

Archaeological Watching Brief
at
**UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL UNION BUILDING,
QUEENS ROAD, CLIFTON, BRISTOL.**
for
University of Bristol



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at
**UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL UNION BUILDING,
QUEENS ROAD, CLIFTON, BRISTOL.**

Centred on
N.G.R. ST 57523 73297

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Agent: Provelio Ltd.

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Abbreviations

AD	Anno Domini	EHA	English Heritage Archive
aOD	Above Ordnance Datum	Km	Kilometre
BaRAS	Bristol & Region Archaeological Services	m	Metre
BC	Before Christ	NGR	National Grid Reference
BHER	Bristol Historic Environment Record	OS	Ordnance Survey
c.	Circa		

NOTE

Notwithstanding that Bristol and Region Archaeological Services have taken reasonable care to produce a comprehensive summary of the known and recorded archaeological evidence, no responsibility can be accepted for any omissions of fact or opinion, however caused.

August, 2012.

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SUMMARY

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during construction groundwork on the University of Bristol Union Building site off Queens Road in Clifton, Bristol.

No significant archaeological deposits or features were present, other than the partial remains of a boundary wall and a stone-built drain. These were associated with a number of large early 19th century residential properties, which formerly occupied the site.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bristol and Region Archaeological Services (BaRAS) was commissioned by Provelio Limited, on behalf of the University of Bristol, to undertake an archaeological watching brief during groundwork associated with *'the extension and refurbishment of the (Queens Road) building with associated external realm and landscaping works (including the removal and replacement of 3no. trees to the Queens Road frontage), increased cycle parking provision and alterations to the basement car park entrance'* (Planning Reference 10/03404/F) (**Fig. 1; Cover**) in the suburb of Clifton in Bristol.
- 1.2 The watching brief was commissioned to comply with conditions 9 and 10 of the planning consent granted by the local planning authority (Bristol City Council) and in accordance with a *Written Scheme of Investigation* prepared by Andrew Townsend (Project Officer), of Bristol and Region Archaeological Services, in April 2011 (Townsend 2011).
- 1.3 The fieldwork was undertaken during several site visits between late November 2011 and late July 2012 under the supervision of Tim Longman MIfA (Project Officer, BaRAS) and Roy Krakowicz (BaRAS), the former of whom subsequently compiled this report.
- 1.4 The project archive will be deposited with Bristol Museums, Galleries & Archives under the Accession Number BRSMG 2011/17 and a copy of the report will be made available to the English Heritage Archive (formerly the National Monuments Record) in Swindon, which is maintained by English Heritage. The project has been entered in the Bristol City Council Historic Environment Record (HER) as BHER 25001 and it has also been allocated the following OASIS ID:bristola1-100405.

2. THE SITE

- 2.1 The study area (centred on NGR ST 57523 73297) lies in the suburb of Clifton (**Figs. 1 & 2**), and is located approximately 1 km (0.6 miles) north-west of Bristol city centre at a height of approximately 67m aOD. The site, which is roughly L-shaped, occupies land between the frontage of the multi-storey Students Union Building, which is set back from the road, and Queens Road, along with an area alongside Gordon Road.
- 2.2 The site was latterly occupied by landscaped areas down to grass, along with areas of hard-standing, including footpaths and vehicular access from both Queens Road and Gordon Road.
- 2.3 The site is located in the Clifton Conservation Area. There are no Scheduled Ancient Monuments in the vicinity of the site, but there are several listed buildings close to or adjoining the site, including No. 103 Queens Road/ Nos. 19/19a Richmond Hill (Grade II; Ref. 901-1/9/952).
- 2.4 The solid geology of the study area is depicted as comprising Carboniferous Limestone (Hotwells Series) (British Geological Survey 2012).

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Prior to the latest project the study area was the subject of an archaeological desk based assessment (Townsend 2010). The full historical and archaeological background to the site is contained within that document (BaRAS Report No. 2235/2010). Relevant details are summarised below:
- 3.2 Historically the site lies in the manor and parish of Clifton in the hundred of Swinehead in the county of Gloucestershire. The parish of Clifton was incorporated into the City and County of Bristol (a county corporate) in 1835.
- 3.3 The land comprising the site appears to have been used for agricultural purposes, until developed for several large semi-detached villas set in landscaped grounds, probably in the early 1820s.
- 3.4 Documentary evidence suggests that the houses suffered severe air-raid damage during the Second World War and by 1950 all structures had been cleared apart from the garden walls. The site remained more-or-less unchanged until it was redeveloped with the construction of the present University of Bristol Union Building in the early 1960s. The latter involved the demolition of any surviving above-ground structures.

4. AIMS AND METHODOLOGY

- 4.1 The fieldwork complied with the methodology contained within the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (Townsend 2011). The fieldwork also followed the *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* issued by the Institute for Archaeologists (1994, revised 2011) and *MORPHE Project Managers Guide* issued by English Heritage (EH 2006). The aim of the watching brief was to record any archaeological features or deposits revealed during the course of intrusive groundwork.
- 4.2 The watching brief involved monitoring four principal groundwork activities between November 2011 and July 2012. These activities consisted of exploratory excavation work at the front of the building, the excavation of five trial pits across the proposal area, mechanical ground reduction work on the site of the proposed building extension alongside Queens Road, and the excavation of foundation pits and trenches alongside Queens Road to a formation level of 63.22m aOD. In addition, several small foundation trenches were excavated at the south-west end of the building fronting Gordon Road.

5. RESULTS

- 5.1 All groundwork was carried out using 360° mechanical slew excavators utilising both toothed buckets and toothless grading buckets.
- 5.2 The first two site visits, in late November, involved monitoring exploratory mechanical excavation work on the line of a live (75mm diameter) cast iron water pipe adjacent to the union building frontage on Queens Road. The excavation of the 0.5-0.7m deep trench disturbed brick demolition rubble possibly derived from the 19th century houses that formerly occupied the site.
- 5.3 The next visits, in early December, involved monitoring the excavation of five trial pits (**Plate 1**), which were intended to enable an assessment of the condition of existing building foundations, along with the general ground conditions at those specific locations. No archaeological features or deposits were present.
- 5.4 Monitoring of the mechanical ground reduction work across the footprint of the new extension alongside Queens Road commenced in early December. Work started at the northern end of the site initially involving the removal of a tarmac surface and about 0.5m of underlying made ground, which revealed the remains of a Pennant rubble stone wall (106) and, some 0.4m to the north-west, a parallel, largely intact stone-built drain (108), complete with capping stones, built also of Pennant Sandstone rubble masonry (**Fig. 2; Plate 2**). Both features were recorded at a height of approximately 64.8m aOD and followed, approximately, the north-east to south-west alignment of Queens Road. From the position of both these structures, along with the nature of the materials used in their construction, it appears likely that they were associated with the early 19th century houses that formerly occupied the site.
- 5.5 The early 19th-century wall (106) (**Plate 3**), the foundations of which were recorded over a distance of some 45 metres, was built of randomly coursed Pennant Sandstone rubble bonded with off-white lime mortar. It measured some 0.56m wide by 0.4m high and, as monitoring continued over the following days, was found to survive in places to within 0.3 – 0.4m of the then ground surface. It became clear that the foundations were the remains of a 19th century boundary wall, clearly shown on the 1:500 OS plan of 1883 (**Fig.3**), which delineated the frontages of five substantial early-19th century properties that formerly faced onto a private drive alongside Queens Road. Any remains, along with the boundary walls, were demolished in the early 1960s prior to the construction of the present multi-storey University Students Union Building.
- 5.6 The 19th-century stone-built drain (108) (**Plates 4 & 5**) was set within a shallow construction cut (110) and had side-walls built of randomly coursed Pennant Sandstone rubble bonded with pale grey lime and charcoal-flecked mortar, with Pennant flagstones up to 80mm thick used for capping the structure. The overall width of the structure was 0.6m with an internal width of 0.25m, while its internal height was 0.36m. The side-walls measured 0.18m wide by 0.34m high. The structure was intact for much of its recorded length of some 20 metres, but an examination of the interior of the feature was possible where several capping stones had been dislodged by the bucket of the mechanical slew. The drain was partially filled with a 60mm thick layer of fine, greyish brown silt, which covered the entire bottom of the feature. There was no stone or mortar base, only the natural stiff, yellowish orange clay (112). No finds were recovered from the interior of the drain.
- 5.7 In mid-December excavation work started on the foundations for the new extension to the existing students union building. Work commenced on the excavation of foundation pits (**Plate 6**), measuring 2m by 2m wide by 1.8m deep, for concrete bases/pads towards the northern end of the site. The solid sandstone geology (115) was encountered beneath the overlying yellowish orange clay subsoil (112). In contrast, the foundation trench being

excavated close to Queens Road for a retaining wall was excavated to a depth of around 1.5m (**Plate 7**). No archaeology was found during either phase of work.

- 5.8 Simultaneously, during the excavation of the foundation trenches, ground reduction work was continuing across the south-west end of the site. However, no traces of either the former stone boundary wall (106) or the stone drain (108) were present, presumably having been removed during earlier demolition ground work on the site in the early 1960s.
- 5.9 The remaining work was mostly on the excavation of foundation trenches (**Plate 8**) up to 1.5m wide, located between the new retaining wall alongside the pavement on Queens Road and the existing building, which extended to depths of up to 4m. The final phase of monitoring, in late July 2012, involved the construction of new additional foundations at the south-west and southern ends of the present building, in the vicinity of the earlier trial pits near Gordon Road. Nothing of archaeological significance was present during either of these latter two activities.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 Apart from the early 19th century foundations of a Pennant rubble boundary wall, which originally lay alongside an access drive off Queens Road, and a parallel length of stone-built drain, probably dating from the mid/late 19th century, which may have lain beneath a grass verge at the side of the drive, no features or deposits of archaeological significance were observed.
- 6.2 The rubble stone wall originally formed the north-western boundary, fronting Queens Road, of the grounds of five substantial residential properties (known as Waterloo Villa, Nelson Villa, Glencairn Villa, Goodwood Villa and Home Cottage in 1854) that formerly occupied the site. No artefacts pre-dating the modern period, other than a few sherds of 19th century domestic pottery, were recorded but not retained during intrusive groundwork at the site.

7. PROJECT TEAM

- 7.1 This report was produced by Tim Longman MifA (Project Officer, BaRAS). The illustrations were prepared and the report compiled by Ann Linge (Design & Production Officer, BaRAS), admin support was provided by Carol Blackmore (Administration & Finance Officer, BaRAS), while the project was managed by John Bryant MifA (Acting Manager, BaRAS).

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES CONSULTED

Published Material

Communities and Local Government, 2010 *Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the Historic Environment*

English Heritage, 1991 *Management of Archaeological Projects 2. Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England*

English Heritage, 2006 *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*

IfA, 2011 *Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs* (1994; revised 2011). Institute for Archaeologists

Unpublished Material

Townsend, A., 2010 *Archaeological Desk-based Assessment of University of Bristol Union Building, Queens Road, Clifton, Bristol* (BaRAS Report No. 2235/2010; privately circulated client report)

Townsend, A., 2011 *Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for a recording programme (Archaeological Watching Brief) at the University of Bristol Union, Queens Road, Clifton, Bristol (NGR ST 57523 73297) as archaeological mitigation for partial redevelopment of the site* (BaRAS Report; privately circulated report)

9. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Bristol and Region Archaeological Services would like to thank Suzanne Pitcher (Project Manager), Joe Reid and Tony Morgan of Provelio Limited along with the site staff of Joe Watt (Senior Project Manager), Andy Blanch (Site Manager), Andy Mitchell (Construction Manager) and Spencer Joseph (Site Engineer) from Cowlin Construction and site staff from G-Work Construction for their assistance and co-operation. Thanks also to Bob Jones MifA (City Archaeologist, Bristol City Council) for his advice.

APPENDIX 1: Policy Statement

This report is the result of work carried out in the light of national and local authority policies.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY (ENGLAND)

The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) for England published by the UK Government in March 2012 states that the historic environment, which includes designated and non-designated heritage assets, is an irreplaceable resource and, as such, should be taken into account by Local Planning Authorities when considering and determining planning applications. This is taken to form part of a positive strategy set out in the respective Local Plan to ensure the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The assigned significance of heritage assets will be key factor in terms of their conservation.

Given their irreplaceable nature, any harm to, or loss of, a heritage asset, or heritage assets, should be clearly and convincingly justified as part of a planning application. As part of this, applicants are required to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected by a proposal, including any contribution made by their setting. Where a heritage asset, or assets, are to be harmed or lost as the result of a proposal, the applicant will be required to record and advance the understanding of the significance of that asset or assets, to include making the evidence arising publicly accessible, but this will be in proportion to the significance of the asset/assets in question.

While the NPPF takes into account the historic environment as a whole, additional protection is afforded to designated heritage assets under current English Law. Any proposal that would result in harm or loss of a designated heritage asset is also required to be justified by the applicant in meeting strict criteria set out in the NPPF.

LOCAL POLICY

Bristol City Council Supplementary Planning Document (2006) states (policy SPD No.7, p4):

- (i) There will be a presumption in favour of preserving any archaeological features or sites of national importance, whether scheduled or not.
- (ii) Development which could adversely affect sites, structures, landscapes or buildings of archaeological interest and their settings will require an assessment of the archaeological resource through a desktop study, and where appropriate a field evaluation. Where there is evidence of archaeological remains, development will not be permitted except where it can be demonstrated that the archaeological features of the site will be satisfactorily preserved in situ, or a suitable strategy has been put forward to mitigate the impact of development proposals upon important archaeological remains and their settings; or, if this is not possible and the sites are not scheduled or of national importance, provision for adequately recording the site prior to destruction is made, preferably by negotiating a planning agreement to ensure that access, time and financial resources are available to allow essential recording and publication to take place.

APPENDIX 2: Context Descriptions

Context No.	Description
100	Tarmac
101	Stone scalplings
102	Fill/Made ground
103	1960s concrete foundations of building
104	Redeposited brownish red stony clay
105	Construction cut for foundations 103
106	C19 Pennant rubble wall foundations
107	Construction cut for wall 106
108	C19 stone drain
109	Greyish brown silt – fill of drain 108
110	Construction cut for drain 108
111	Dark brown silty soil – backfill of drain cut
112	Stiff yellowish orange clay
113	Orange brown clayey silt
114	Reddish brown silt
115	Solid sandstone geology

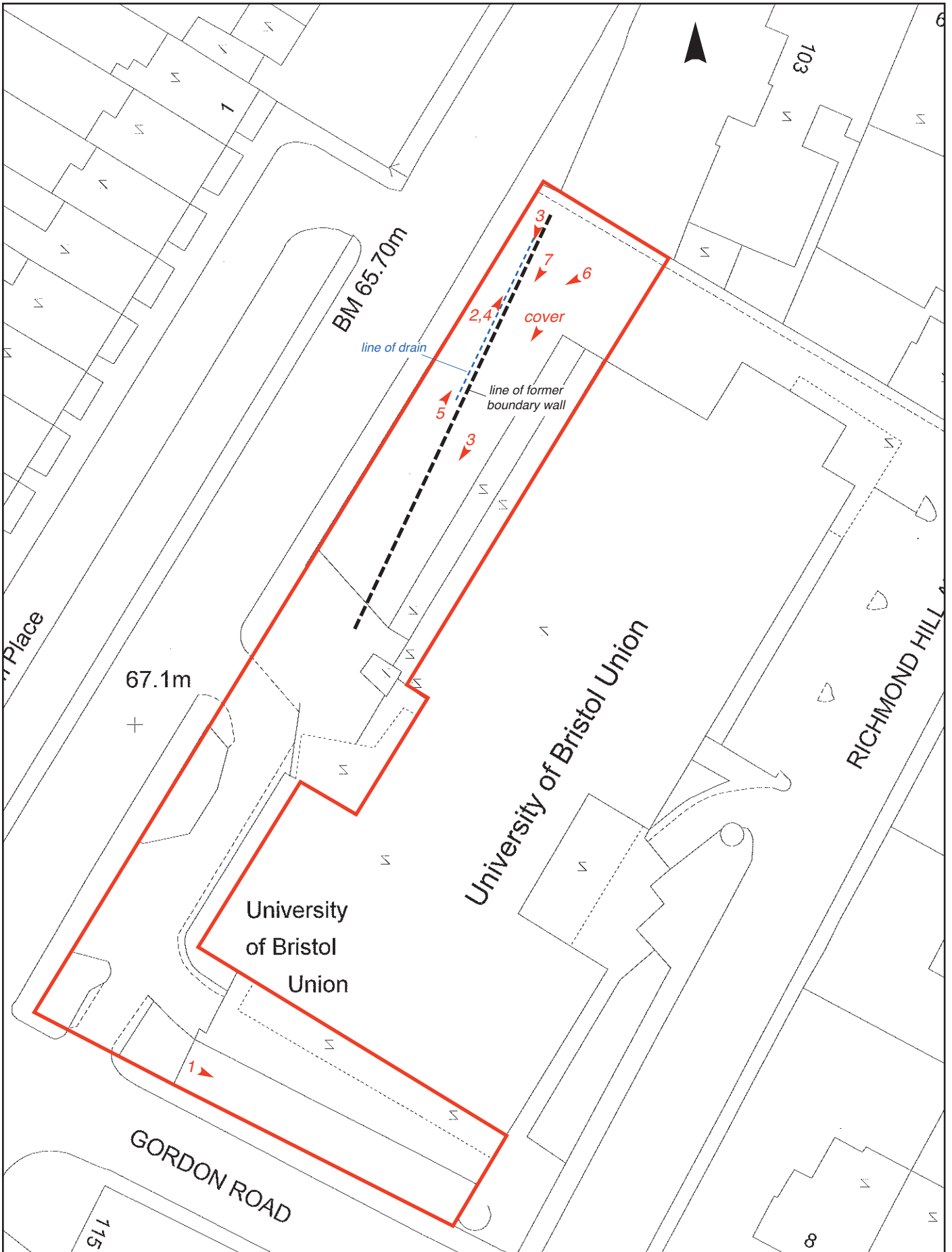


Fig.2 Site plan (1:500 scale), showing location of 19th-century boundary wall and drain

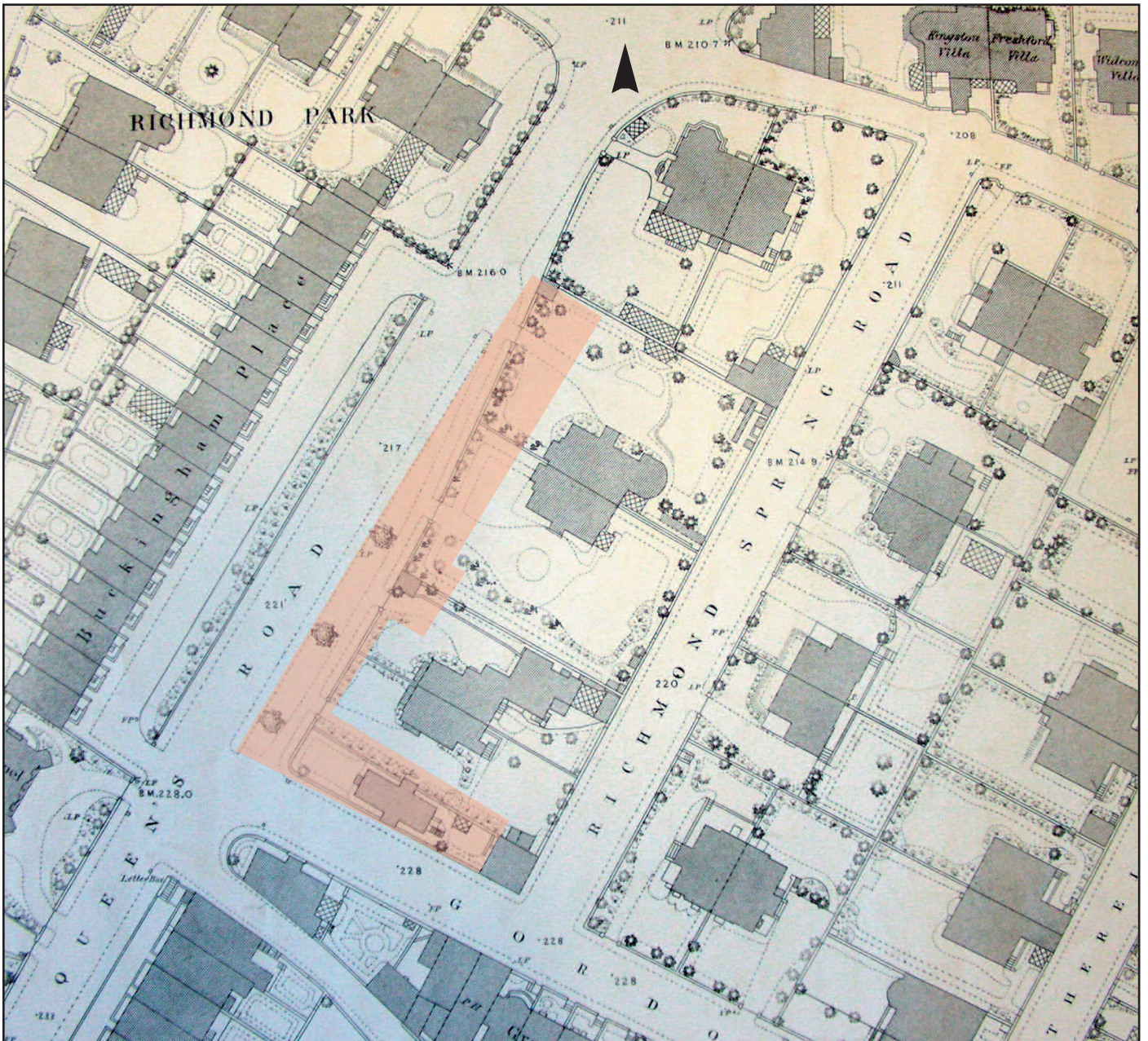


Fig.3 Extract from First Edition (1:500) OS plan of 1883

Plate 1
North-west facing section
in TP4



Plate 2 Looking north at the remains of 19th-century former boundary wall (106) and a stone drain (108), towards the north-west corner of the site



Plate 3 Looking south-west across the site at the remains of the former boundary wall (106) and stone drain (108)



Plate 4
Close-up view of partially intact length
of stone drain (108), looking north-east



Plate 5 North-facing section through drain (108)



Plate 6
Excavating foundation pit,
looking south-west



Plate 7 Excavating foundation trench for new retaining wall alongside Queens Road, looking south-west



Plate 8 North-east facing section in foundation trench