

WALLIS, SPECIAL PROJECTS

**7-15 FLEET STREET,
LONDON.**

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

NGR TQ 3105 8105

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March 2001

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Prepared by: <i>Ben M Ford</i> Date: <i>22 / 3 / 2001</i>
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SUMMARY

The Oxford Archaeological Unit (OAU) carried out a field evaluation at 7-15 Fleet Street, London on behalf of Wallace Special Projects. The evaluation consisted of three small trenches excavated through the floors of the basements at the above location. It revealed Thames terrace gravels at a depth of 10.25m OD, overlain by various depths of sterile made ground. Overlying the made ground were the remains of 18th-19th century structures comprising a short stretch of wall orientated north-south, and a soak-away. The stretch of wall is located on a previous property boundary that may have its origins in the original property boundaries of the burhgage plots established along Fleet Street in the medieval period. Evidence for the demolition of these structures was recorded. The main structural foundations of the present extant buildings were observed to completely truncate (in the specific areas where they exist) all previous remains.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Location and scope of work

- 1.1.1 In February 2001 OAU carried out a field evaluation at 7-15 Fleet Street, London on behalf of Wallis - Special Projects. The archaeological brief was set by, and a Written Scheme of Investigation agreed with, Katherine Stubbs, Archaeological Officer for the Corporation of London.

1.2 Geology and topography

- 1.2.1 The development site at 7-15 Fleet Street is located within Farringdon Ward Without some 50m inside the City of London's western boundary. It is situated at the western end of Fleet Street on its southern side, it is bounded to the north by Fleet Street, to the east by Nos. 1-3 Middle Temple Lane, to the west by Inner Temple Lane and by Hare Court to the south. NGR TQ 3105 8105 (Fig.1).
- 1.2.2 Fleet street runs east-west along the southern edge of the relatively flat first gravel terrace of the River Thames. To the south the land slopes away to the current northern edge of the river some 200m distant. The river would have been nearer to the site and the slope would have been more pronounced in the Roman and medieval periods.

1.3 Archaeological [and historical] background

- 1.3.1 No conclusive evidence for a human presence within the Corporation boundaries during the Palaeolithic period has yet been found. Evidence for later Prehistoric activity has been recovered from at least 34 sites within the City and is supported by 97 isolated finds (including 2 hoards). Isolated Mesolithic and Iron Age finds have been found within 40m of the College of Arms. However, conclusive evidence for any substantial pre-Roman settlement in this area remains elusive.

- 1.3.2 The Roman town of Londinium was founded sometime between the invasion of Britain in AD 43 and AD 60, when the town was first documented. Initially it centered on the area to the north of the newly constructed bridge (close to the site of the present London Bridge) and, as well as minor roads, included two main east/west roads, along which the most important buildings, constructed in timber, were built
- 1.3.3 Expansion peaked during the first half of the 2nd century, with the town spreading west to cover an area of approximately one square mile and, around AD 200, the whole was enclosed by a massive city wall (Fig.4).
- 1.3.4 From the mid 4th century Londinium's stability appears to have weakened, largely as a result of political unrest within the Roman Empire and the intensifying threat of barbarian aggression. It was at this time that a riverside wall was constructed, and the landward defences strengthened.
- 1.3.5 During early 5th century increased barbarian attacks and internal political divisions led to the collapse of the Western Roman Empire, resulting in the end of Roman rule in Britain. London's administration and urban economy collapsed completely, buildings were deserted, and dark earth, thought to indicate agricultural activity, built up all over the city.
- 1.3.6 Very little is known of the city during the period of Germanic settlement in the post-Roman period. What little evidence there is suggests that the area within the walls was more or less deserted. Recent excavations have demonstrated that by the 8th century AD London's commercial centre, then known as *Lundonwic*, had migrated to the area around the Strand, to the west of the Roman town.
- 1.3.7 It has been suggested that the area around St. Paul's Cathedral formed an administrative and ecclesiastical centre, containing a royal palace, possibly to the north of St. Paul's Cathedral, the Cathedral itself, founded in 604, and the enclosed residences of high status citizens
- 1.3.8 During the 9th and 10th centuries London's commercial centre was again relocated within the city walls, probably as a defensive measure against raids by the Vikings, who succeeded in occupying London between 872 and 886 before being ousted by King Alfred and his forces.
- 1.3.9 The site lies at what is thought to be the eastern limits of *Lundonwic* (Fig.5).
- 1.3.10 By the 13th century the walled city had again become fully established as a major international trading centre. It was densely populated and much of the modern street plan including the line of Fleet Street had crystallized. Property boundaries been established with the characteristic medieval burhgage plots lining the streets. By this period the extensive complex of New Temple had already been established to the south of the current site (Figs 6 and 7).

1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 Grateful thanks are extended to Wallis who provided all the attendance necessary to complete the fieldwork.

2 EVALUATION AIMS

2.1 General

- 2.1.1 The aim of the evaluation was to allow the engineers to view the necessary foundation details, below current floor levels, with the minimum of impact to any significant archaeological remains that may be encountered.
- 2.1.2 To ensure that an opportunity is provided for any archaeological remains or deposits that may be revealed by the intrusive work to be investigated and recorded.

2.2 Specific

- 2.2.1 To establish the depth to which modern activity has impacted. To record the level at which archaeological deposits or potential archaeological horizons might survive in order to add to the existing understanding of the area.
- 2.2.2 To establish the character, extent and date of archaeological deposits and structures, and the natural geological horizon.
- 2.2.3 To make the results available to the client and the planning authority by way of a report.

3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The fieldwork was limited to three separate areas where lift-pits are to be proposed within the basement levels of the extant buildings.
- 3.1.2 The evaluation consisted of three trenches, Trench 1 measured 1 m x 1.4 m, Trench 2 measured 1.4 m x 1.5 m, and Trench 3 measured 1.7 m x 1.3 m (Fig. 2).

3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The position and size of the trenches were determined by the engineers. The main purpose for the trenches was to provide information for the design of proposed lift-shafts.
- 3.2.2 Initial concrete surfaces and modern overburden were removed to the first significant archaeological horizon by the attendance contractors.
- 3.2.3 Further hand excavation was conducted by the supervising archaeologist, and any deposits and revealed features were excavated within the limits of the trench to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples.

3.2.4 All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scales of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

3.3 **Finds**

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and generally bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.

3.4 **Palaeo-environmental evidence**

3.4.1 No deposits having environmental potential for charred plant remains, waterlogged remains, or plant macro and micro-fossil remains were located.

3.5 **Presentation of results**

3.5.1 Having established the background to the evaluation, there follows a general description of each trench from the earliest deposit through the sequence to the latest deposit. Any finds from the excavations will then be considered, and the results will then be discussed as a whole and an interpretation offered.

4 **RESULTS: GENERAL**

4.1 **Soils and ground conditions**

4.1.1 The three trenches were located in the floors of the cellar levels of the current buildings occupying 7-15 Fleet Street. The location and size of each trench were specified for engineering purposes, which resulted in these locations in all instances being restricted by structural walling making working conditions rather cramped. There was no natural lighting. No waterlogged conditions were encountered.

5 **RESULTS: ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESCRIPTIONS**

5.1 **Trench 1 (Fig 3a)**

5.1.1 Trench 1 measured 1.36 m by 1.0 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.17 m (9.70 m OD), within which no *in-situ* natural geological deposits were encountered.

5.1.2 The earliest archaeological deposit was structure 106. This structure consisted of a length of curved brick wall, surviving to a height of 0.40 m and varying in thickness from 0.23 m to 0.30 m. Although the structures interior brick face had a curved finish, its main body was roughly built with no discernable bond using un-frogged red bricks. The bricks measured 0.23 m x 0.10 m x 0.07 m which were bonded by a hard orangey-grey mortar containing white calcium carbonate flecks. The interior of this structure was void except for a ceramic pipe leading into it from the north-east. It is probably a soak-away, or possibly a former well. The structure was abutted by

deposit 108, a gravelly silt, interpreted as the backfill to the construction cut for 106, although no cut was observed.

- 5.1.3 Two wall footings were then installed. Above the soak-away was structure 105 constructed from red un-frogged bricks measuring 0.23 m by 0.07 m with the width unobserved, and bonded by a hard pink-grey mortar. This structure forms the foundation to an extant partition wall above which runs north to south with its southern limits within the area of the trench. To the west and running parallel to 105 were the more substantial footings of structure 103. These stepped and off-set footings were constructed on a bedding layer of clay 104, and built from two types of building material. The lower 0.18 m comprised large limestone slabs measuring 0.30m by 0.30 m by 0.09 m thick, which were overlain by red brickwork, the brick dimensions were 0.22 m by 0.11 m by 0.09 m thick, both were bonded by a hard grey cement mortar. The wall they supported was more substantial than that above footings 105. A ceramic pipe had been incorporated into 103 and ran east-west to join with another large ceramic pipe which ran north-south in the space between 103 and 105. It is probable that the two footings and their respective walls and the pipe-work are contemporary, although the large limestone slabs may indicate re-use or the in-situ remains of an earlier structure incorporated into new foundations.
- 5.1.4 The pipe and the footings are overlain by 102, interpreted as backfilling the construction sequence of 103 and 105. This was in turn sealed below the current concrete floor slab which measured 0.38 m thick.

5.2 Trench 2 (Fig 3a)

- 5.2.1 Trench 2 measured 1.5 m square and was excavated to a depth of 1.4 m at an absolute height of 10.25 m OD, where probable natural gravels and sands 210 were encountered.
- 5.2.2 Natural geology 210 was overlain by 209 a thin deposit of pale grey-brown sandy silt, containing mortar dust and fragments. This was sealed by a 0.8 m thick layer of clean grey-brown sandy-silt 208, which is probably redeposited natural and represents a land raising exercise. This layer is cut by a foundation trench 0.25 m deep and 0.5 m wide for foundation 204 comprising a hard grey mortar with white calcium carbonate flecks. 204 provides the foundation for wall 203 which is 0.30 m wide and survived to a height of 6 courses high. This wall is orientated north-south but was only observed in the southern side to Trench 2. This structure is overlain by deposit 201, which contains bricks and mortar similar to those in wall 203, and probably represents its final demolition. No associated floor surfaces were observed, but the construction level for the foundation was recorded at 11.0 m OD, and possibly represents the ground level at this time.
- 5.2.3 The demolition layer was cut by a substantial foundation trench, 1.40 m deep, to receive foundation 206/207 upon which was laid the off-set stepped brick footings to

the current cellar wall, which runs north-south and forms the limit of excavation on the trenches eastern side.

5.3 Trench 3 (Fig 3b)

5.3.1 Trench 3 measured 1.7m by 1.40 m and was excavated to a depth of 1.6 m, an absolute height of 9.90 m OD. The truncated horizon of the natural sand and gravel geology was encountered at 10.18 m OD.

5.3.2 The natural deposits 312 and 313 were overlain by a thin sandy clay layer, 311, which was in turn overlain by a series of gravelly silty-sand deposits 310, 309, 308, and 307 measuring 0.85 m thick, which contained large pieces of concrete, broken bricks and significant quantities of mortar dust and fragments. These deposits probably derived from demolition activity at the site. Cutting the upper levels of this demolition sequence is the construction cut for the concrete foundations to the off-set stepped brick footings 304. These footings are 5 courses in height and support an extant cellar wall which runs round the top of the trench on its western and southern sides. Abutting the concrete foundation to footings 304 is concrete foundation 305. This runs north-south, at right angles to 304 and supports footings 303, in turn supporting an extant partition wall.

5.4 Finds

Bricks

5.4.1 The bricks and mortar provide the only dating evidence in terms of finds. Their dimensions were recorded on site and a comment on their date is offered in the discussion and interpretation section of the report below.

5.5 Palaeo-environmental remains

5.5.1 No paleo-environmental samples were taken due to the absence of deposits with any potential

6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

6.1 Reliability of field investigation

6.1.1 The restricted operating space and lack of natural lighting made fieldwork difficult and therefore limits interpretation and comments on the extent of the structures and deposits encountered. The foundations for the current buildings are substantial, heavily truncating the earlier archaeology at the locations of the trenches. In addition, a distinct lack of dating evidence, except for the structures and their building materials limits firm dating of the sequences observed.

6.2 Overall interpretation

Natural Topography

- 6.2.1 Natural geological sandy gravels were observed at an absolute height of c. 10.20 m OD in Trenches 2 and 3, but no overlying subsoil was encountered suggesting that the ground level has been truncated to some degree during previous activity on the site.

Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

- 6.2.2 Two structures can be considered to be contemporary, built from bricks of similar dimensions and fabric. The bricks from this phase measured 0.22/0.23 m long by 0.07 m thick by 0.10 m wide, were un-fogged and made from a red fired fabric. The bricks are thicker than those from the 16th and 17th centuries, suggesting a later date. Frogged bricks are uncommon prior to the late 18th century. The bricks alone therefore suggest a construction date for these structures from the mid-18th century to the early-mid 19th century. The mortar type concurs with this conclusion. These structures include soak-away 106, and foundation/wall 204/203. It is probable that they represent elements of the buildings and their gardens shown on Figures 8 and 9. The level from which foundation 204 was cut and the presence of this structure below current basement floor levels suggests either that the original ground surface in this period (some 10.0 m distant from the frontage onto Fleet Street) was at c. 11.0m OD. Alternatively these are the structural remains of a former basement. It is notable that one of the regularly spaced north-south property divisions on the Figures 8 and 9 coincide with the location of wall 203.
- 6.2.3 There are *in-situ* structural remains of previous buildings on the site that were demolished, probably to make way for the current buildings. Material from this phase of demolition was recorded in Trench 3, and was probably used to prepare and level the ground for the new buildings. Elements of earlier structures survive between the later truncation from the broad and deep foundations to the current buildings, it is unclear from the limited area investigated in the trenches to what extent they survive.

Twentieth Century

- 6.2.4 The majority of the structural remains relate to the current buildings on the site (Fig. 2). These substantial concrete foundations with stepped off-set footings, where they occur, were observed to truncate the full sequence of previous activity down to the natural geological terrace gravels.

Significance

- 6.2.5 It would appear that some of the north-south property boundaries relating to the eighteenth centuries have been rebuilt in the main structural walls of the current buildings. These property boundaries may have their origins in the medieval burhgage plots that were laid out along Fleet Street (Figs 7 and 8). Because the current walls are placed, in the main part, along the lines of the previous property boundaries, the majority of these will have completely removed elements of the 18th Century structures that survived demolition. Where the current buildings foundations

do not coincide with the early property boundaries previous structures are likely to survive, as evidenced in Trench 2.

APPENDICES

7 APPENDIX I ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

<i>Trench</i>	<i>Ctxt No</i>	<i>Type</i>	<i>Thick. (m)</i>	<i>Comment</i>	<i>Findings</i>	<i>Date</i>
001						
	101	Layer	0.30m	Concrete floor surface	no	19th/20th
	102	Fill	0.48m	Backfill over 103	no	19th/20th
	103	Structure	0.26m	Stone and brick foundation	stone slabs	18th/19th
	104	Fill	0.10m	Clay layer below 103	no	18th/19th
	105	Structure	-	Foundation/footings	brick 0.23 x 0.07m	18th/19th
	106	Structure	-	Soak-away	brick 0.23 x 0.07 x 0.11 m	18th/19th
	107	Cut	-	Construction cut for 105/103	no	-
	108	Fill	0.30m	Backfill to 106	no	-
002						
	200	Layer	0.16m	Concrete floor	no	-
	201	Layer	0.36m	Demolition/make-up	no	-
	202	Fill	0.50m	Backfill over 206/207	no	-
	203	Structure	0.44m	Wall	brick 0.22x0.07	18th-19th century
	204	Structure	0.25m	Foundation to 203	no	-
	205	Structure	0.48m	Off-set stepped brick footings	brick 0.22x0.07	-
	206	Structure	0.54m	Concrete foundations	no	-
	207	Structure	0.18m	Foundations	no	-
	208	layer	0.80m	Made ground	no	-
	209	Fill	0.10m	Construction debris	no	-
	210	Layer	-	Natural gravel	no	-

	211	Fill	0.25m	Concrete foundations to 212 for extant wall same as 206	no	-
	212	Structure	0.48m	Footings on 211 same as 205	brick 0.22x0.07	-
003						
	301	Layer	0.20m	Concrete floor slab	no	-
	302	Fill	0.28m	Backfill	no	-
	303	Structure	0.50m	Wall/footing	brick 0.2x0.1x 0.07	20th century
	304	Structure	0.40m	Footings to extant wall	brick 0.1x0.07	20th century
	305	Structure	0.43m	Concrete Foundation to 303	no	-
	306	Structure	0.63m	Concrete block	no	-
	307	Layer	0.35m	Demolition layer	no	-
	308	Layer	0.18m	Demolition layer	brick 0.1x0.07	18th- 19th century
	309	Layer	0.17m	Demolition layer	no	-
	310	Layer	0.18m	Re-dep natural	no	-
	311	Layer	0.04m	Clay layer	no	-
	312	Layer	0.20m	Natural gravel	no	-
	313	Layer	-	Natural gravel	no	-
	314	Structure	0.50m	Concrete foundation to 304	no	-
	315	Fill	0.32m	Backfill	no	-

8 APPENDIX 2 GLSMR/RCHME NMR ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT FORM

1) TYPE OF RECORDING

Evaluation/Watching Brief,

2) LOCATION

Borough: City of London

Site address: 7-15 Fleet Street, London.

Site Name: 7-15 Fleet Street Site Code: FTT 01

Nat. grid Refs: TQ 3105 8105 centre of site.

3) ORGANISATION

Name of archaeological unit/company/society: Oxford Archaeological Unit

Address: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 OES

Site director/supervisor: Bryan Matthews

Project manager: Ben Ford

Funded by: Wallace - Special Projects

4) DURATION

Date fieldwork started 11/02/2001

Date finished: 15/02/2001

Fieldwork previously notified?

NO

Fieldwork will continue?

NO

5) PERIODS REPRESENTED

Post-Medieval

6) PERIOD SUMMARIES

Post Medieval

Natural gravel at 10.25m OD, overlain by made ground up to 0.80m thick. A stub of north-south orientated wall and a soak away probably dating to the 18th/19th centuries. Demolition material relating to the demolition of these structures in the 19th/20th century and finally truncation by foundations to current walls of extant buildings on site, 19th/20th centuries.

7) NATURAL

Type: First Terrace Thames gravels

Height above Ordnance datum: c. 10.25m OD

8) LOCATION OF ARCHIVES

- a) Please provide an estimate of the quantity of material in your possession for the following categories:

NOtes 40sheets

PLans 5 sheets

PHotos 10

Ngatives 10

SLides 10

Correspondence 0

MScripts (unpub reports, etc)0

BULK finds 0

SMall finds 0

SOil samples 0

- b) The archive has been prepared and stored in accordance with MGC standards and will be deposited in the following location: Museum of London, London.
- c) Has a security copy of the archive been made?: NO

10) BIBLIOGRAPHY

SIGNED: *BGM Ford*

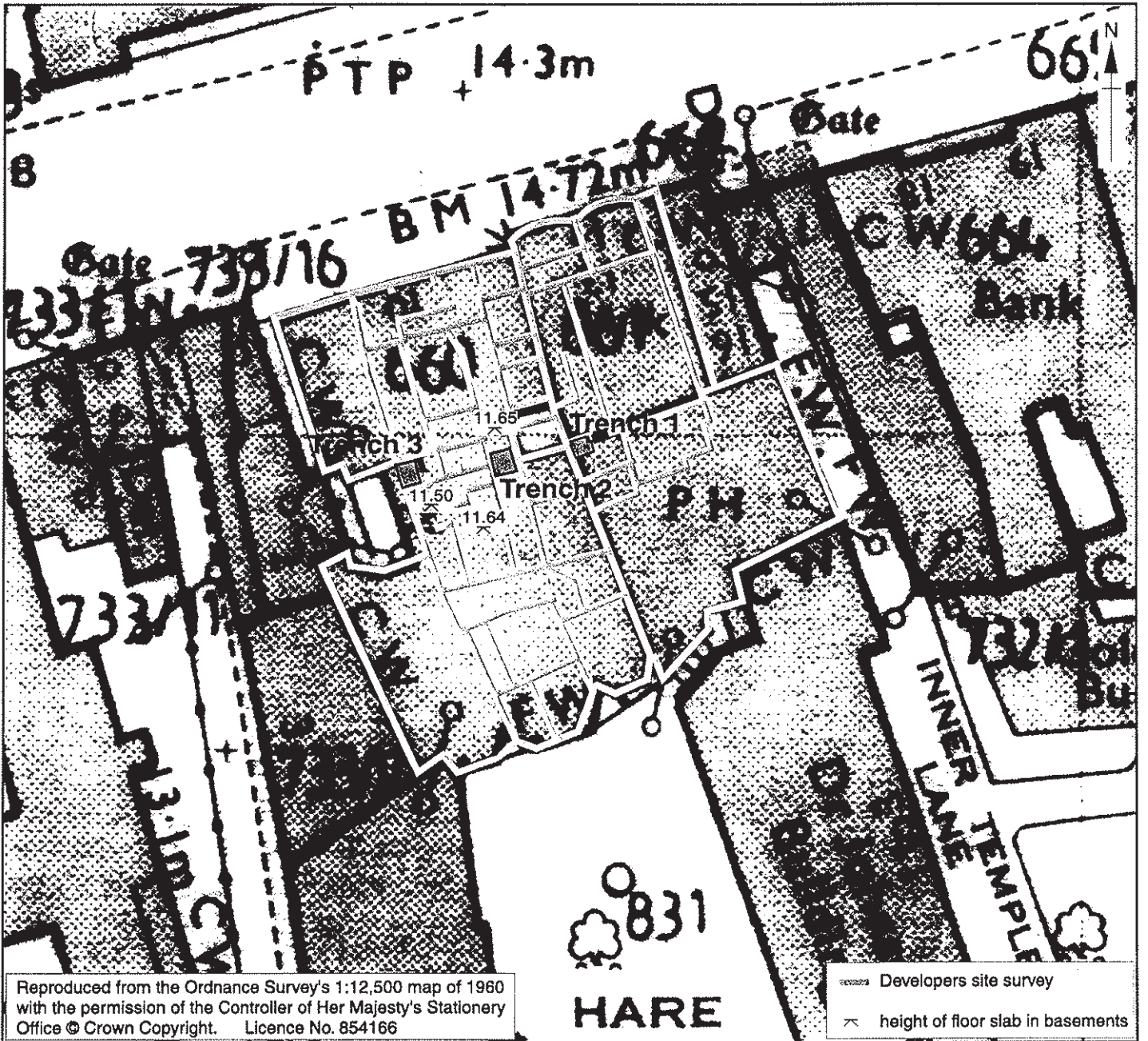
DATE: 22/03/01

NAME: *BGM M Ford*



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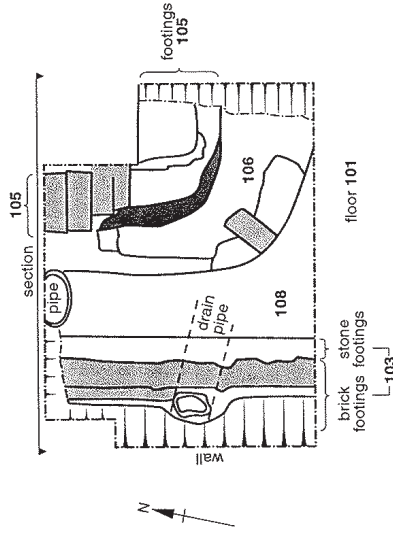
Figure 1: Site location



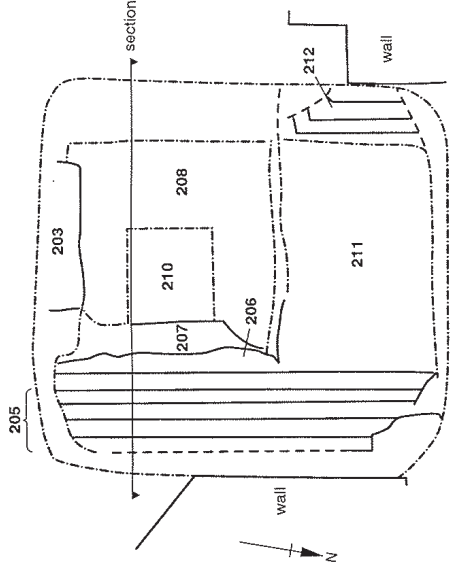
scale 1:400

Figure 2: Location of trenches within site, showing internal cellar walls

Trench 1 Plan

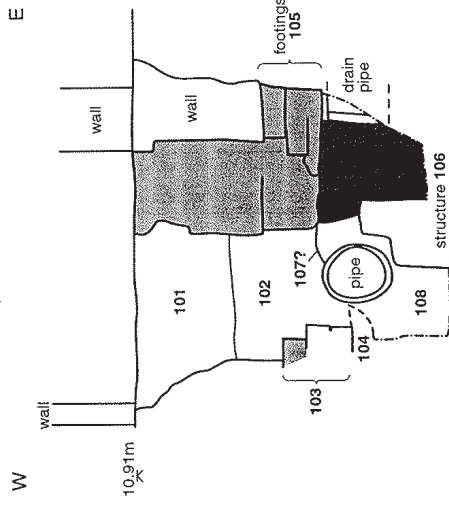


Trench 2 Plan



brick
void

Trench 1 Section



Trench 2 Section

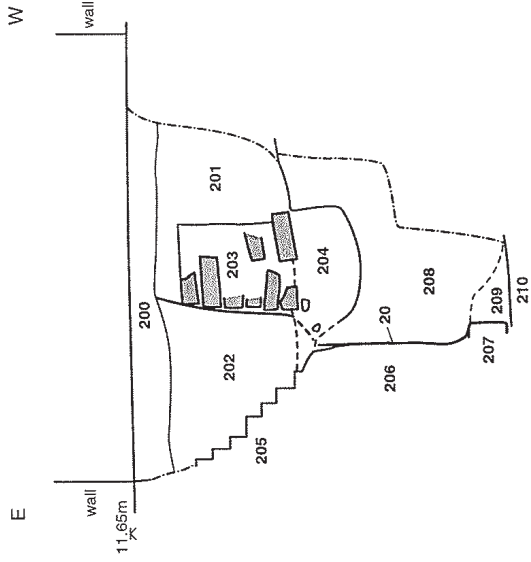
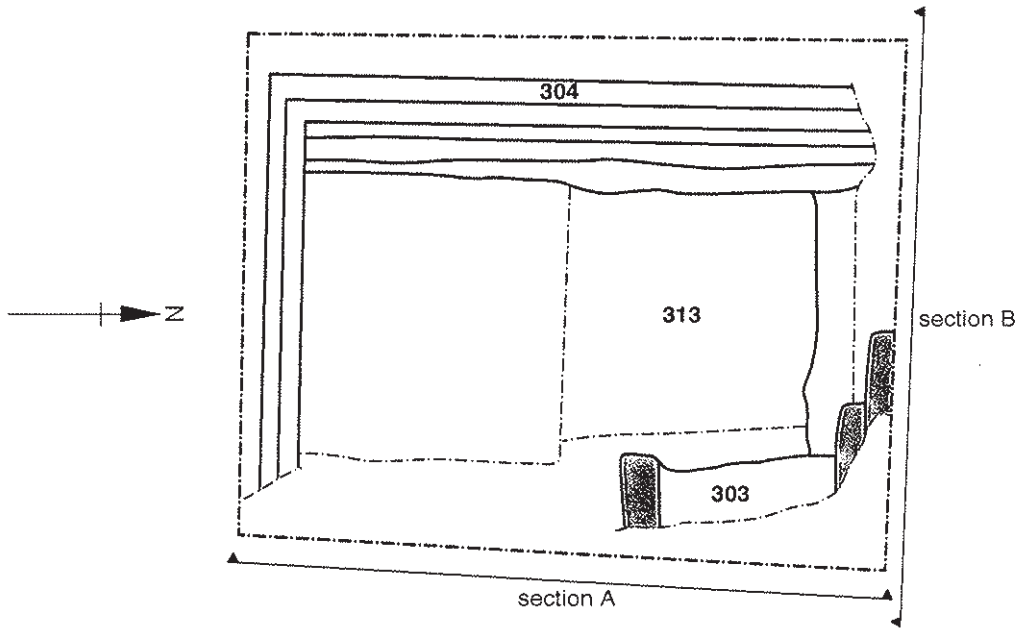
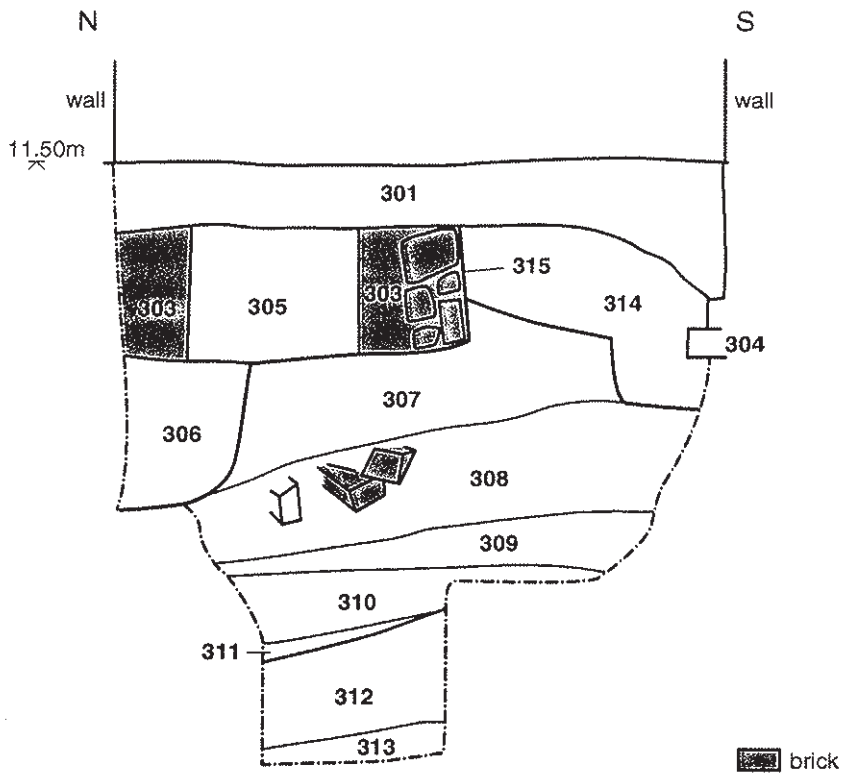


Figure 3a: Trenches 1 and 2 plans and sections

Trench 3 Plan



Trench 3 Section A



Trench 3 Section B

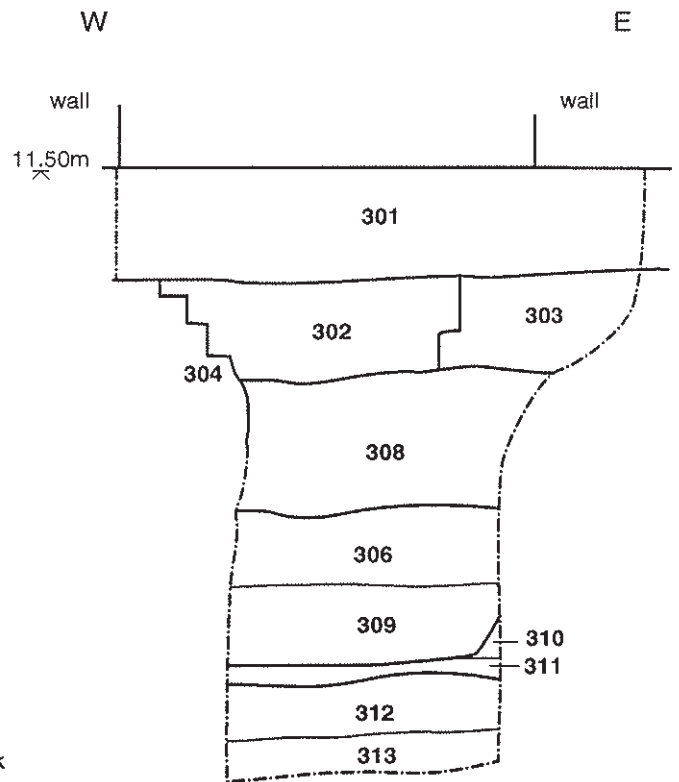


Figure 3b: Trench 3 plan and sections



Figure 4: The site in relation to Londinium

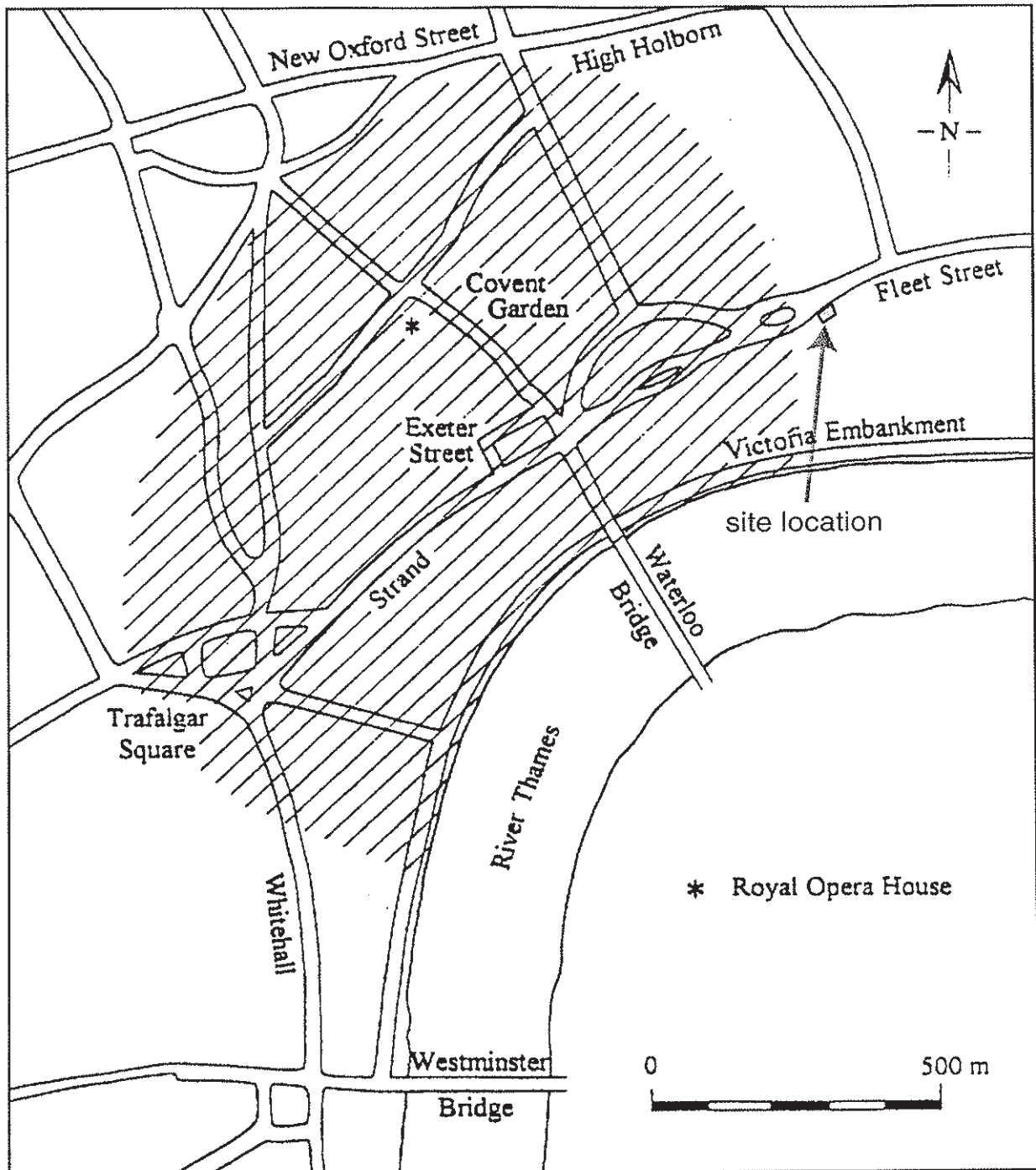


Figure 5: The site in relation to Londunwic



Figure 7: The site in relation to Brown and Hogenbers (1572)

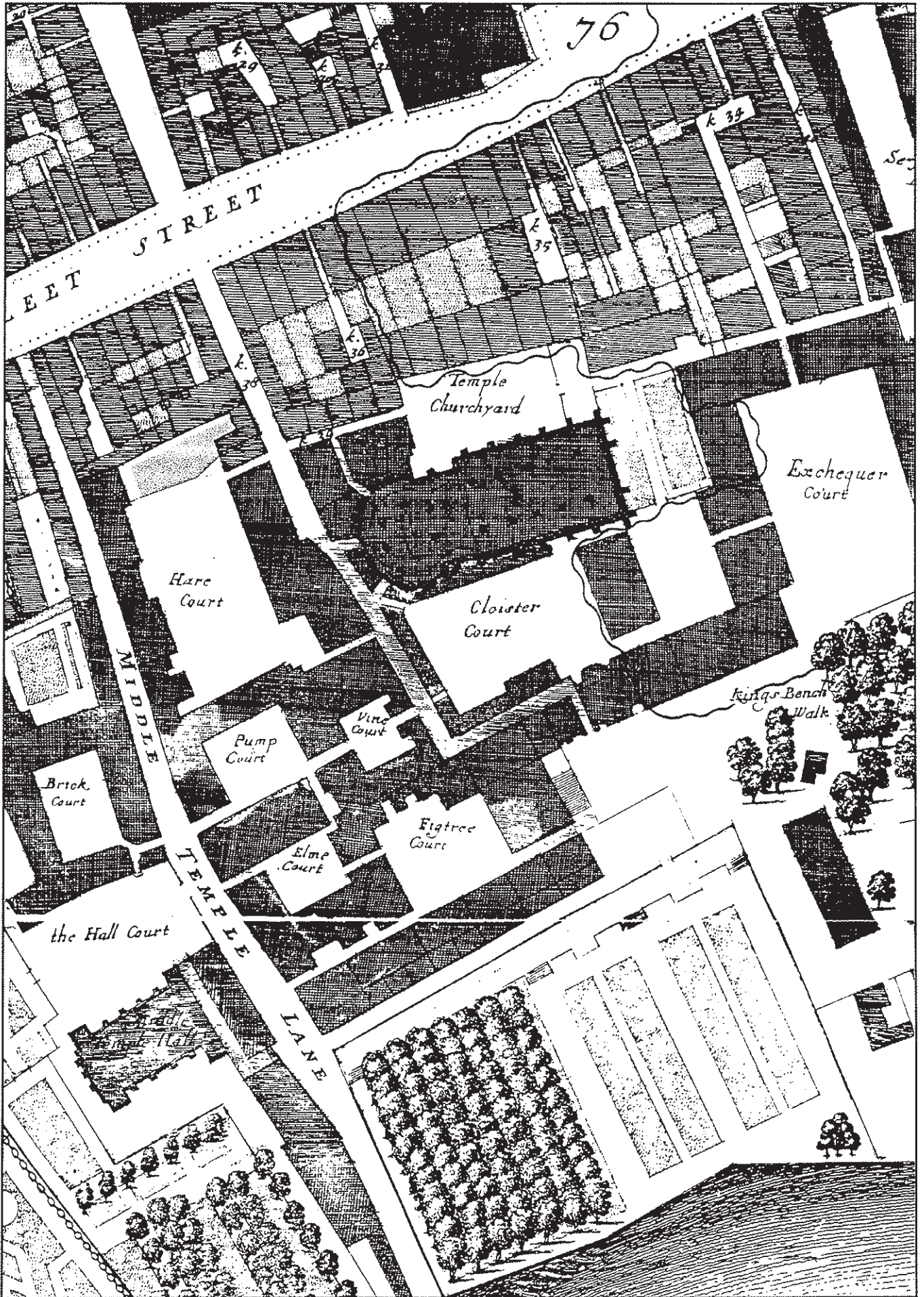


Figure 8: The site in relation to Ogilby and Morgan (1676)

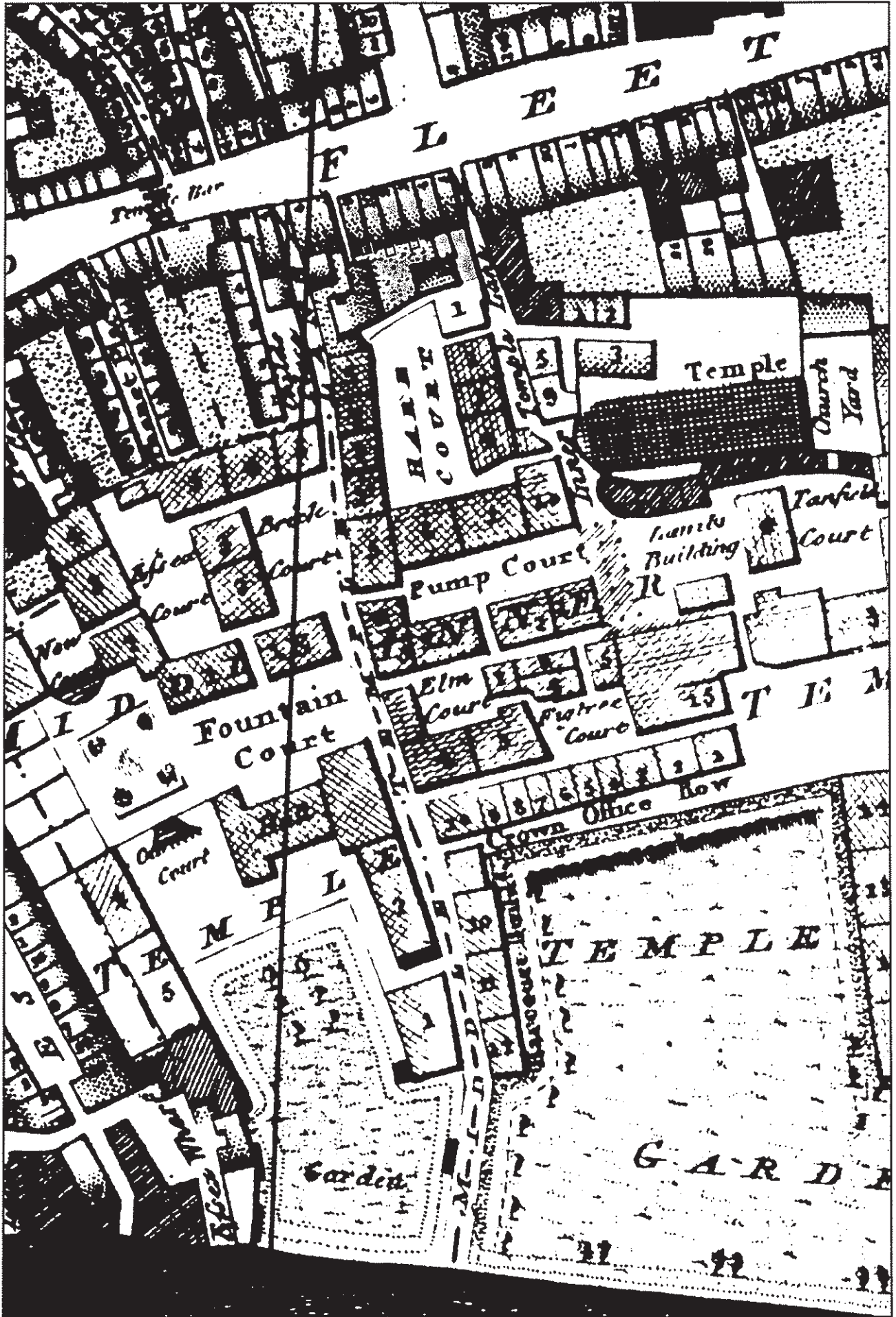


Figure 9: The site in relation to Harwood's Plan of London (1799-1819)