in square)

## 3 The watching brief

### 3.1 Field methodology

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- 3.1.1 All ground works were undertaken by the designated contractors (Conway) and monitored by a member of staff from MOLA. All excavations were done mechanically.
- 3.1.2 The archaeological work was carried out in accordance with the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (MOLA 2017).
- 3.1.3 Excavation locations were provided by Conway\AECOM drawing no 60320925-E220-CP03-DWG-1079 rev 3.
- 3.1.4 The nature of the fieldwork meant it was not possible to accurately calculate Ordnance Datum levels therefore site levels are expressed as depth from ground level (ie m bgl).

### 3.2 Recording methodology

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- 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 2017).

### 3.3 Site archive

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Number of trench record sheets	1
Number of overall location plans	1
Number of Context sheets	8
Number of photographs	72 (digital)
Number of Plan sheets	4
Number of Sections	0



## 4 Results of the watching brief

Significant archaeological remains were only recorded in the tree planting pit furthest to the south-west. For watching brief locations see Fig 2.

### 4.1 South-west tree planting pit

Location	Towards south-west of car park
Dimensions	2.50m by 2.50m by 1.80m max depth
Modern ground level	0m bgl
Base of modern levelling	0.45m bgl
Depth of archaeological stratigraphy above natural (if any)	0.75m
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	1.80m bgl
Top of surviving natural observed at	1.05m bgl
Level of base of trench	1.80m bgl

- 4.1.1 The trench was excavated by the contractors to the top of a red-brick wall with deeper excavation on the south side. The trench measured 2.50m by 2.50m and was excavated to a maximum depth (see Photo 1 and Fig 3) of 1.80m below ground surface (bgl).
- 4.1.2 The lowest and earliest deposit was a light brownish yellow clay with occasional stones. This was interpreted as a natural deposit, possibly a floodplain deposit derived from the outcropping London Clay. The natural was cut by a substantial red-brick wall [6]. It was 1.20m wide, and seen for 2.60m crossing the base of the trench, aligned east–west. Where exposed on the south side, 3-courses of cross bond brick face was seen (0.35m) over ragstone footings (0.35m). The footing continued beyond the base of the trench at 1.80m bgl. The bricks measured 100mm (breadth) x 60mm (thickness) x 220mm (length). The core of the wall was formed of half-bricks and no face was evident on the north side. The bricks were bonded with a yellowish white sandy lime soft cement. The upper remains of the wall were truncation at 1.05m–1.10m bgl and sealed by 600mm of light brown plastic silty clay with frequent brick and mortar debris; interpreted as ground levelling or landscaping. The upper 0.45m consisted of the made ground and tarmac surface of the present car park.
- 4.1.3 Wall [6] has been dated provisionally to the 18th-century and is probably the remains of the “bastion wall” built in the 1730s (Fig 4). There was no evidence of any associated ditch, although it was possible a ditch could have existed to the north of the wall.
- 4.1.4 The wall was not seen in the tree planting pit to the east, despite being excavated to the top of the natural clay at approximately the same depth. This tree planting pit exposed the same sequence of deposits over the natural clay as seen over Wall [6] in the south-west pit. None of the other tree planting pits were observed.



*Photo 1 Wall [6] in south-west tree planting pit, looking East (scale 0.5m)*

## 4.2 Other areas

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- 4.2.1 With the exception of the tree planting holes, there was no ground reduction greater than 0.45m. Spreads of red brick masonry rubble were encountered but these were thought to have been imported as part of the ground levelling prior to the construction of the existing car park. Some drainage runs, on the periphery of the car park, cut into the underlying ground levelling deposit seen sealing wall [6].



*Photo 2 Ground reduction in advance of extending car park, looking North-east*

## 4.3 The finds

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4.3.1 No finds were collected during the watching brief

## 5 Archaeological potential

### 5.1 Answering original research aims

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- 5.1.1 The original research aims set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2017, Section 2.2) have been addressed as follows:
- What is the nature and level of natural topography?  
*A light brownish yellow clay with occasional stones was observed in the two south-western tree planting pits. This deposit was interpreted as a floodplain deposit derived from the outcropping London Clay.*
  - What are the earliest deposits identified?  
*The natural clay described above was the earliest deposit identified.*
  - Is there any evidence for prehistoric activity previously identified in the area?  
*There was no evidence of the prehistoric activity previously identified in the area.*
  - Is there any evidence for Romano-British activity as previously found nearby?  
*There was no evidence for the Romano-British activity as found previously nearby.*
  - What are the latest deposits identified?  
*The latest deposits identified were the 18th-century wall [6], identified as part of the south bastion that formed part of the boundary to Kensington Gardens, and the overlying light brown plastic silty clay with frequent brick and mortar debris; interpreted as ground levelling or landscaping.*
  - What is the extent of modern disturbance?  
*The upper 0.45m assumed to extend across the area consisted of made ground, lawn and tarmac surface formed during the construction of the existing car park.*

### 5.2 Answering new research aims

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- 5.2.1 The uncovering of a further section of the southern bastion, which had also been seen in a previous archaeological evaluation (Hulka 2002), contributes to the understanding of the location, structure and design of the Souther Bastion and by implication the development of Kensington Gardens.

### 5.3 Significance of the data

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- 5.3.1 Given that Hyde Park is a Grade I Registered Park and Garden, as is Kensington Gardens to the west, such a structure can be considered to be of national significance.

## 6 Publication and archiving

- 6.1.1 The results of the watching brief 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.
- 6.1.2 The site archive containing original records (no finds were recovered) will be stored in accordance with the terms of the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (MOLA 2017) in the Museum of London Archaeological Archive within 12 months of the end of the watching brief.
- 6.1.3 Although the wall is part of a significant feature within the park, only short length was exposed. It is therefore suggested that a short note on the results of the watching brief should appear in the annual round up of the *London Archaeologist*.

## 7 Acknowledgements

- 7.1.1 MOLA would like to thank Ciara McLoughlin of Transport of London for commissioning the archaeological work.
- 7.1.2 The author would also like to thank the Daniel Dobie of Conway and his team for their assistance in site during the watching brief.
- 7.1.3 Thanks also to MOLA staff Diego Rodrigo Maganto (geomatics) and Judit Peresztegi (graphics) for their contributions to the report's illustrations.

## 8 Bibliography

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- Museum of London, 2002 *A research framework for London archaeology 2002*, London



Fig 1 Site location



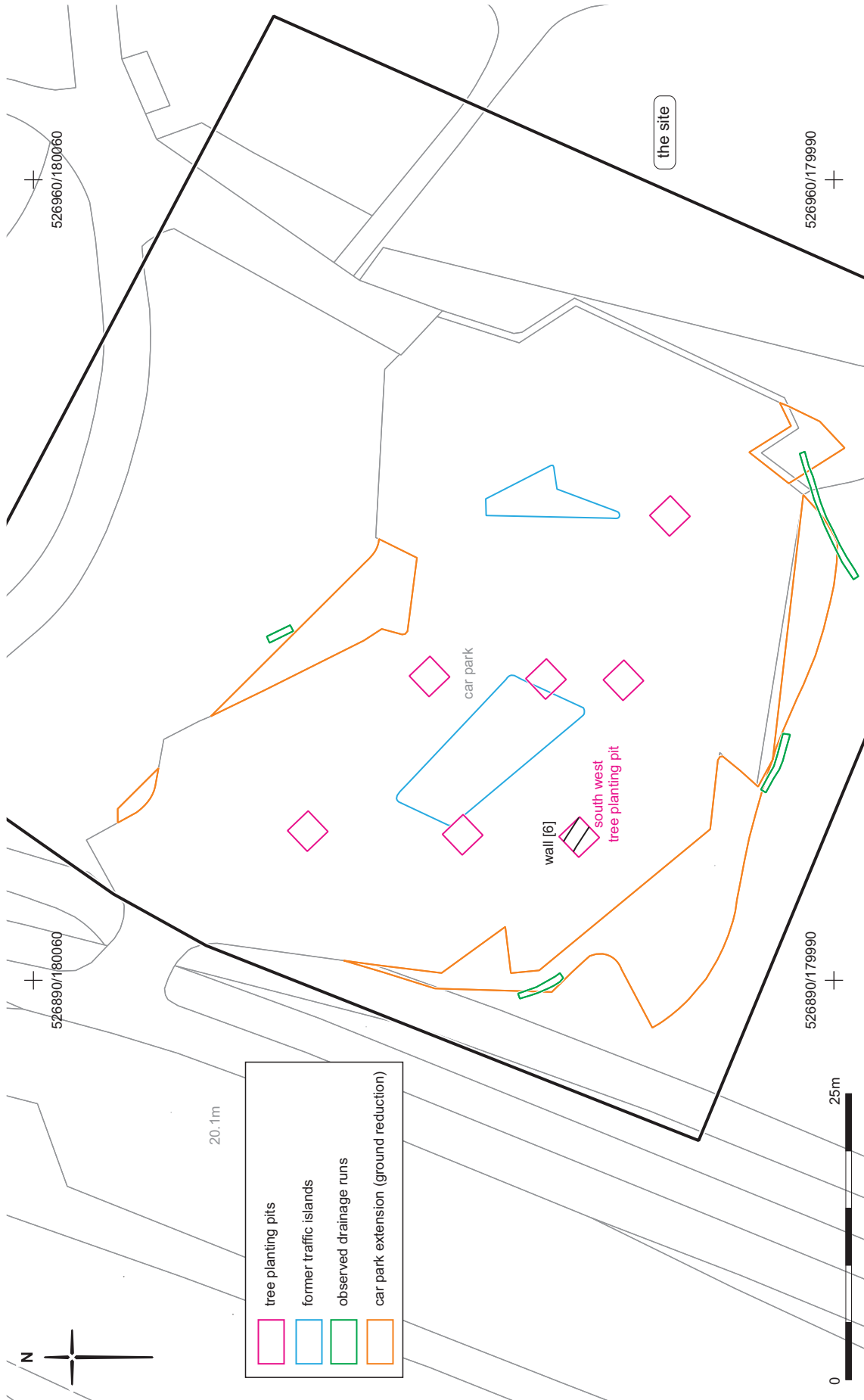


Fig 2 Areas of watching brief

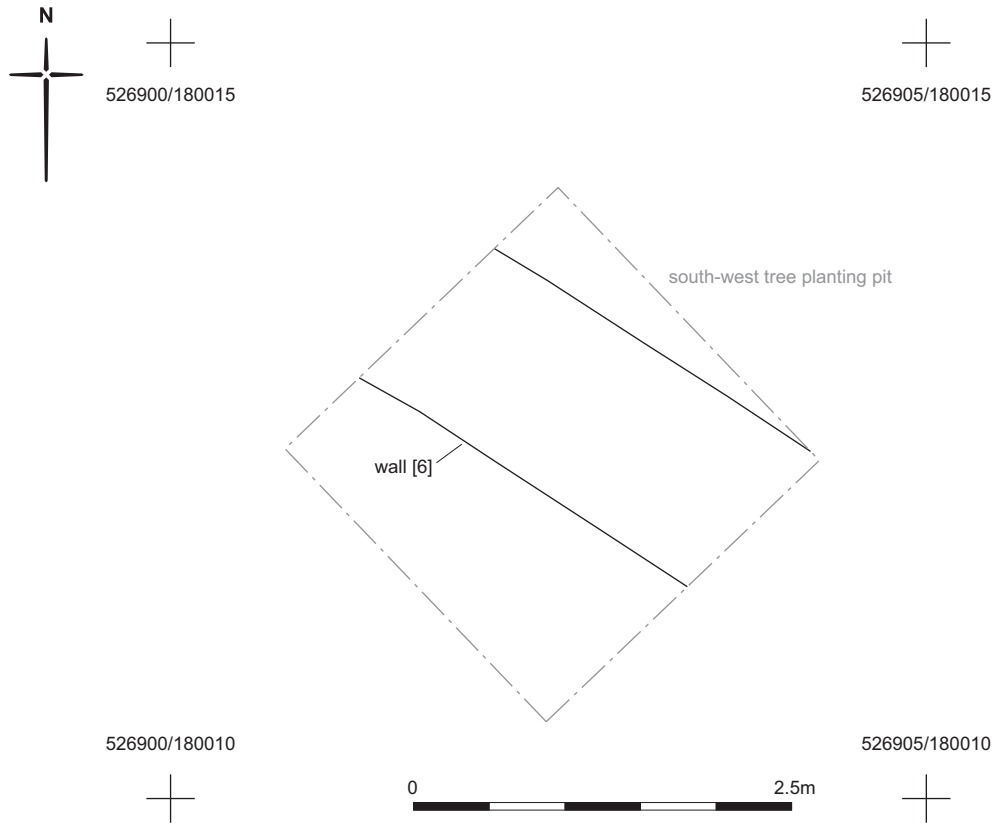


Fig 3 Plan of wall [6] in south-west tree planting pit

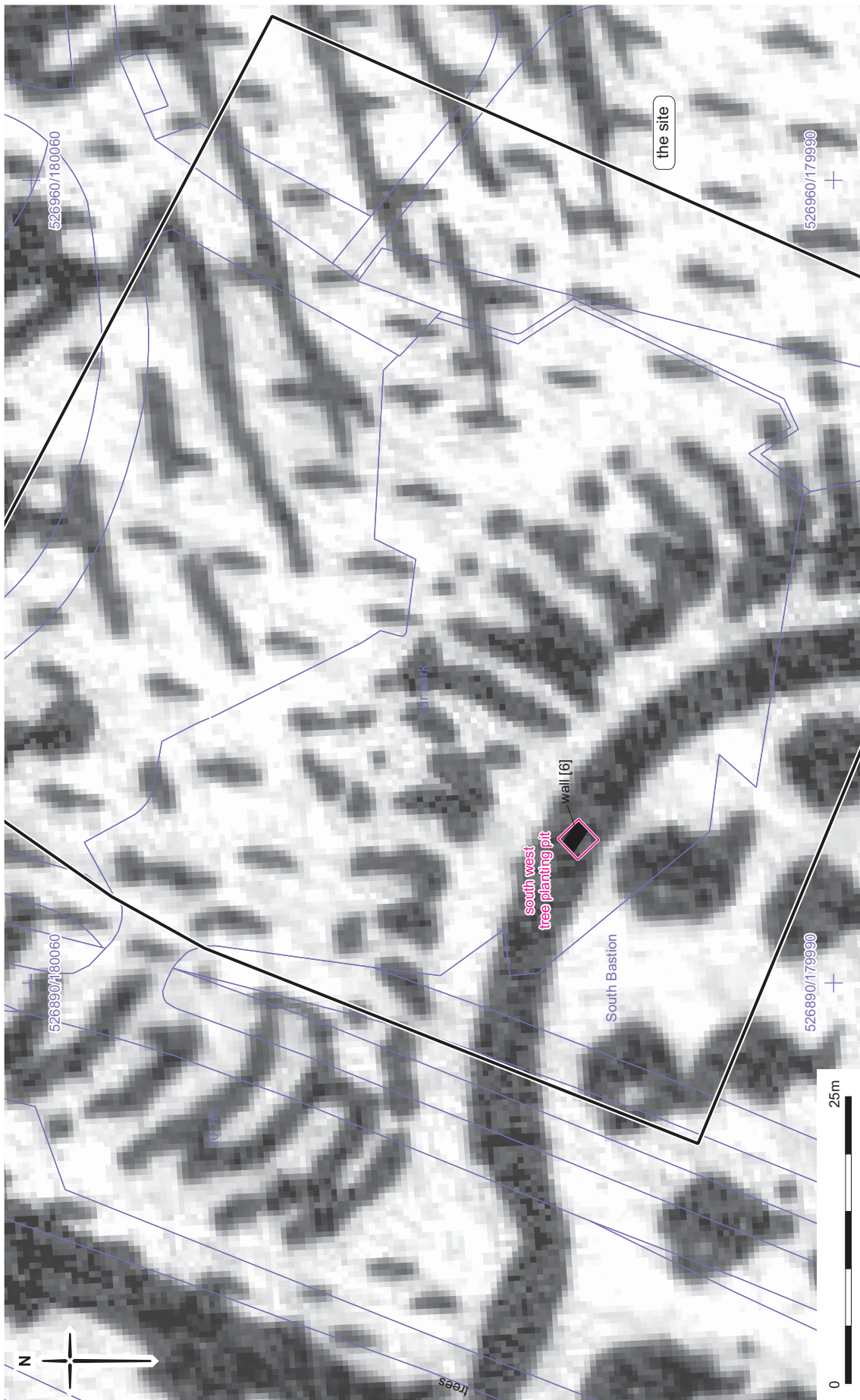


Fig 4 Location of wall [6] related to Rocque's map of 1756

## 9 OASIS archaeological report form

OASIS ID: molas1-303342	
<b>Project details</b>	
Project name	Diana Car Park, Hyde park
Short description of the project	A watching brief on works to improve the existing car park, found an 18th-century wall which was part of the boundary of Kensington Palace garden.
Project dates	Start: 17-10-2017 End: 04-12-2017
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	WTG02 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	WCD17 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	English Heritage List of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest
Current Land use	Other 15 - Other
Monument type	WALL Post Medieval
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Best Practice
<b>Project location</b>	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CITY OF WESTMINSTER PADDINGTON BAYSWATER AND KNIGHTSBRIDGE Diana Car Park
Postcode	W1
Study area	1 Hectares
Site coordinates	TQ 26896 80039 51.504522828429 -0.171435854464 51 30 16 N 000 10 17 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 18m Max: 21m
<b>Project creators</b>	
Name of Organisation	MOLA
Project brief originator	AECOM
Project design originator	MOLA

Project manager	David Divers
Project supervisor	Antony Francis
Project supervisor	Robert Cowie
Project supervisor	Isca Howell
Type of funding body	Client
Name of funding body	Transport for London
<b>Project archives</b>	
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive ID	WCD17
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Archive ID	WCD17
Paper Contents	"Survey"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Diary", "Plan", "Report"
<b>Project bibliography</b>	
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Diana Car Park, Hyde Park, London W1
Author	Howell, I
Date	2017
Issuer	MOLA
Place of issue	London
Description	Client report