



49 PARK LANE London W1

London Borough of Westminster

Archaeological watching brief
March 2009

**49 PARK LANE
London W1**

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Archaeological watching brief

Site Code: PKJ07

National Grid Reference: 528380 180295

Project Manager	Rosalind Aitken
Reviewed by	
Author	Jez Taylor
Graphics	Louise Davies

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Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED
tel 020 7410 2200 fax 020 7410 2201
molas@museumoflondon.org.uk
www.museumoflondonarchaeology.org.uk

Summary (non-technical)

This report has been commissioned by Gerald Eve, on behalf of the client 49 Park Lane, in order to record and assess the results of a watching brief carried out at 49 Park Lane, London W1.

Redevelopment of the site included demolition of the existing building and replacement with an eight-storey building with deeper basement. The foundations to the new building were piled and additional structural retaining walls were added to the southern boundary. The watching brief monitored works during demolition of the existing basement and subsequent ground-reduction across the site footprint. Also – localised excavations below existing floor levels in a sequence of vaults that extend within and along the north site limit. The watching brief monitored and recorded the works intermittently from July 9th to November 8th 2007.

In situ natural river terrace gravel was recorded at c 20.35m OD and the highest survival of archaeological deposits occurred at 21.69m OD.

Archaeological remains were limited and no dating evidence was retrieved. However, a deposit recorded beneath a vault (towards the north-east site limit) was indicative of rural, open land, pre-dating post-medieval urban development; possibly Roman or medieval. Later sequences included post-medieval rubbish dumping and/or general landfill, with contemporary pitting, probably associated with early urban development of the site, from the late-18th to mid 19th century.

Although limited in number, the archaeological remains are of local significance and will serve to widen our understanding of urban development in this area during the post-medieval period.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The watching brief took place at 49 Park Lane, London W1, hereafter called 'the site'. The property is bounded to the north by Tilney Street and to the west by Deanery Street. Properties facing onto Stanhope Gate lie along the south and west boundary (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). The centre of the site is at OS National Grid Reference 528380 180295. The level of the existing ground surface is 24.50m OD. The site code is PKJ07.

A desk top *Archaeological (impact) assessment* was previously prepared by MOL Archaeology, which covers the whole area of the site (Francis, 2006). 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. The *Assessment*, informed the design (*Method Statement*) for the watching brief which was eventually carried out (Aitken, 2006).

Works included demolition of the existing building and replacement with an eight-storey building with deeper basement. The foundations to the new building were piled and additional structural retaining walls were added to the southern boundary.

The watching brief monitored and recorded the works intermittently from July 9th to November 8th 2007.

1.2 The planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Archaeological impact assessment* (Francis, 2006, Section 2).

1.3 Planning background

The watching brief was carried out as a condition of the planning consent (Application No. 06/08436/ADFULL), approved by City of Westminster, Department of Planning and City Development.

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

The report was commissioned from Museum of London Archaeology (MOL Archaeology) by Gerald Eve, on behalf of the client 49 Park Lane. The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute for 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* (Section 2.2) and are outlined in the following section.

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

1.5 Aims and objectives

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

The limited nature of the works and the watching brief upon them made it unreasonable to establish many specific archaeological research objectives. The archaeological brief was essentially limited to establishing where, if at all, archaeological deposits survived (presence/absence), recording where necessary, and ensuring that the groundworks did not involve the destruction of any archaeological deposits of national significance. Nevertheless, in addition, a few research questions were outlined:

- What is the level of natural topography?
- What are the earliest deposits identified?
- Are there any *in situ* Roman remains associated with the nearby Roman Road?
- Are there any remains associated with the medieval road?
- What are the latest deposits identified?

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

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1 Topography

Until the medieval period the area around Whitehall and Parliament Street was low lying and prone to flooding. To the far south-east of the site, where Westminster Abbey and the Palace of Westminster now stand, was an eyot, Thorney Island, formed by a low mound of sand and gravel. Here the Tyburn split into at least two channels flowing to the north and south of the eyot. Much of the Hyde Park area, including the site, is located on the Taplow Terrace, a river flood plain gravel deposited during the last Ice Age. Where untruncated it is normally sealed by a reddish sandy clay, commonly an alluvial deposit known as brickearth. The level of the current ground surface is 24.50m OD.

2.2 Prehistoric

In 1925 excavations in Hyde Park on the north side of the Serpentine recorded significant assemblages of Palaeolithic flint artefacts (including Levallois flakes and cores), in clay levels as low as 13.41m O.D. These excavations also recovered the tooth of a bos, a type of wild ox. A Neolithic flint axe was found in the Hyde Park Corner vicinity and ground works in Hyde Park in 1959, 500m south-east of Victoria Gate produced further flint artefacts including an arrowhead dated to the Bronze Age. An undated flint scraper was found in the gravel deposits in front of 145 Piccadilly House in 1933 to the south east of the site and Iron Age activity was discovered in St James Park where a hoard of Iron Age potin coins were found in 1827. Late Neolithic or Early Bronze Age pottery and worked flint were recovered from a small pit cutting the natural gravels at an excavation at Curzon Gate, 200m south of the site.

2.3 Roman

The main Roman arterial road Watling Street is thought to have run down the eastern side of what is now Park Lane, passing just to the west of the site. In 1912 excavations near Speakers Corner were undertaken to locate this major north-south Roman route. Unfortunately no evidence of the road or associated features were uncovered.

2.4 Saxon

It is probable that the area was rural during the Saxon period.

2.5 Medieval

The Hyde Park area was one of three situated in the Manor of Eia (Ebury, Neate and Hyde). Edward the Confessor is recorded as granting the water rights of the land to the west of the site (Hyde) to Westminster Abbey. After the Norman conquest the manor was bequeathed to the monks of Westminster by Geoffrey de Mandeville, who had himself been given the land by William I. The land was used by the abbey for

farming. Urban development did not extend to the site area and during the medieval period, Hyde remained relatively undeveloped except for farming.

2.6 Post-medieval

Park Lane was for centuries a narrow road bounded on its west side by Hyde Park. It was previously named Tyburn or Tiburn Lane. The Rocque map of 1746 shows the site occupied open ground near Tibern Lane south of a built-up area with ornamental gardens. By 1799, a number of properties had been built on the site and Tilney Street established, as shown by the Horwood map. In the second half of the 19th century the volume of traffic using Park Lane had increased and in 1851 a short stretch at the north end of Park Lane was widened. Ordnance Survey mapping shows that the site was dominated by a building that was roughly triangular in plan by 1869 and the site boundaries remained static into the 20th century.

3 The watching brief

3.1 Methodology

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

The slab/ground was broken out and cleared by contractors under MOL Archaeology supervision. Areas where ground reduction took place were machine-excavated or hand-excavated by the contractors, and monitored by a member of staff from MOL Archaeology.

The locations of the areas of excavation were recorded by offsetting from adjacent standing walls and plotted on to a Basement Survey provided by RHWL Architects (Dwg no:n/a, dated 2005). This information was then plotted onto the OS grid.

The heights of observations and/or archaeological remains were recorded relative to Ordnance Datum (benchmarks provided by engineers on site).

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; 8 context records; 2 x 1:20 section drawings.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code PKJ07 in the MoL archive.

3.2 Results of the watching brief

The watching brief monitored works during demolition of the existing basement and subsequent ground-reduction across the site footprint. Also – localised excavations below floor level in the sequence of vaults that extend along the north site limit. (The vaults are to be retained). There follows a brief description of the archaeological deposits as recorded.

For location of areas monitored and recorded during the watching brief, see **Error! Reference source not found.**

3.2.1 Ground reduction

See Figs 2, 3

General ground-reduction was monitored within the bulk of the site-footprint, the exception being the retained sequence of vaults that extend along the north site-limit. The stratigraphic sequence was largely uniform: *In situ* natural sandy gravel [4] was recorded at c 20.35m OD. It was sealed by a layer of firmly compacted, dark brown to black sand/silt [3]. Layer [3] was c 1m thick and frequently charcoal-stained. It contained a few small fragments of clay tobacco pipe, occasional ceramic roof tile and oyster shell, and a single localised dump of oyster shell. The homogeneous

nature of the deposit suggests a sustained phase of rubbish dumping and/or general landfill, probably taking place during relatively early development of the site – late 18th to mid 19th century? The high percentage of charcoal waste *may* be indicative of industrial rather than domestic occupation, though there was no other evidence to back this up. Layer [3] was truncated by a single cess pit [2], with an undated, organic clay/silt fill [1] (see **Error! Reference source not found.**), but no other features were observed. The archaeological sequence concluded at a maximum height of 21.4m OD. It was sealed by modern backfill dumped below the pre-existing basement.

3.2.2 Vaults

See Figs 2, 4

A series of vaults lie within and adjacent to the north site limit. Excavations were carried out through and beneath their existing floors. Access and visibility was largely limited and obscured by shoring, but a stratigraphic sequence was partly visible in one of the vaults, located towards the east site-limit (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). The sequence lay immediately behind the rear (north) vault wall: Layer [8] was a gravelly, orange-light brown, mixed clay/sand deposit; possibly a layer of reworked or disturbed natural ground. Layer [7] was a dark brown, 'sterile', mixed silt/clay/sand. It was sealed by layer [6]; a similar deposit, c 0.2m thick, but with occasional oyster shell and small fragments of ceramic building material. At the top of the sequence, layer [5] was a light brown clay/sand with occasional charcoal flecks, with a maximum height at 21.69m OD.

With such limited exposure it was difficult to make any firm interpretation of the sequence, but they were clearly external deposits; possibly evidence of general rubbish dumping (layers [5]–[7]) over rural, open, ploughed? land (layer [8]). There was no dating evidence, but it seems likely that layer [8] pre-dates urban development of the site; possibly Roman or medieval, whereas layers [5] to [7] are probably associated with late-18th/19th century occupation.

Brick and stonework visible in section beneath the existing concrete floor indicated refurbishment of the original structure (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). The pre-existing building was built in 1928, perhaps incorporating earlier Victorian vaulting or basements/cellars.

4 Potential of archaeology

4.1 Original research aims

- What is the level of natural topography?

In situ natural river terrace gravel was recorded at c 20.35m OD.

- What are the earliest deposits identified?

Layer [8] at the base of the sequence in the vault, may have been a layer of reworked or disturbed natural ground, indicative of when the area was rural, open, possibly ploughed land, prior to development in the late-18th/19th century. However, it was not possible to conclusively determine whether it dated to the Roman, medieval or early post-medieval period.

- Are there any *in situ* Roman remains associated with the nearby Roman Road?

None

- Are there any remains associated with the medieval road?

None

- What are the latest deposits identified?

The latest sequence of deposits included post-medieval rubbish dumping and/or general landfill with contemporary pitting, probably associated with early urban development of the site from the late-18th to mid 19th century.

4.2 Significance of the data

Whilst the archaeological remains are undoubtedly of local significance there is nothing to suggest that they are of regional or national importance.

5 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 will be stored in accordance with the terms of the *Method Statement* (Aitken, 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 4) and the relatively limited significance of the data (Section 4.2) 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*.

6 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the client 49 Park Lane Ltd for commissioning the works, thanks also to Sarah Jones, Valeria Boesso from MOL Archaeology Geomatics Team and Louise Davies from MOL Archaeology Drawing Office for their contributions and help in producing this report.

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8 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

8.1 OASIS ID: molas1-56334

Project details

Project name 49 Park Lane, London W1

Short description of the project Redevelopment of the site included demolition of the existing building and replacement with an eight-storey building with deeper basement. The foundations to the new building were piled and additional structural retaining walls were added to the southern boundary. The watching brief monitored works during demolition of the existing basement and subsequent ground-reduction across the site footprint. Also - localised excavations below existing floor levels in a sequence of vaults that extend within and along the north site limit. The watching brief monitored and recorded the works intermittently from July 9th to November 8th 2007. In situ natural river terrace gravel was recorded at c 20.35m OD and the highest survival of archaeological deposits occurred at 21.69m OD. Archaeological remains were limited and no dating evidence was retrieved. However, a deposit recorded beneath a vault (towards the north-east site limit) was indicative of rural, open land, pre-dating post-medieval urban development; possibly Roman or medieval. Later sequences included post-medieval rubbish dumping and/or general landfill, with contemporary pitting, probably associated with early urban development of the site, from the late-18th to mid 19th century.

Project dates Start: 09-07-2007 End: 08-11-2007

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes PKJ07 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Current Land use Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices

Monument type EXTERNAL DUMPING. RUBBISH PITTING Post Medieval

Significant Finds NONE

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CITY OF WESTMINSTER CITY OF WESTMINSTER 49 Park Lane, London W1
Postcode	W1
Study area	862.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 28380 80295 51.5064878498 -0.149970202120 51 30 23 N 000 08 59 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 20.35m Max: 20.35m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MoLAS
Project brief originator	MoLAS project manager
Project design originator	MoLAS
Project director/manager	Ros Aitken
Project supervisor	Jez Taylor
Name of sponsor/funding body	49 Park Lane

Project archives

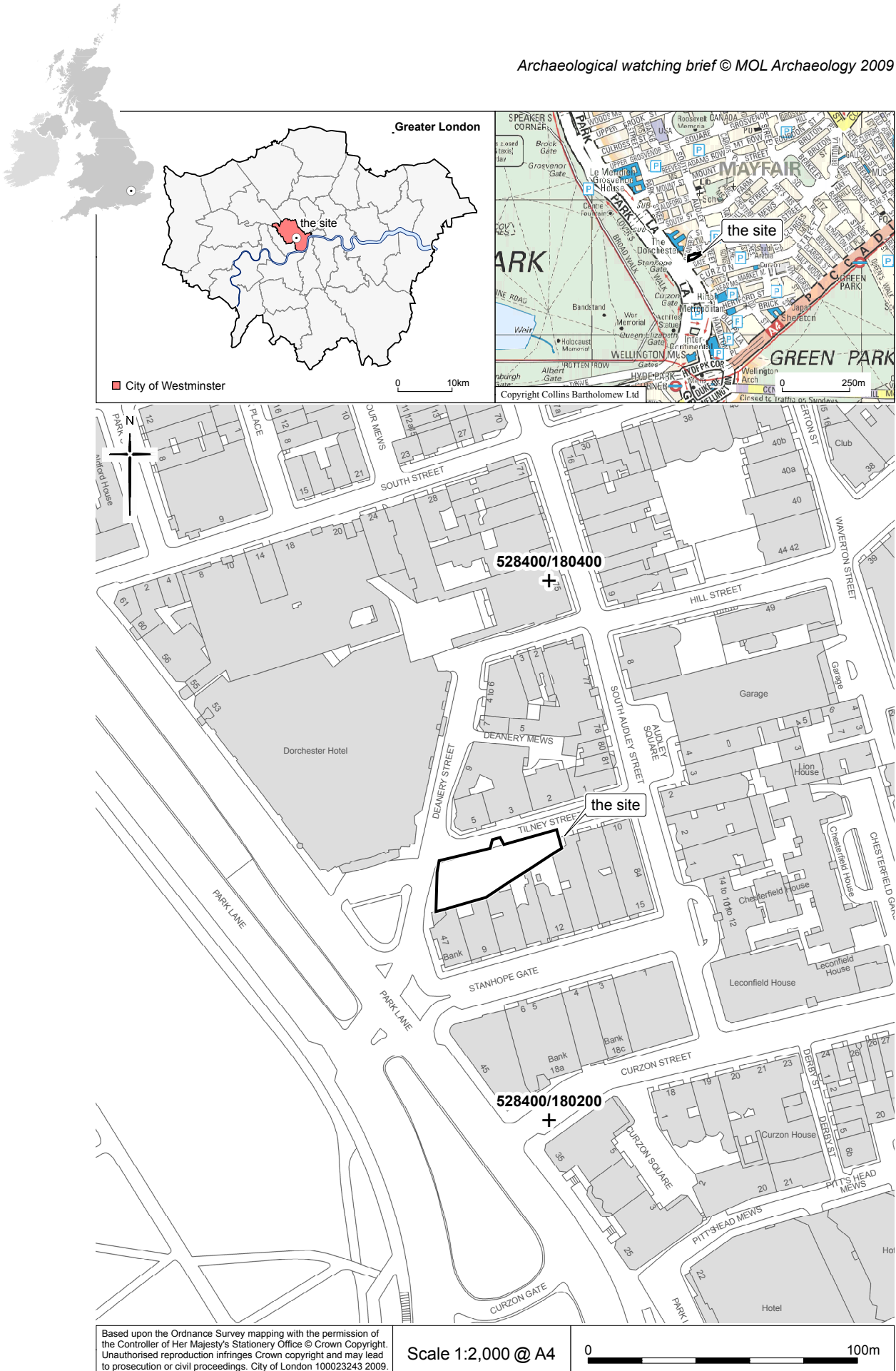
Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC

Paper Archive recipient LAARC

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title 49 Park Lane, London W1. An archaeological watching brief report
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Scale 1:2,000 @ A4

0 100m

Fig 1 Site location



Fig 2 Areas of investigation and section locations

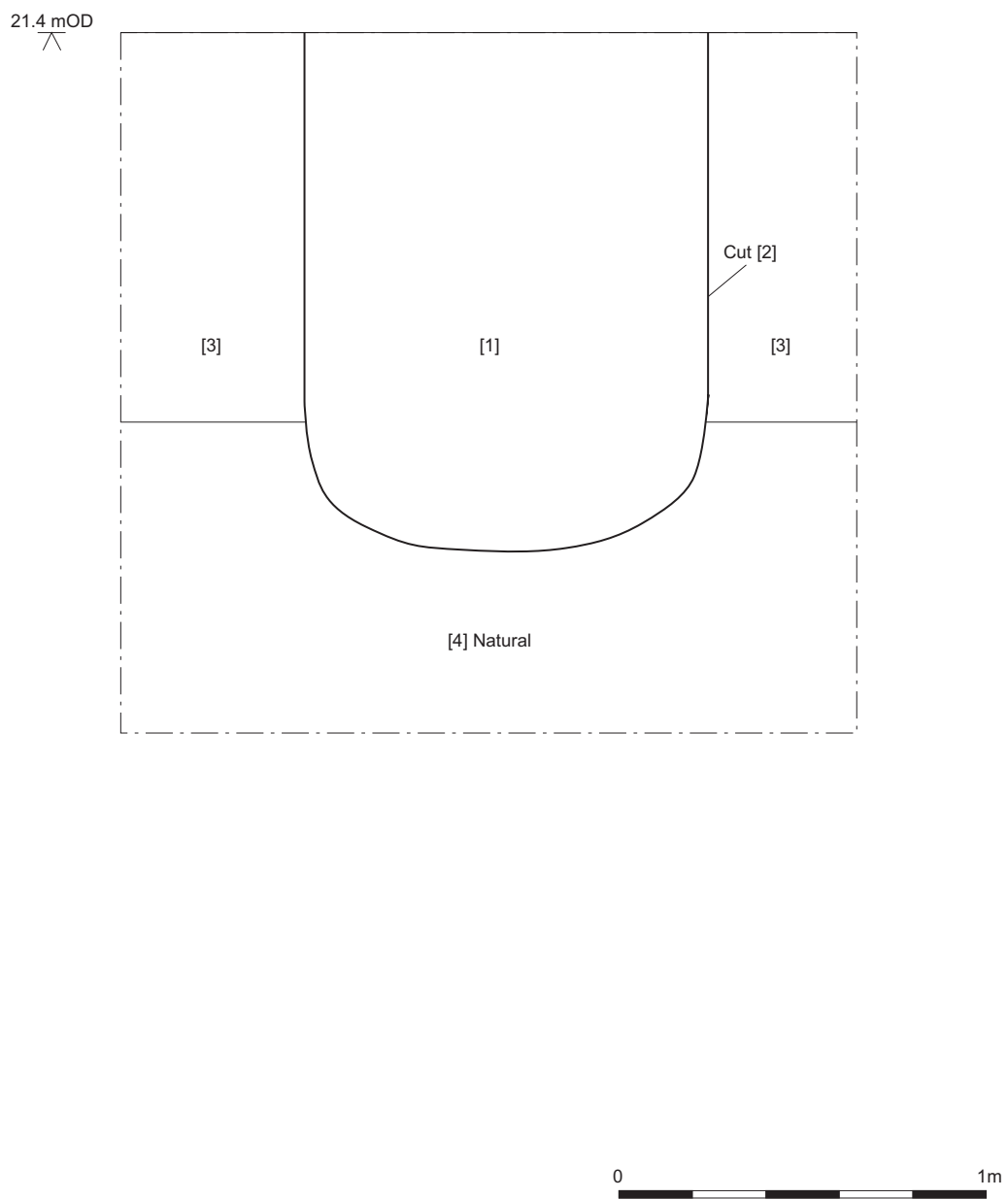


Fig 3 West-facing section through cess pit [2] (ground reduction)

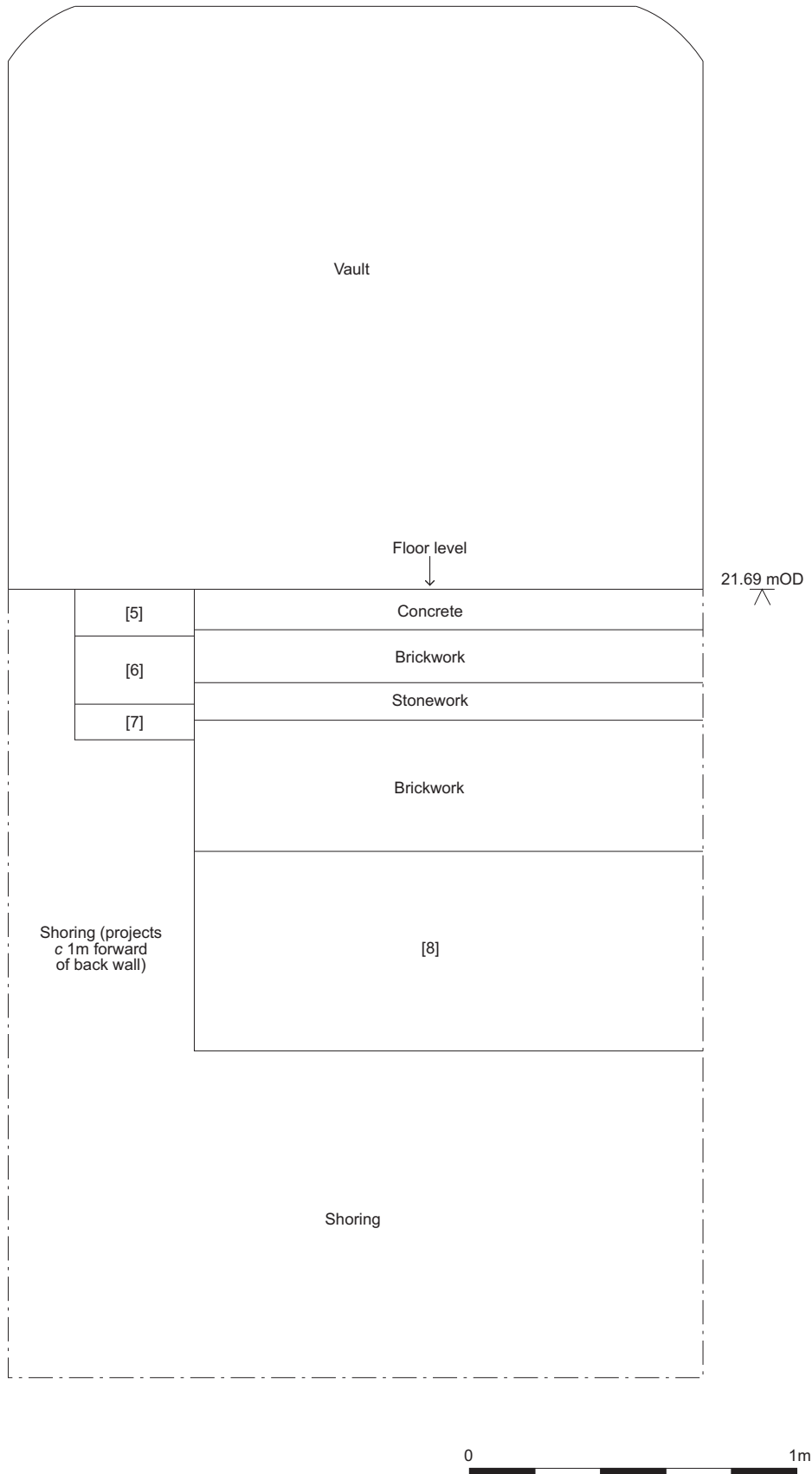


Fig 4 South-facing section (vault)