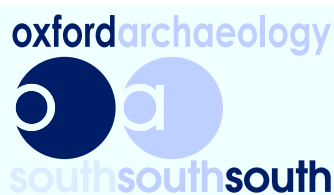


Hampton Court Palace Vrow Walk Test pits



Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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Hampton Court Palace - Vrow Walk Test Pits

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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Summary

Between the 10th and 13th January 2011, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Hampton Court Palace, Surrey (NGR TQ 155 686). The work was commissioned by Historic Royal Palaces in advance of the installation of the new car park exit. The watching brief of the test pit outside the Palace revealed modern backfill deposits related to the services running down Hampton Court Road overlain by the current footpath surfaces. Garden soils and old path surfaces were identified in the test pits excavated inside the palace alongside the Kitchen garden wall, Vrow Walk. Where the test pits abutted the palace garden walls, possible construction cut fill deposits were identified. No archaeological structures or features associated with the Tiltyard or subsequent Kitchen Gardens were identified within the excavated slots.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 In January 2011, Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out an archaeological watching brief at Hampton Court Palace, Surrey (NGR TQ 155 686). The work was commissioned by William Page, Conservation Building Surveyor (Hampton Court Palace), Historic Royal Palaces .
- 1.1.2 Three test pits were excavated to identify any archaeological remains, modern services that may be present as well as test the load bearing of the underlying geology. The test pits were located next to the Hitchen wall along Vrow Walk and immediately outside Vrow Gate, adjacent to Hampton Court Road.

1.2 Location, geology and topography

- 1.2.1 Test Pits 1 and 1a were located on Vrow Walk 12 m to the east of Vrow Gate, orientated north to south from the north side of the car park wall out into the pathway (Fig. 2). Test Pit 2 was located 2.5 m to the south of Vrow Gate outside the Palaces walls and was orientated east to west from the Palace wall to Hampton Court Road.
- 1.2.2 The site lies on the first Terrace gravel drift geology of the river Thames, at c 9 m OD.

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 Hampton Court Palace is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Surrey No. 83). The palace, gardens and grounds form an archaeological and historical site of international importance.
- 1.3.2 The historical background to Hampton Court Palace is well documented. The detailed background for the Vrow Wall area has recently been set out in in an Oxford Archaeology report on the wall itself (OA September 2010).

2 PROJECT AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 Aims

- 2.1.1 To identify and record the presence or absence, extent, condition, quality and date of archaeological remains in the impacted area.



- 2.1.2 To preserve by record any archaeological remains (if present) that the works may remove or damage within the impacted area.
- 2.1.3 To make available the results of archaeological investigation.

2.2 Methodology

- 2.2.1 A supervisor was in attendance to monitor the excavation of the test pits. These were excavated by hand with the aid of power tools.
- 2.2.2 Three test pits were excavated (Fig. 2). Test Pit 1 measured approximately 2.75 m x 0.80 m, Test Pit 1a measured 1.25 m x 0.8 m and Test Pit 2 measured 14.30 m x 0.80 m. The test pits were all excavated to an average depth of 0.75m below the ground surface level.
- 2.2.3 A digital .pdf plan showing the extent and location of all excavations was prepared (Fig. 2). Hand drawn sketch plans sections of each post hole were also prepared. A detailed digital photographic record was made. Recording followed procedures detailed in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed. D. Wilkinson, 1992).

3 RESULTS

3.1 Description of deposits

Test Pit 1

- 3.1.1 This test pit (Fig. 2 and 3, Plate 1) was excavated to the north of the main car parks north wall in what was first the Tiltyard, and subsequently became the Kitchen Gardens and was excavated to identify both archaeological remains that may be associated with the tiltyard or kitchen gardens and also the presence of any service pipes in the vicinity.
- 3.1.2 The trench was excavated to a depth of 1.5 m up against the Kitchen garden wall which exposed the footings (Plate 4), which were made up of 0.6 m of rough stone, brick and chalk foundations overlain by 0.4 m thick red clay brick footings of a regular course with a concrete bond. The faced stone block wall was built onto the footings in a regular course with no discernible pattern.
- 3.1.3 Evidence of a rubbly backfill of a construction trench was visible at the southern end of the test pit up against the side of the footings. This consisted of a 0.12 m thick brown/orange sandy/silt layer with brick and tile fragment inclusions, (104). overlain by 0.5 m thick brown/grey silty deposit with brick and tile fragment inclusions (103). The backfill deposits were overlain by a brown/grey silt garden soil with <1% small stone inclusions (101). Brick and tile fragments were recovered from this deposit. The upper fill of this part of the test pit consisted of a 0.43 m thick topsoil which is now part of the flower beds that occupy this part of the site. The two backfill deposits are most likely the fill of a construction cut associated with the construction of the wall, however, this portion of the test pit was only 0.4 m wide and the actual construction cut was not visible.
- 3.1.4 The remaining 2.35 m length of the test pit was separated from the flower beds by wooden boards and was only excavated to a depth of 0.75 m; it was made up of mid brown/grey silty subsoil (102) with <1% small stone inclusions, overlain by 0.67 m thick silty brown/grey garden soil, (101), which is seen in the entire length of the test pit. Brick and tile fragments were recovered from this deposit. The garden soil in this part of the trench was overlain by a 0.1 m thick turf line which bordered both the flower beds and the path.



Test Pit 1a

- 3.1.5 Test Pit 1a (Fig. 2 and 3, Plate 2) was excavated to the immediate north of Test Pit 1 and was excavated into the path way adjacent to the grass. The test pit was 1.25 m x 0.80 m and was excavated to a depth of 0.75 m.
- 3.1.6 The test pit was made up of a 0.4 m wide and 0.53 m thick silty brown/grey garden soil deposit (114), overlain by a compact 0.15 m thick brown rubble levelling deposit (107). This deposit most likely served as a base for the overlying tarmac path surface (106). Deposit (114) was identified at the southern end of Test Pit 1a and was abutted to the north by a series of layers that appear to make up different surface layers. Deposit 113 is the lowest layer and is a compact 0.09 m thick rubble deposit consisting of brick fragments and stone. This deposit most likely formed a solid base for the overlying 0.07 m thick brick rubble layer 112, which may be the remains of an old surface/path. Deposit 112 is overlain by layer 111, a compact brick and stone base for the overlying tarmac path layer (110). Deposit 110 represents an old path surface and is 0.06m thick that was subsequently buried by a later path. Layer 109 is the brick rubble base of a later tarmac path, (108). Path 108 is overlain by deposit 107, seen in the southern part of the test pit which was overlain by current tarmac path surface, (106).

Test Pit 2

- 3.1.7 Test Pit 2 (Fig. 2 and 3) was excavated 2.5 m south of Vrow Gate outside the palace and ran from the outer palace wall to the edge of Hampton Court Road. The test pit measured 14.3 m x 0.80 m and was excavated to a depth of 0.75 m. The trench was excavated to identify any archaeological remains associated with Hampton Court Palace that may be present and to also trace all services identified on the architects service plans.
- 3.1.8 The trench was excavated in three separate stages in order not to block the pedestrian right of way alongside Hampton Court Road. Generally the make up of the trenches was similar in all sections of this test pit, as described below.
- 3.1.9 Services were identified throughout the trench including two high voltage cables and British Telecom service cables. The services were seen towards the bottom of the test pit at an average depth of between 0.60 m and 0.75 m. The lowest fill (201, 206 and 209), which was seen running along the entire length of the trench, overlay the services and was a compact brown clay silt deposit with small stone and brick/tile inclusions. Clay pipe and oyster shell was also recovered from this deposit. A dark brown grey silty deposit (203) was identified up against the side of the outer palace wall from which brick and tile fragments were recovered. This deposit was most likely a backfill deposit laid down within a construction cut for the wall, however no cut could be identified as this deposit was truncated by the later cut for the services identified nearby and subsequent backfill.
- 3.1.10 The backfill deposit at the bottom of this test pit was overlain by three different and distinct layers. The eastern end of Test Pit 2 was excavated through a grass verge that ran to the east of the footpath and up to the palace wall. The backfill layer here, (201), was overlain by 0.4 m of topsoil and grass, (200). This section of the test pit was 5.4 m long and 0.80 m wide.
- 3.1.11 The central part of the test pit (Plate 3) was excavated through the public foot path that ran down Hampton Court Road and was 3.5 m long and 0.80 m wide. The compact



backfill deposit (209) was overlain with a 0.31 m thick pale yellow concrete layer (208), which would have been laid down to provide a stable base for the overlying tarmac and gravel path (207).

- 3.1.12 The western section of Test Pit 2 was excavated through a gravel verge that ran alongside Hampton Court Road. This section was 5.4 m long and 0.80 m wide. The compact backfill (206) was overlain by a 0.3 m thick sandy ballast stone layer (205) onto which a 0.10 m thick gravel layer, (204) was laid down to provide a finished surface.
- 3.1.13 No archaeological features were identified in this test pit.

3.2 Finds

- 3.2.1 Samples of brick and tile were recovered during the course of the watching brief.

3.3 Environmental remains

- 3.3.1 No deposits suitable for palaeo-environmental sampling were identified during the course of the watching brief.

4 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1.1 Test pits 1 and 1a were excavated into the flower beds, grass verge and tarmac path along Vrow Walk inside the palace near to Vrow Gate. The test pits mostly revealed an underlying garden soil deposit with brick and tile inclusions which may have been associated with the Kitchen Gardens that superseded the earlier Tiltyard that once occupied this area of the palace. This deposit was subsequently overlain with topsoil for the flower beds, the grass verge and tarmac path surface. However earlier backfill deposits were seen up against the footings of the Kitchen Garden wall to the south of the trench and appear to represent the possible fill of a wall construction cut. Several old surface levels were seen in Test Pit 1a and were identified as being associated with old path surfaces that represent a build up of the path ground surface of Vrow Walk.
- 4.1.2 Test Pit 2 which was excavated outside the palace near to Vrow Gate mainly revealed a compact clay/silt backfill/levelling deposit that overlay a series of modern surfaces that run along the side of Hampton Court Road. This deposit supported a variety of upper ground surfaces that can still be seen, the grass verge next to the palace, the footpath and the gravel surface that is immediately to the side of Hampton Court Road.
- 4.1.3 No archaeological structures or features associated with the Tiltyard or subsequent Kitchen Gardens were revealed during the course of this watching brief however a sample of brick fragments and tile was recovered..



APPENDIX A. ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context	Type	Depth (m)	Width	Length	Comments	Finds	Date
100	Layer	0.43	-	-	Topsoil	-	-
101	Layer	0.67	-	-	Garden Soil	Yes	-
102	Layer	-	-	-	Subsoil	-	-
103	Fill	0.5	-	-	Backfill	Yes	-
104	Fill	-	-	-	Backfill	Yes	-
105	Structure	1.5	-	-	Wall Foundation	No	-
106	Layer	0.07	-	-	Tarmac Path	No	-
107	Layer	0.15	-	-	Levelling Layer	No	-
108	Layer	0.06	-	-	Old Tarmac Path	No	-
109	Layer	0.04	-	-	Levelling Layer	No	-
110	Layer	0.06	-	-	Old Tarmac Path	No	-
111	Layer	0.12	-	-	Levelling Layer	No	-
112	Layer	0.07	-	-	Possible path surface	No	-
113	Layer	0.09	-	-	Levelling Layer	-	-
114	Layer	-	-	-	Garden Soil	No	-
200	Layer	0.4	-	-	Topsoil	No	-
201	Layer	-	-	-	Levelling	Yes	-
202	Cut	-	-	-	Service trench cut	-	-
203	Fill	-	-	-	Wall construction Backfill	Yes	-
204	Layer	0.1	-	-	Gravel Surface	No	-
205	Layer	0.31	-	-	Sand/Gravel Ballast	No	-
206	Layer		-	-	Levelling	Yes	-
207	Layer	0.1	-	-	Tarmac Path	No	-
208	Layer	0.31	-	-	Concrete	No	-
209	Layer	-	-	-	Levelling	Yes	-



APPENDIX B. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

Hampton Court Palace, 2009, *Brief for Archaeological Observation and Recording*

IFA, 2008 *Standards and Guidelines for Archaeological Watching Briefs*

OA, September 2010, *Vrow Walk, Hampton Court Palace, Historic Buildings Recording and Investigation, HCP78*

OAU, 1992, *Fieldwork Manual*, (Ed. D Wilkinson, first edition, August 1992)



APPENDIX C. SUMMARY OF SITE DETAILS

Site name:	Hampton Court Palace - Vrow Walk Test Pits
Site code:	HCP81
Grid reference:	Centred at NGR TQ 155 686
Type :	Archaeological Watching Brief
Date and duration of project:	10 th to 13 th January 2011, 4 days
Summary of results:	All test pits were excavated into modern overburden and garden soils. No archaeological features were encountered during the course of this watching brief.
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Hampton Court Palace in due course.

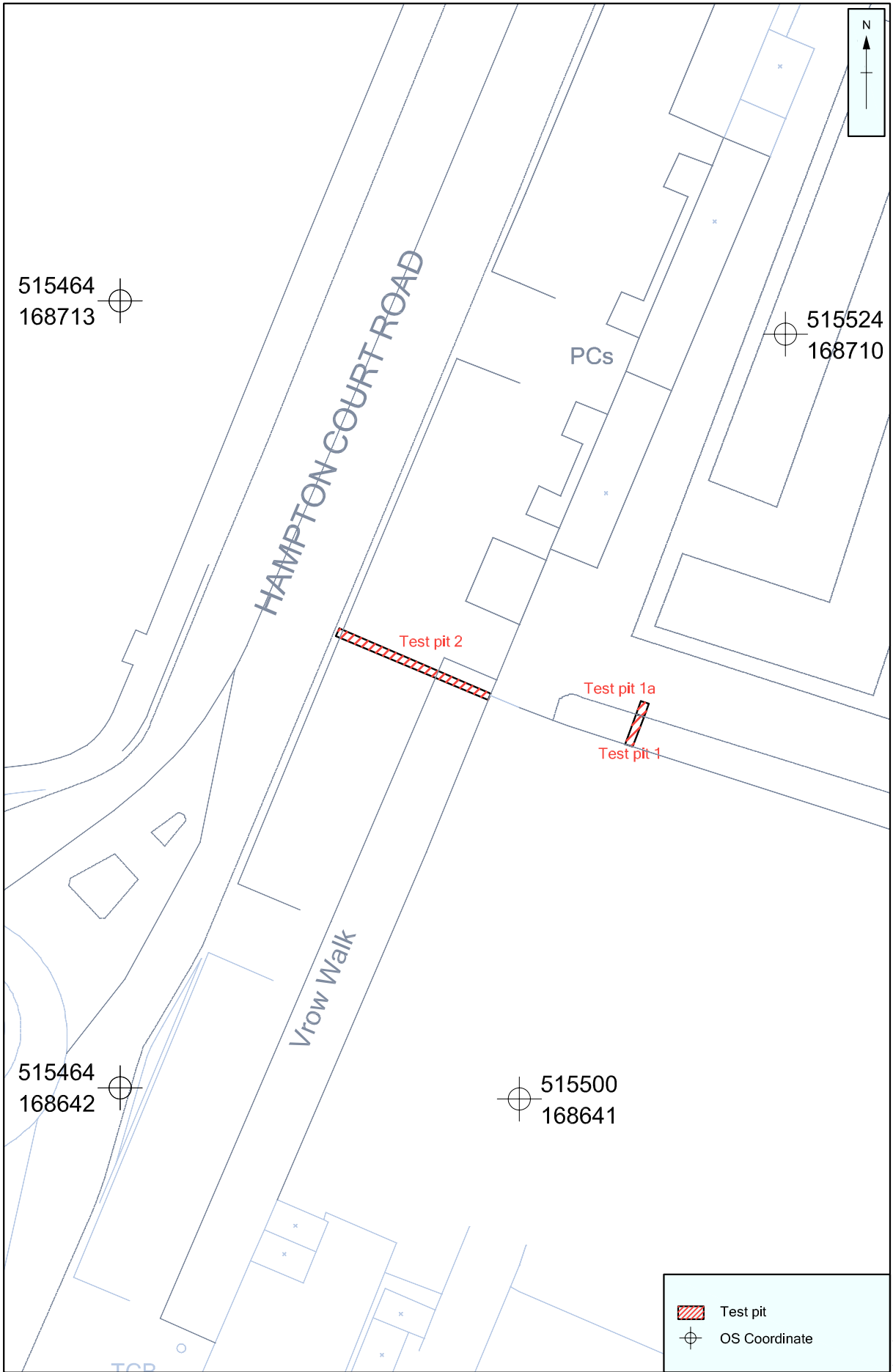


Scale 1:50,000

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Figure 1: Site location

X:\HCP81\Geomatics\CAD\HCP81_Test pit_locations_180111.dwg(A4 portrait)****dan.watkeys* 18 Jan 2011



0 20 m
1:500 @ A4

Figure 2: Test pit Locations

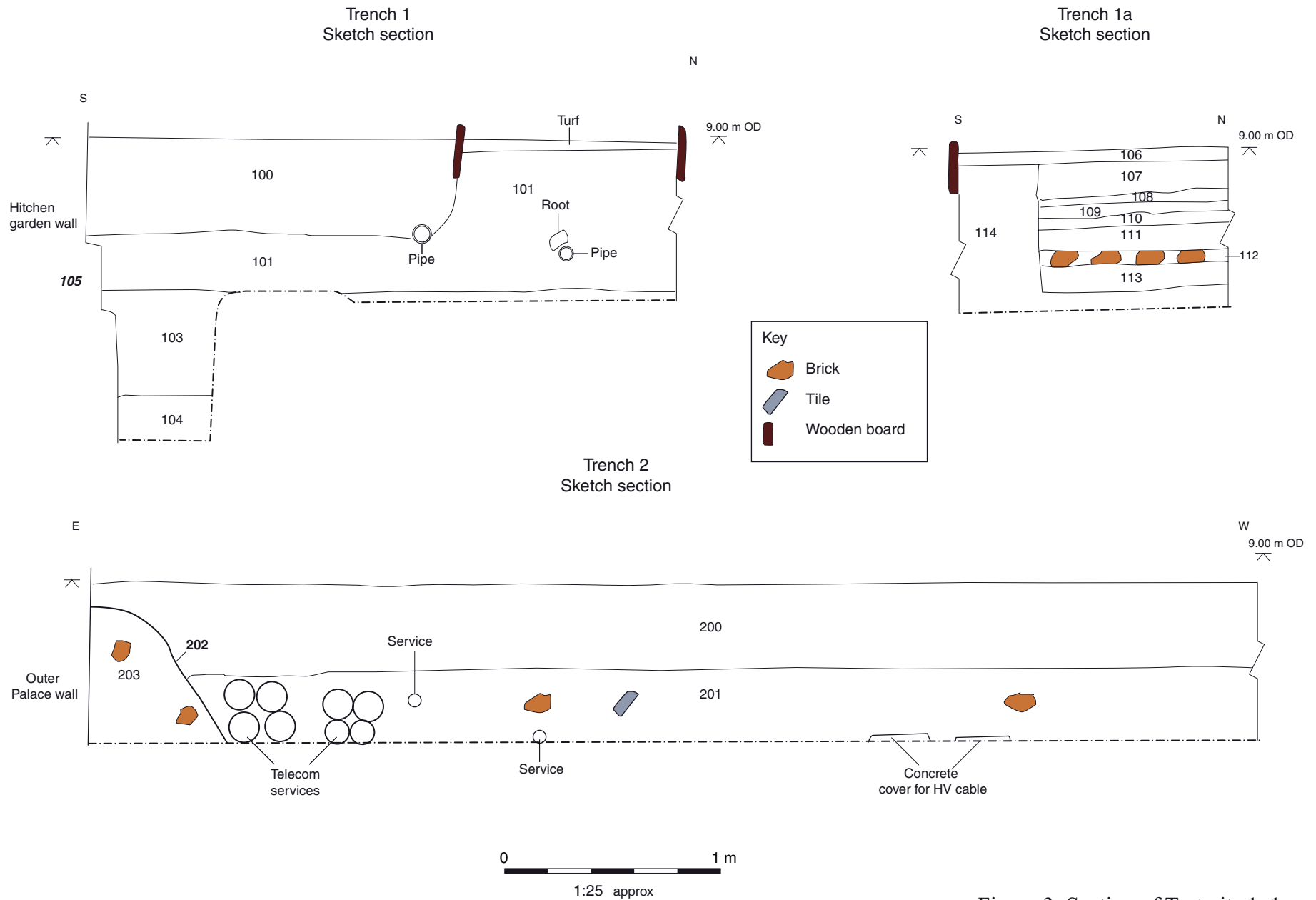


Figure 3: Section of Test pits 1, 1a and 2



Plate 1: Trench 1



Plate 2: Trench 1a



Plate 3: Trench 2, through footpath



Plate 4: Footings
of Hitchen garden wall



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