



Tumbling Bay, Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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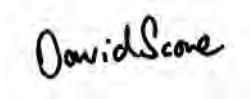
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Prepared by: Tamsin Jones (Assistant Supervisor)
Checked by: Joakim Thomasson (Senior Project Manager)
Edited by: Martyn Allen (Senior Project Manager)
Approved for Issue by: David Score (Head of Fieldwork)
Signature:



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OA South
Janus House
Osney Mead
Oxford
OX2 0ES

t. +44 (0)1865 263 800

OA East
15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridge
CB23 8SQ

t. +44 (0)1223 850 500

OA North
Mill 3
Moor Lane Mills
Moor Lane
Lancaster
LA1 1QD

t. +44 (0)1524 880 250

e. info@oxfordarch.co.uk
w. oxfordarchaeology.com

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Director and Chief Executive
Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCIFA
Private Limited Company, No: 1618597
Registered Charity, No: 285627
Registered Office: Oxford Archaeology Ltd
Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 0ES

Tumbling Bay, Oxford

Archaeological Watching Brief Report

Written by Tamsin Jones and Joakim Thomasson

*with contributions from John Cotter and Ian R. Scott and
illustrations by Simon Batsman and Matt Bradley*

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Summary

Between the 22nd October and the 28th November 2019, Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief on behalf of the Environment Agency at the site of Tumbling Bay in Oxford during groundworks associated with the construction of a fish pass.

The watching brief encountered remains from Tumbling Bay bathing place, which existed from the mid-19th century until 1990. In total, 16 structures including buildings and pavements were documented. During the 19th century, the site consisted of a parkland area with a ferry house and a toll house along the Thames to the east and a bathing place with buildings to the west of the weir sluice. From the 1920s onwards, the bathing place was enlarged to the east and the north.

The watching brief uncovered evidence of landscaping, with the ground level being raised to prevent flooding. The Bulstake Stream was converted into pools with concrete sides and steps and was jettied by footbridges connecting the north and south sides. New buildings were constructed, aligned with the northern boundary of the site. Recording of the concrete foundations shows that the site had a guard house and toilet facilities between 1921 and 1957. The buildings erected during the following decades were more robustly built with brick walls, among them locker rooms, connected by concrete paved and walled pathways.

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The project was managed for Oxford Archaeology by Joakim Thomasson. The fieldwork was directed by Tamsin Jones, who was supported by Christopher Clarke. Survey and digitising were carried out by Simon Batsman and Matt Bradley. Thanks are also extended to the teams of OA staff that cleaned and packaged the finds under the management of Geraldine Crann and prepared the archive under the management of Nicola Scott.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of work

- 1.1.1 Oxford Archaeology (OA) was commissioned by the Environment Agency to undertake a watching brief at the site of Tumbling Bay former bathing area by Bulstake Stream in Oxford.
- 1.1.2 The work was undertaken as a condition of Planning Permission (planning ref. 18/03176/FUL). A specification was set by David Radford and a written scheme of investigation (WSI) was produced by OA detailing the Local Authority's requirements for work necessary to inform the planning process and to discharge the planning condition. This document outlines how OA implemented the specified requirements.

1.2 Location, topography and geology

- 1.2.1 The development site was situated within the Thames floodplain, west of Oxford's historic centre and north of Botley Road. The site covered an area c 0.86ha, encompassing the north and south banks of the Bulstake Stream and bounded by the River Thames to the east.
- 1.2.2 The site comprised a former open-air bathing place, grass land, shrubbery and trees.
- 1.2.3 The underlying geology consists of alluvial deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel. This overlies Oxford Clay Formation mudstone, formed in the Jurassic period (BGS 2019).

1.3 Archaeological and historical background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological and historical background of the area has been described in detail in an archaeological desk-based assessment (DBA) (OA 2018) and in the WSI (OA 2019). The following text provides a summary of that information.
- 1.3.2 The location of the site on the floodplain of the River Thames with the Bulstake Stream running through it indicates that palaeochannels may exist under the alluvium. If so, these have the potential to contain waterlogged deposits and organic material.
- 1.3.3 During the Neolithic and the Bronze Age, the Thames Valley floodplain was drier and more suitable for habitation. A series of cropmarks east of the site suggests prehistoric activity. The area of highest archaeological potential within the geological sequence is the interface between the alluvium and the gravel, where activity relating to the Bronze Age may be present.
- 1.3.4 There is little evidence relating to settlement during the Iron Age and Roman periods. Archaeological remains of medieval date are primarily concentrated toward the south-east of the study area, reflecting the site's location outside of the known extent of medieval Oxford. During this period, the site consisted an area of meadowland and was potentially used seasonally for grazing.
- 1.3.5 Towards the mid-19th century, Tumbling Bay was developed as a bathing place. Throughout the 20th century, the Bulstake Stream was continually modified and managed, and several phases of small buildings and outbuildings were constructed

and demolished within the site until the official closure of the bathing place in 1990. It is possible that evidence of the original structures survives.

2 WATCHING BRIEF AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 General

2.1.1 The watching brief was set up to monitor excavations in order to obtain information about the nature and depths of any archaeological deposits that may have survived within the site.

2.2 Specific aims and objectives

2.2.1 The specific aims and objectives of the watching brief were:

- i. To determine or confirm the general nature and extent of any archaeological remains present;
- ii. To determine or confirm the approximate date or date range of any remains by means of artefactual or other evidence;
- iii. To record the exposed sediment sequences including palaeochannel sequences, the depth of the Pleistocene gravel surface, and to recover samples from organic/peat sequences where practicable; and
- iv. To make available the results of the investigation.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 A summary of OA's general approach to excavation and recording can be found in Appendix A of the WSI. Standard methodologies for geomatics and survey, environmental evidence, artefactual evidence and burials can also be found in the WSI (Appendices B, C, D and E respectively).

2.3.2 The groundwork contractor allowed sufficient time within their programme for adequate archaeological investigation of structures and trenches.

2.3.3 The concrete foundations related to the 19th- and 20th-century bathing place (referred to here as 'structures') were recorded prior to the machine excavations.

2.3.4 All structures situated within the area of the proposed fish pass and within plant driveways were cleared from foliage, photographed, recorded, and digitally surveyed. Structures located outside this area were, when opportunities arose, photographed and surveyed.

2.3.5 Five trial trenches, one measuring 6m by 8m (trench 1) the other four measuring 2m by 1m (trenches 2–5), were excavated within the 177m long and up to 8m wide area of the proposed fish pass. The general stratigraphy was recorded and photographed. The high water level and unstable sides made further cleaning and recording within the trench dangerous.

2.3.6 No environmental samples were taken.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Introduction and presentation of results

- 3.1.1 A total of 16 structures related to the Tumbling Bay bathing place were recorded at locations scattered over the site (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.2 The five trial trenches, which were excavated to a depth of 1m to 0.8m below ground level, uncovered foundation layers for the bathing facilities and buried ground levels (Fig. 2).
- 3.1.3 No other archaeological deposits or finds were found during the watching brief.
- 3.1.4 The full measurements and descriptions of structures and trenches are tabulated in Appendix A.

3.2 General soils and ground conditions

- 3.2.1 The natural geology of Jurassic Oxford Clay was overlain by a deposit of river gravels of the Northmoor Foundation, and in places overlain by a clay-silt alluvium subsoil. A topsoil layer had accumulated above this, which in turn was overlain by foundation layers and the present topsoil.
- 3.2.2 At the beginning of the watching brief, the ground conditions were generally good in terms of the clearing and recording of the structures. Due to the high water table, and some persistent heavy rain leading the adjacent River Thames to be very high, the trenches quickly flooded once excavated.
- 3.2.3 The structures were fairly easy to identify and hand clean. However, some were hidden underneath dense foliage and a mechanical excavator was needed to clear the features. Certain structures (eg S5, S19) were outside of the fish pass area and were therefore not a high priority to be cleared by mechanical excavator. These remained partially covered during recording.

3.3 Structures

- 3.3.1 Most of the structures were situated in the northern part of the site, aligned with the area of the proposed fish pass. They have been grouped into building foundations and pavements.
- 3.3.2 The building foundations mostly comprised rectangular concrete slabs. With the exception of S1 (Plates 2–3), all the structures had an east-west alignment with their southern long sides facing Bulstake Stream. Remains of brick walls were observed in relation to S2, S3, S8 and S20 (Plates 4, 5 and 8). Preserved concrete paving was observed in relation to S8 (Plate 8). Sewage pipes and lavatory porcelain were found in association with S1 and S24 at the very eastern and western ends of the site.
- 3.3.3 Two of the building foundations were square shaped. Remains of brick walls were observed on the southern platform of S8 (Plate 8). Parts of a concrete paved floor were preserved on the northern foundation of S21 (Plate 9).
- 3.3.4 The pavements were of two types. Three long and narrow platforms found in S4, S7 and 23 (Plates 7 and 10) were aligned with the northern boundary of the site. Remains

of brick walls and concrete paving were recorded on the eastern platform of S7. A large rectangular pavement was observed in the southern part of the site at S5 in the vicinity of the weir sluice and the eastern pool.

3.4 Trial trenches

- 3.4.1 Trench 1 was situated in the eastern part of the site. It measured 6m by 8m and was 1m at the deepest point. The natural (101) was encountered 0.57m below ground level and consisted of light yellow-brown clay. This was overlain by topsoil which constituted a 0.23m-thick layer (100) of grey clayey silt with gravel inclusions. A 0.14m-deep layer of dark black-grey friable silty rubble (102) was found immediately underneath the topsoil. It was overlain by structure 1 and was deposited as a foundation for the building. The surrounding topsoil was not visible in this trench.
- 3.4.2 Alluvial deposits were recorded in trenches 2 and 3 in the eastern and central part of the site. These comprised orangey-yellow sandy gravels that were encountered approximately 0.75m below the present ground level (202, 303). A 0.05m-thick buried topsoil layer consisting of grey clayey silt was noted in trench 3 (302). A 0.5m-deep layer of yellow sand overlay the buried topsoil and the natural (201, 301).
- 3.4.3 The natural, consisting of light yellowish-grey clay, was recorded in the central/western parts of the site in trenches 4 and 5 at approximately 0.4m below the ground level (402, 502). This was, as in trenches 2 and 3, overlain by a 0.2m deep layer of yellow sand (401, 501).

3.5 Finds summary

- 3.5.1 Finds comprised parts from wash basins or water closets with Bristol-type internal glaze, and from salt-glazed stoneware drainpipes. Also, three metal finds, a length of pipe, a pivot arm and a ground spike were noted.
- 3.5.2 All the finds dated to the modern period and have been discarded.

4 DISCUSSION

4.1 Objectives and results

4.1.1 The watching brief resulted in the documentation of remains from the bathing place. No deposits relating to palaeochannels or Neolithic–Bronze Age activities were encountered.

4.2 Interpretation

4.2.1 The chronology of the site can be divided into four main phases:

- I. *19th century*: The site divides into two areas: a ferry place and a toll house surrounded by parkland east of the weir sluice and a narrow area along the Bulstake Stream to the east of the sluice.
- II. *1921–1957*: The Bulstake Stream was consolidated with concrete sides and divided into pools with a new sluice construction. The site was expanded eastward and comprised the former parkland towards the north. New buildings were constructed on alignment with the northern boundary. Two toilets and a guard house were built in the eastern part.
- III. *1957–1990*: Additional buildings with locker rooms connected by concrete paved paths are constructed on alignment with the northern boundary. The buildings had more robust brick walls.
- IV. *1990–present*: The site is closed and all the structures have been demolished.

Phase I

4.2.2 The Tumbling Bay bathing place was established in the mid-19th century. According to the 1876 Ordnance Survey map it originally consisted of two areas (Fig. 3). A toll house associated with a ferry-crossing point were at this time surrounded by parkland that stretched from the River Thames and further westwards to the sluice. The bathing facilities were located within an 80m wide area along the Bulstake Stream east of the sluice gate. It comprised a north-south L-shaped building by the sluice and two smaller east-west rectangular buildings positioned along the northern boundary. Four structures were recorded in the bathing area, but none in the parkland surrounding the toll house.

4.2.3 The rectangular building foundation (S19) situated in the western part of the site is depicted on the 19th-century maps, but not on later editions.

Phase II

4.2.4 Map progression shows the development of Tumbling Bay bathing place into the 20th century (Fig. 4). By 1921 the bathing area had been expanded to the north and east. The natural bank of the Bulstake Stream had been consolidated along its northern side. Buildings had been built in the eastern part of the site. Between 1937 and 1957, further outbuildings were constructed along the northern and eastern boundaries of the site and four footbridges had been built over the stream. The stream had now taken the form of rectangular pools with concrete sides and steps, which are evident at the site today.

- 4.2.5 The stratigraphy recorded in the trenches clearly showed that landscaping preceded the expansion of the bathing place. Half a meter of sand was deposited to raise the ground level, still visible as a steep slope towards the low-lying fields north of the site. Another material was used in around the north-south aligned building (S1) in the eastern part. The contents of the layer suggest nearby topsoil was used.
- 4.2.6 Six of the recorded structures can be identified on the 1957 National Grid map (Fig. 4). The buildings in the very north-eastern and north-western (S1, S24) edges of the site functioned as toilets (Plates 2–3). Between these and aligned with the northern boundary, there were two rectangular buildings, possibly locker rooms. A square-shaped and high building foundation (S8) was located midway north of the pool located east of the sluice. Remains of brick walls suggest that it had a sturdier construction than the toilet buildings and probably functioned as a lifeguard house. Finally, a 0.5m-diameter stone foundation was located in the north-eastern corner of the bathing place area (S9). It appears on the 1957 and 1969 National Grid maps and is labelled “D Fn”, probably denoting a datum point and/or the location of a flagpole.
- 4.2.7 The large concrete pavement (S5) was not identified on any of the historic maps, but was probably part of the development of the bathing place that occurred after 1937.

Phase III

- 4.2.8 All five buildings first appearing on the 1969 National Grid map were recorded during the watching brief (Fig. 5). Three of these, S2, S3 and S20 (Plates 4–5) had interior brick-built divisions, likely functioned as locker rooms. Another square-shaped and high concrete foundation (S21), situated in the central northern part of the site overlooking the bathing facilities, was probably used as a guard house. Several concrete pavements, one with remains of a brick wall and floor tiling (S7), connected several of the east-west aligned buildings along the northern boundary.

APPENDIX A DESCRIPTIONS AND CONTEXT INVENTORY

Structure 1						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Concrete foundation pad. Included four partial toilet structures and associated pipes. Depth not visible from surface.					Length (m)	9.70
					Width (m)	2
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
1:1	Structure	2	-	Concrete foundation pad	-	-
1:2	Structure	0.27	-	Toilet	-	-
1:3	Structure	0.19	-	Pipe	-	-
1:4	Structure	0.25	-	Toilet	-	-
1:5	Structure	0.19		Pipe	-	-
1:6	Structure	0.26		Toilet	Enamel	-
1:7	Structure	0.17		Pipe	Piping	-
1:8	Structure	0.24		Toilet	-	-
1:9	Structure	0.19		Pipe	-	-

Structure 2						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Concrete foundation pad. Some brickwork partitions still visible. Full depth not visible from surface, but some recorded as is a positive feature.					Length (m)	9.85
					Width (m)	2.04
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
2	Structure	2.04	0.49	Concrete foundation pad	-	-

Structure 3						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Concrete foundation pad. Some brickwork partitions still visible. Depth not visible from surface.					Length (m)	9.80
					Width (m)	2.02
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
3	Structure	2.02	/	Concrete foundation pad	-	-

Structure 4						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Concrete walkway or wall. Depth not visible from surface. Partially broken at eastern and western end due to foliage and tree roots. Comprised two parallel walkways, one of the total (although partially broken) length of 13.7m x 05.50m wide; the other 13.30m long x 0.40m wide.					Length (m)	13.69
					Width (m)	0.9
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
4	Structure	0.9	/	Concrete walkway	-	-

Structure 5						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Concrete surface. Surveyed and photographed but not recorded further.					Length (m)	/
					Width (m)	/
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
5	Structure	/	/	Concrete foundation pad	-	-

Structure 6						
General description					Orientation	E-W
T-shaped concrete foundation pad. Depth not visible from surface. Had an extension, comprising a square pad, to the north of the main rectangular pad measuring 3m long x 2.13m wide.					Length (m)	9.16
					Width (m)	2.05
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
6	Structure	2.05	/	Concrete foundation pad	-	-

Structure 7						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Concrete foundation walkway or wall. Depth not visible from surface. Comprised long concrete walkway, floor tiling, and brickwork.					Length (m)	20.30
					Width (m)	1.06
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Length (m)	Description	Finds	Date
7:1	Structure	0.62	20.3	Concrete walkway	-	-
7:2	Structure	0.33	19.5	Tiling		
7:3	Structure	0.11	10.8	Brickwork		

Structure 8						
General description					Orientation	N-S
Concrete foundation pad. Some brickwork at eastern and western edge. Concrete step and tiling at the southern end. Depth not visible from surface.					Length (m)	2.84
					Width (m)	2.58
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Length (m)	Description	Finds	Date
8:1	Structure	2.24	2.84	Concrete foundation pad	-	-
8:2	Structure	0.09	2.43	Eastern brickwork		
8:3	Structure	0.09	1.87	Western brickwork (partially broken)		
8:4	Structure	0.41	2.58	Concrete step		
8:5	Structure	0.25	0.77	Tiling		

Structure 9						
General description					Orientation	/
Circular stone structure. Depth not visible from surface.					Length (m)	0.52
					Width (m)	0.53

Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Length (m)	Description	Avg. depth (m)	Findings	Date
9	Structure	0.53	0.52	Stone	-	-	-

Structure 18

General description					Orientation	E-W
Concrete foundation pad. Surveyed and photographed but not recorded further.					Length (m)	/
					Width (m)	/
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Findings	Date
18	Structure	/	/	Concrete foundation pad	-	-

Structure 19

General description					Orientation	E-W
Concrete surface. Surveyed and photographed but not recorded further.					Length (m)	/
					Width (m)	/
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Findings	Date
19	Structure	/	/	Concrete surface	-	-

Structure 20

General description					Orientation	E-W
Concrete foundation pad. Some brickwork partitions still visible. Full depth not visible from surface, but some recorded as is a positive feature.					Length (m)	9.80
					Width (m)	2.08
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Findings	Date
20	Structure	2.08m	0.40	Concrete foundation pad	-	-

Structure 21

General description					Orientation	N-S
Square concrete tiled surface. Depth not visible from surface.					Length (m)	3.74
					Width (m)	3.74
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Length (m)	Description	Findings	Date
21	Structure	3.74	3.74	Concrete tiled surface	-	-

Structure 22

General description					Orientation	E-W
Concrete foundation pad. Full depth not visible from surface, but some recorded as is a positive feature.					Length (m)	9.35
					Width (m)	2.20
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Findings	Date

22	Structure	2.20	0.30	Concrete foundation pad	-	-
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Structure 23						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Concrete walkway. Depth not visible from surface.					Length (m)	5.90
					Width (m)	0.92
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Length (m)	Description	Finds	Date
23	Structure	0.92	5.90	Concrete walkway	-	-

Structure 24						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Concrete foundation pad. Three toilets and piping/ urinal trough visible. Depth not visible from surface.					Length (m)	9.35
					Width (m)	2.00
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Length (m)	Description	Finds	Date
24:1	Structure	2.00	9.35	Concrete foundation pad	-	-
24:2	Structure	0.22	0.30	Toilet		
24:3	Structure	0.10	0.10	Toilet pipe		
24:4	Structure	0.23	3.03	Pipe/ urinal trough		

Trench 1						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Situated in the eastern part of the site.					Length (m)	6.0
					Width (m)	8.0
					Avg. depth (m)	1
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
100	Layer	6.0	0.23	Subsoil	-	-
101	Layer	6.0	0.45	Natural		
102	Layer	6.0	0.14	Foundation layer		

Trench 2						
General description					Orientation	E-W
Situated in the eastern part of the site. Concrete intrusion along the western side. Natural level found 0.8m below present ground level.					Length (m)	2
					Width (m)	1
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
200	Layer	1.0	0.3	Topsoil	-	-
201	Layer	1.0	0.5	Foundation layer		
202	Layer	1.0	-	Natural		

Trench 3						
General description					Orientation	E-W
					Length (m)	2

Situated in the central part of the site. Natural level found 0.75m below present ground level.					Width (m)	1
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
300	Layer	1.0	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
301	Layer	1.0	0.5	Foundation layer		
302	Layer	1.0	0.05	Buried topsoil		
303	Layer	1.0	-	Natural		

Trench 4

General description					Orientation	E-W
Situated in the western part of the site. Natural level found 0.4m below present ground level.					Length (m)	2
					Width (m)	1
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
400	Layer	1.00	0.15	Topsoil	-	-
401	Layer	1.00	0.25	Foundation layer		
402	Layer	1.00	-	Natural		

Trench 5

General description					Orientation	E-W
Situated in the western part of the site. Natural level found 0.4m below present ground level.					Length (m)	2
					Width (m)	1
					Avg. depth (m)	/
Context No.	Type	Width (m)	Depth (m)	Description	Finds	Date
500	Layer	1.00	0.2	Topsoil	-	-
501	Layer	1.00	0.2	Foundation layer		
502	Layer	1.00	-	Natural		

APPENDIX B FINDS REPORTS

B.1 Pottery

By John Cotter

Context	Description	Date
S14	14 sherds of ceramic building material from wash basin or water closet, including one pedestal sherd and several pipe sherds. In Stoneware fabric similar to yellow ware (YELL) with external white slip under clear glaze, internally a clear Bristol-type glaze. No maker's marks. 1066g	Late 19 th – 20 th century
S15	10 sherds from the rim of a salt glazed stoneware drainpipe and a piece of cement seal. 1157g	Late 19 th – 20 th century

B.2 Metals

By Ian R Scott

- B.2.1 There are three metal finds, a length of pipe, a pivot arm and a ground spike all related to structure 1.
- B.2.2 The asymmetrical pivot arm is made in bright steel and has pivot holes at each end. The longer part of the pivot arm is straight with a lenticular cross-section; the shorter end is curved and slight tapered. The point is positioned between the two arms. Modern.
- B.2.3 The iron pipe is broken at one and has a 90° junction piece at other end. Modern pipe.
- B.2.4 The third metal item is a cast-iron ground spike with a flat top and two screw holes. The tapering spike has a T-shaped cross section and the point is missing. Modern.

Finds Register

Structure 1		
	(1)	Asymmetrical pivot bar in bright metal, probably stainless or similar. Now slightly bent. The shorter slightly curved arm is c 110mm long, whereas the longer straight arm measures L: 160mm. Overall L: c270mm.
	(2)	Pipe, iron. Length of pipe with right angle curved junction piece at one end. D of pipe: 28mm. Overall L: 245mm.
	(3)	Ground spike, cast iron. Flat topped with two screw holes. One screw is in situ. The tapered spike is of T-shaped cross-section, and broken off short. L extant: 95mm.

APPENDIX C BIBLIOGRAPHY

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<http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html> [accessed July 2019].

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APPENDIX D

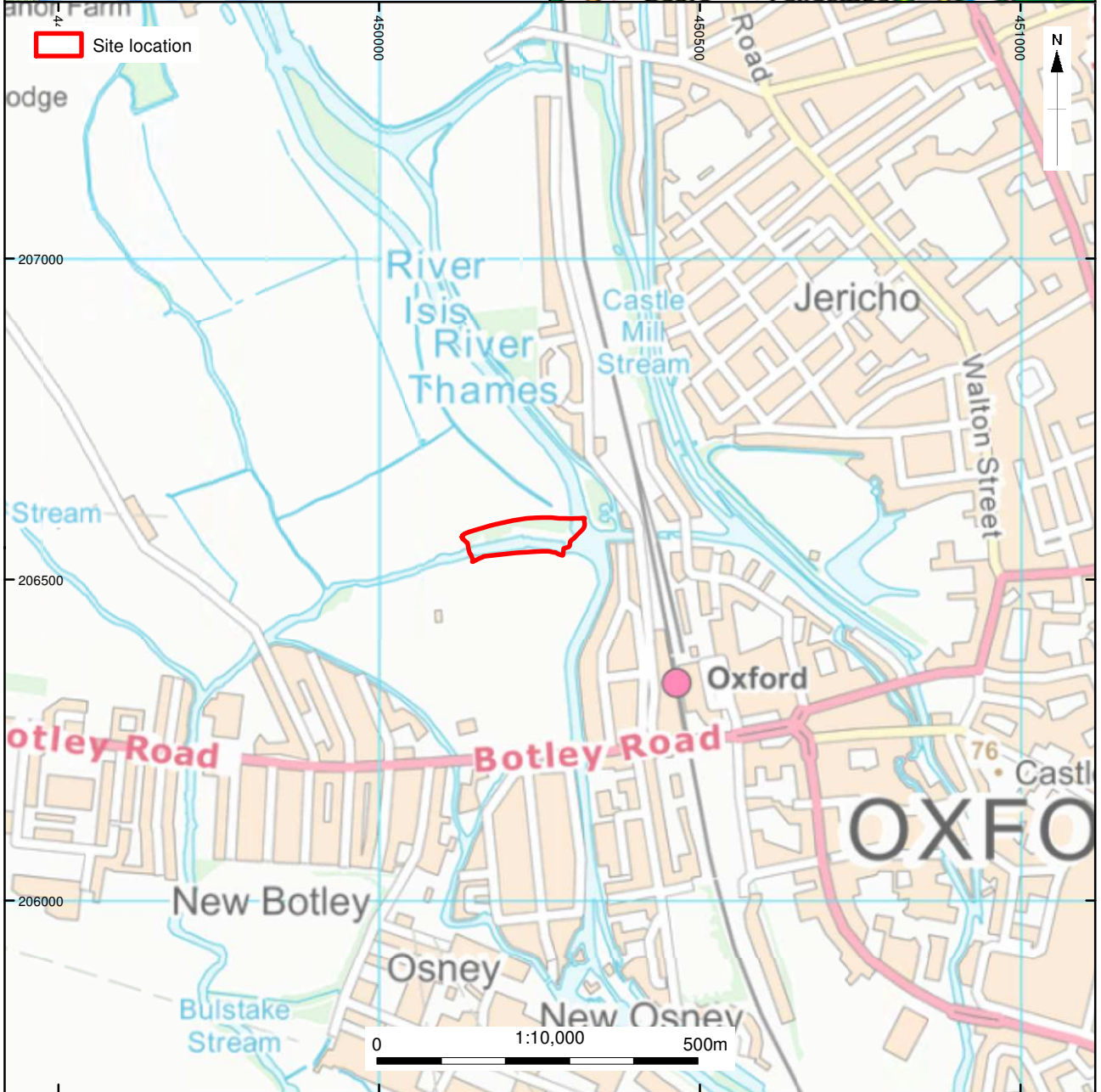
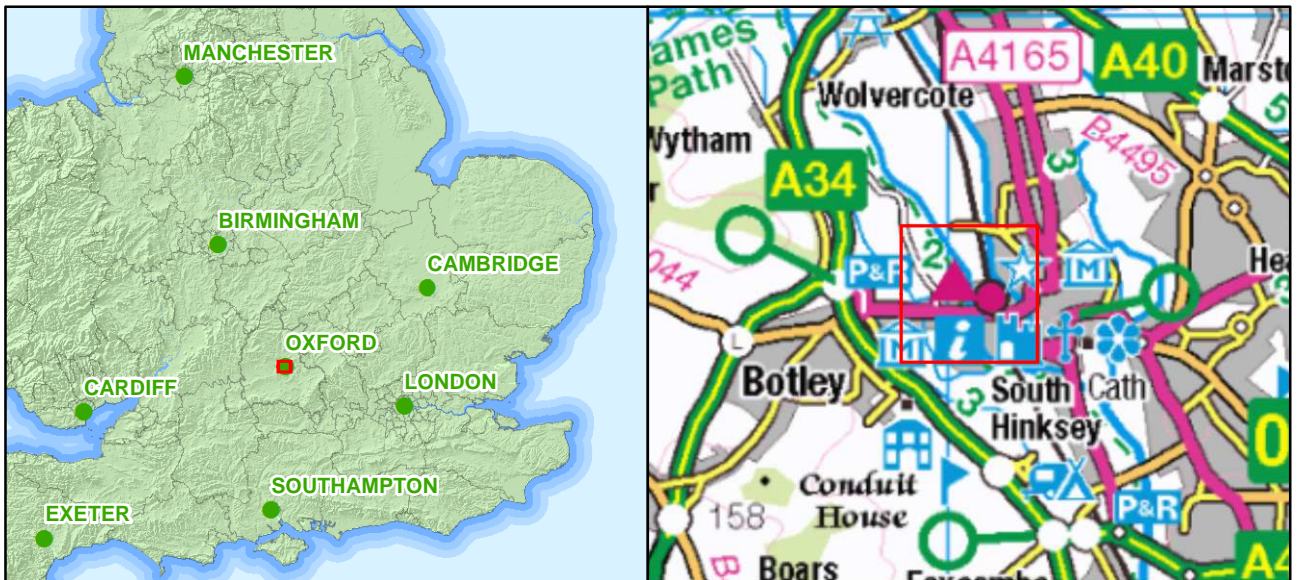
SITE SUMMARY DETAILS

Site name:	Tumbling Bay, Oxford
Site code:	OXTUMB19
Grid Reference	SP 50221 06578
Type:	Watching Brief
Date and duration:	22nd October–28th November
Area of Site	0.86ha
Location of archive:	The archive is currently held at OA, Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford, OX2 0ES, and will be deposited with Oxfordshire Museum Services in due course, under the following accession number: OXCMS 2019:108.

Summary of Results: Between the 22nd October and the 28th November 2019, Oxford Archaeology carried out an archaeological watching brief on behalf of the Environment Agency on the site of Tumbling Bay in Oxford during groundworks associated with the construction of a fish pass.

The watching brief encountered remains from Tumbling Bay bathing place that existed from the mid-19th century until 1990. In total, 16 structures of buildings and pavements were documented. During the 19th century, the site consisted of a parkland area with a ferry house and a toll house along the Thames in the east, and a bathing place with a few buildings along west of the weir sluice.

From the 1920s onwards, the bathing place was enlarged eastwards and towards the north. The watching brief uncovered clear evidence of landscaping, raising the ground level to prevent flooding. Bulstake Stream, both east and west of the sluice, was converted into pools with concrete sides and steps, jettied by footbridges connecting the north and south sides. New buildings were constructed to align with the northern boundary of the site. The recording of the concrete foundations shows that the site was completed with a guard house and toilet facilities during the 1950s. The buildings erected during the following decades were more sturdily built with brick walls, among them locker rooms, connected by concrete paved and walled pathways.



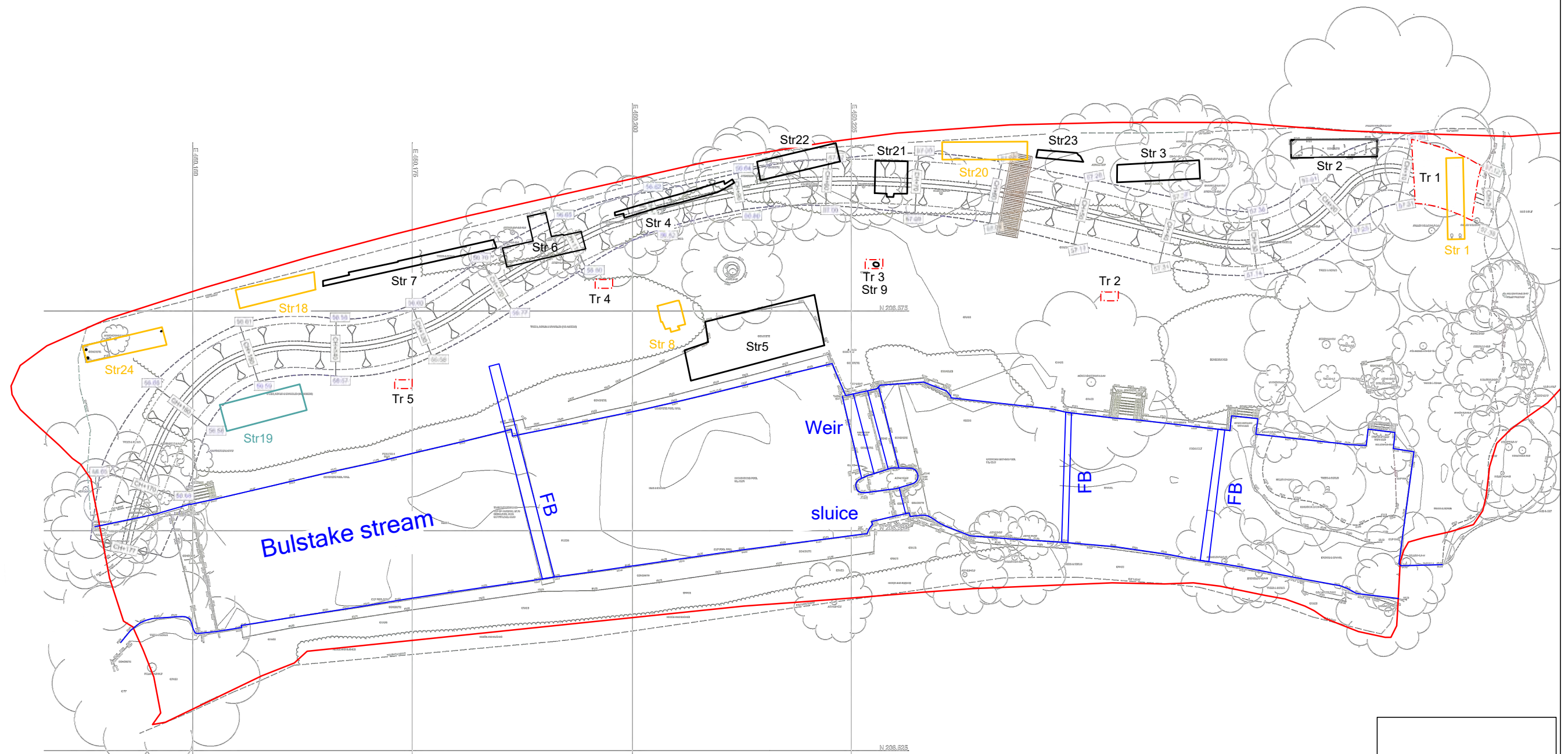
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Figure 1: Site location

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450130
206620

450300
206620



450130
206520

- Site boundary
- Limit of excavation
- Archaeological structure 1899
- Archaeological structure 1921-57
- Archaeological structure after 1957

0 20m

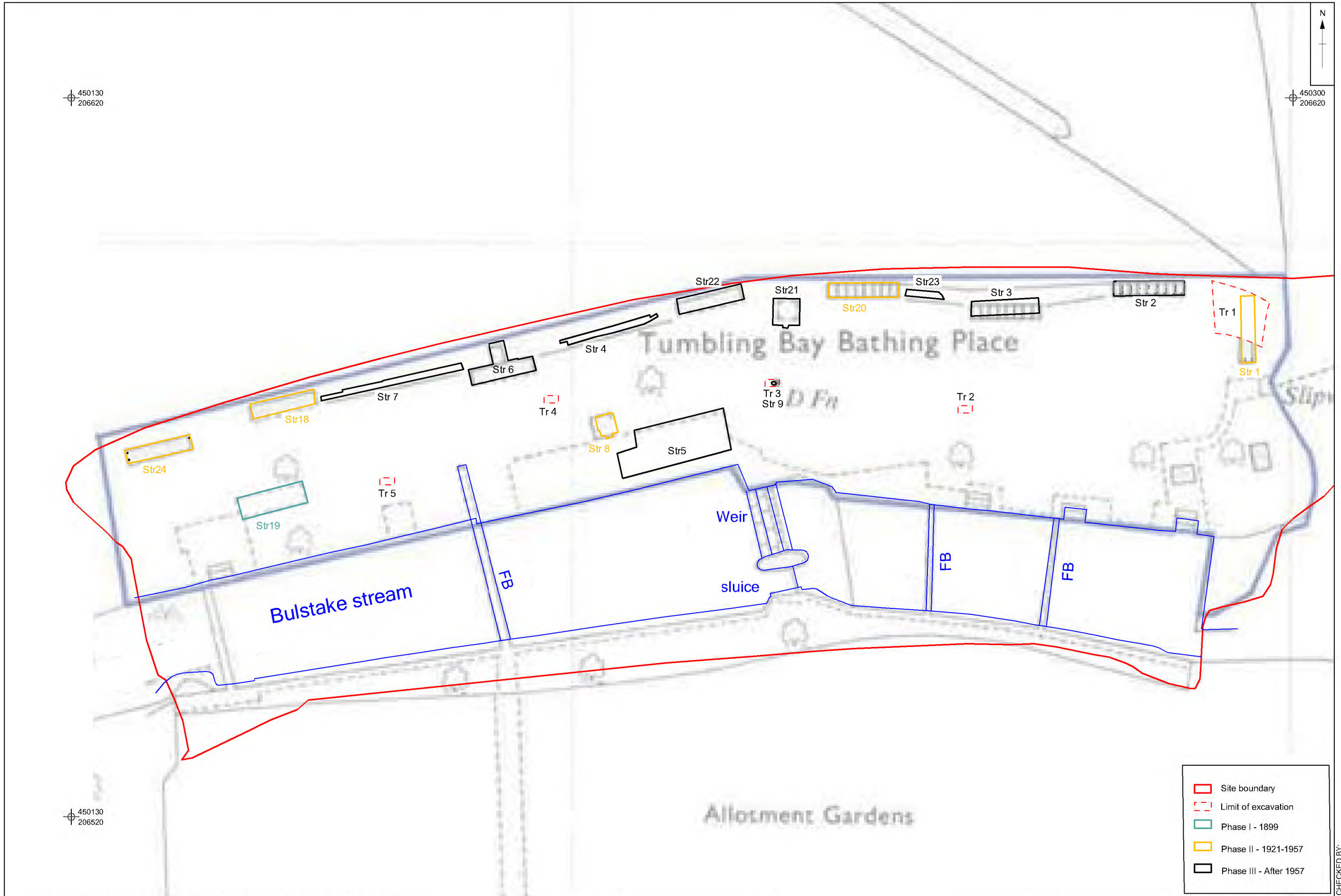
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Figure 2: watching brief areas and recorded structures

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- ▭ Site boundary
- - - Limit of excavation
- ▭ Phase I - 1899
- ▭ Phase II - 1921-1957
- ▭ Phase III - After 1957

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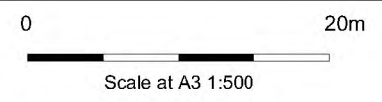
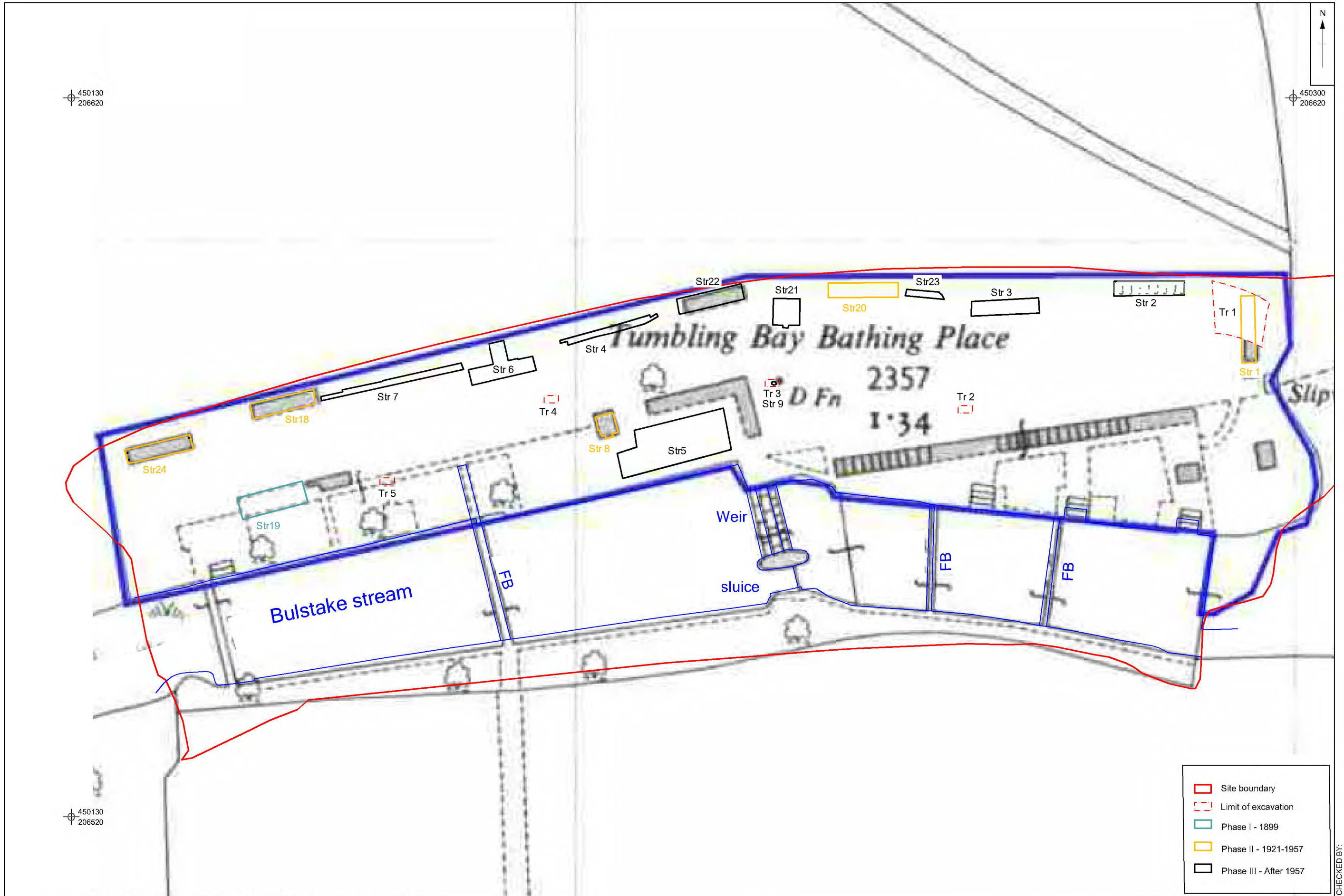


Figure 3: Structures overlaid on the 1899 OS County Series Ordnance Survey Map

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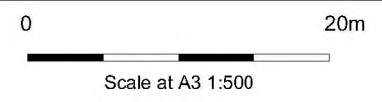
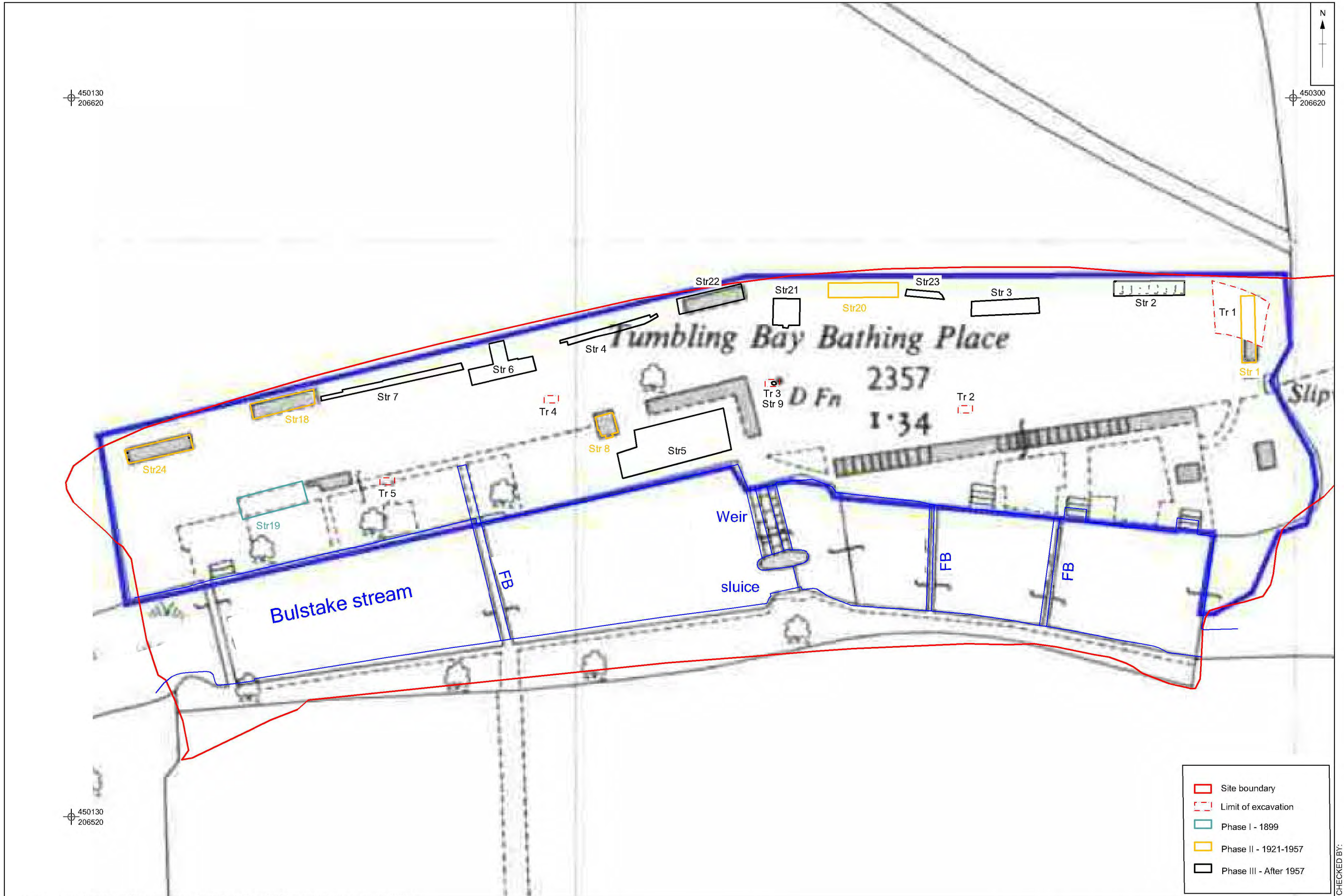


Figure 4: Structures overlaid on the 1957 OS National Grid Series Ordnance Survey Map

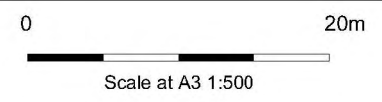
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- ▭ Site boundary
- - - Limit of excavation
- ▭ Phase I - 1899
- ▭ Phase II - 1921-1957
- ▭ Phase III - After 1957

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Figure 5: Structures overlaid on the 1969-72 OS National Grid Series Ordnance Survey Map

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Plate 1: General site photo, facing east



Plate 2: Structure 1, facing north



Plate 3: Structure 1, detail of toilet cubicles facing south



Plate 4: Structure 2, brick foundations of locker rooms visible, facing west



Plate 5: Structure 2, foundation of outer wall



Plate 6: Structure 6, facing west



Plate 7: Structure 7, facing east



Plate 8: Structure 8, facing north



Plate 9: Structure 21, facing south



Plate 10: Structure 23, facing west



**Head Office/Registered Office/
OA South**

JanusHouse
Osney Mead
Oxford OX20ES

t: +44 (0) 1865 263 800
f: +44 (0) 1865 793 496
e: info@oxfordarchaeology.com
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA North

Mill 3
Moor Lane
Lancaster LA1 1QD

t: +44 (0) 1524 541 000
f: +44 (0) 1524 848 606
e: [oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oanorth@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>

OA East

15 Trafalgar Way
Bar Hill
Cambridgeshire
CB23 8SQ

t: +44 (0) 1223 850500
e: [oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com](mailto: oaeast@oxfordarchaeology.com)
w: <http://oxfordarchaeology.com>



Director: Gill Hey, BA PhD FSA MCIfA
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