

SITE SUMMARY SHEET

97/62 Richmond Palace

Location, Topography and Geology

The area under investigation comprises the gardens of Trumpeters House, Richmond, London. Survey was restricted to the lawn, an irregular shaped stretch of grass measuring 110 metres by 40 metres. Although generally level, there is a slight rise in the ground level close to the house, where a croquet lawn has been established. In addition, the gardens slope gradually downhill towards the River Thames, the banks of which form the southern boundary to the property. The site lies on river gravels.

Archaeology

The Palace of Richmond, dating to Tudor times, is known to have existed on the site but the precise location of the major building is uncertain. Parts of the gatehouse and wardrobe are visible within the present residential property and excavations in 1972 discovered a section of the north-eastern arm of the moat associated with the palace.

Aim of Survey

As part of a Time Team investigation at the site, it was hoped that a resistivity survey would help in pinpointing the Privy Lodgings, which are believed to lie somewhere between Trumpeters House and the Thames.

Summary of Results

Resistance survey was carried out across the lawn using a twin-probe configuration with three different electrode separations: 0.5m, 1.0m and 1.5m. It was hoped that these might provide greater information of features surviving at depth; a greater penetration is achieved with the wider separations, but with a consequential loss of resolution.

The results of the survey are clearly affected by past landscaping and consolidation that has taken place at the site. In addition, the large amounts of building debris, as seen in the excavation trenches, has masked many of the structural elements. Despite these problems, particularly clear responses were obtained from wall foundations on the croquet lawn close to Trumpeters House and along the western edge of the main lawn. Excavation Trenches 2 to 4 confirmed the main resistance results but indicated a more complex arrangement of building remains. Elsewhere, Trench 1, indicated that broad changes in resistance coincided with a wall line that had deeply filled rubble to the north and relatively stone- and brick-free deposits to the south.

It is believed that the low and high resistance bands in the southern half of the lawn are associated with former channels of the Thames and possibly embankments, though these areas were not investigated archaeologically.

SURVEY RESULTS

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1. Survey Area

1.1 An area of approximately 0.4 hectares was surveyed using the resistance technique on the lawn of Trumpeters House. Three probe separations were employed: 0.5m, 1.0m and 1.5m.

1.2 The survey blocks were set out GSB Prospection and tied in by members of staff from RCHME and MOLAS who retain the location information (see Figure 1 at a scale of 1:500).

2. Display

2.1 The detailed survey results for each of the three datasets are displayed as grey-scales in Figure 2 at a scale of 1:625. This display method is discussed in Technical Section of the report.

3. General Considerations - Complicating Factors

3.1 In general, ground conditions were good for survey, with the lawn being closely cut and free of obstructions.

3.2 Gravel paths, trees and bushes restricted survey at the lawn edges.

The survey was carried out as part of a television programme and external factors dictated the course and progress of the geophysical investigations.

4.1 Survey began on the southern half of the lawn in the hope of locating the southern wall of the Privy Lodgings.

4.2 The results from this area indicate bands of low and high resistance which are believed to reflect former courses of the River Thames; documentary and environmental evidence suggests that the Tudor water line was to the north of its present position and the geophysics supports this evidence.

4.3 Trench 1 was excavated in order to test whether a marked change between high and low resistance readings could indicate the southern limits of the building, even though no clear wall lines are visible in the data. Excavation demonstrated a brick wall with substantial rubble deposits to a depth of more than 2m in the north, but none to the south. This clearly accounts for the observed variations in resistance in all three datasets.

4.4 The survey was extended to the north on the eastern side of the lawn and this additional area helped confirm that a low resistance linear anomaly that cuts across the site is due to a service trench, later confirmed as an electricity cable.

4.5 Although there are variations in the resistance responses in the datasets, no anomalies are visible in the central area of the lawn that are indicative of wall foundations. It is possible that a concentration of rubble is masking any surviving archaeology.

4.6 At the northern limits of the survey area, however, the 0.5m and 1.0m datasets indicate clear wall lines; Trenches 2 and 3 were targeted to investigate these responses. Again, the excavations confirmed the presence of substantial wall foundations and also indicated phases of robbing and rebuilding. The 1.5m dataset indicates that the depth of the foundations is unlikely to continue much below 1.5m.

4.7 When the survey was extended down the western side of the main lawn broad areas of high resistance were identified. The southern limit of the high readings coincides with the line investigated in Trench 1 and would therefore support a view that this marks the limits of the Privy Lodgings, if this interpretation of the excavation results is confirmed.

4.8 Along the western edge of the lawn and close to the area where the ground rises slightly to a path, there are two linear anomalies that are indicative of wall lines. One response is longer and more coherent as an anomaly and it is on the same alignment as a wall seen in the results from Trench 3. Excavation over this anomaly, Trench 4, confirmed the presence of a large brick wall and this was interpreted as being the eastern edge of the Privy Lodging.

5.1 The results of the resistance survey at the site of Richmond Palace helped considerably in choosing the location for the archaeological trenches. By providing specific targets, particular questions about the site could be posed and then answered by selective invasive work. In this respect the resistance survey worked extremely well; broad changes in resistance were seen to coincide with walls and rubble deposits, and linear high resistance anomalies were shown to be associated with surviving wall foundations.

5.2 The complexity of the archaeological deposits at the site, however, are too great for the resistance survey to provide an overall clear plan of any building remains. The restricted area available for survey also hindered this wider picture being obtained.

5.3 The clearest results are from the northern part of the lawn, where there appears to be a lack of masking rubble. In the central area, however, the results are more difficult to interpret. Apart from a wall along the eastern edge of the survey area and a clear southern limit to the rubble deposits, little archaeological detail is apparent in the data. The bands of low and high resistance closest to the Thames are indicative of former channels and embankments, though this interpretation was not tested archaeologically.