

Archaeological Watching Brief at Sydney Gardens, Bath

Worcestershire Archaeology
for RPS Consulting

October 2019



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SYDNEY GARDENS, BATH, BATH AND NORTH EAST SOMERSET

Archaeological Watching Brief Report



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The Hive
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The Butts
Worcester
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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: Sydney Gardens, Bath
Local planning authority: Bath and North East Somerset
Central NGR: ST 75805 65327.
Commissioning client: RPS Consulting
Client project reference: JAC25645
WA project number: P5716
WA report number: 2746
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APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF PROJECT ARCHIVE

An archaeological watching brief at Sydney Gardens, Bath, Bath and North East Somerset

By Tom Rogers

With contributions by Rob Hedge

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on geotechnical works undertaken at Sydney Gardens, Bath, Bath and North East Somerset (NGR ST 75805 65327). It was commissioned by RPS Consulting on behalf of Bath and North East Somerset Council.

Sydney Gardens are situated in Bathwick, a residential area to the north-east of the city centre of Bath. They are the only surviving eighteenth Century pleasure gardens in the country and included in the Historic England Register of Parks and Gardens. The Gardens are crossed by the Kennet and Avon canal and Great Western Railway and there are a number of individually listed structures within the Gardens which are also within the Bath World Heritage Site and the designated Bath City Centre Conservation Area.

The Roman Road from Bathwick to Poole Harbour aligns largely with the line of the later Pultney Road / Darlington Street, directly adjacent to the south-west of Sydney Gardens. The east of the Site is part of an area identified in the HER as a Roman cemetery postulated to be present in this area due to the frequency of coffin finds.

Three Trial Holes and ten Trial Pits were excavated across the site. The three Trial Holes and six Trial Pits were excavated by hand while four Trial Pits were excavated using a mechanical excavator.

No archaeologically significant features or deposits were recorded during the watching brief largely because the nature of the geotechnical works were to ascertain the depths of foundations around buildings as well as depths of largely made ground and for the most part did not disturb natural ground. It is clear from the works that Sydney Gardens has been subject to considerable landscaping which has included the importation of material for terracing and drainage. Some oyster shell and the bone handle of a utensil were recovered.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in October 2019 at Sydney Gardens, Bath, Bath and North East Somerset (NGR ST 75805 65327). The project was commissioned by RPS Consulting on behalf of Bath and North East Somerset Council

The watching brief comprised observation of three Trial Holes and ten Trial Pits within the Gardens during geotechnical investigations ahead of improvements to the Gardens following a successful heritage Lottery Fund bid. Planning permission was granted for the works, which are described as follows:-

Works at Sydney Gardens Public Park including erection of cafe kiosk with accessible toilets following demolition of existing Bowls Pavilion. Restoration of Listed Ladies and Gents toilets to be used for park related uses and events. Relocation of listed ladies' toilets. Conservation works to the grade 2 listed Loggia and Minerva's Temple. Conversion of Bothy and modern toilets to community / park related activity use. Consolidation of the lower half of the derelict structure in the current depot area and associated site wide repairs and landscape works.

Permission was granted subject to conditions including Condition 4 which requires an archaeological watching brief to be maintained on groundworks associated with the development.

An Archaeological Management Plan was produced by RPS Consulting (2019) which sets out a methodology for archaeological works including a watching brief element to which this project conforms. The watching brief also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in the *Standard and guidance: for an archaeological watching brief* (CIfA 2014).

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

Sydney Gardens are situated in Bathwick, a residential area to the north-east of the city centre of Bath. The Site is underlain by Charmouth Mudstone Formation while superficial River Terrace Deposits, Sand and Gravel are present in the western part of the site. No superficial geology is recorded for the eastern half of the Site.

2 Archaeological and historical background

2.1 Introduction

An archaeological and historical background to the site is presented in the Archaeological Management Plan (RPS Consulting 2019). The section below is a summarised from this report.

2.2 Prehistoric/Iron Age/Roman

There are three artefacts of Neolithic (61463) to Bronze Age dates (61464 and 61465) are mapped approximately 290 m to the south-east of Sydney Gardens, but no exact provenance is known for any of these.

A series of trial trenches were dug in the grounds of three buildings proposed for redevelopment approximately 200m to the north-west of Sydney Gardens in July 2009 (65369). The evaluation revealed stratified early Roman deposits in all three trenches dug

beneath post-medieval made ground deposits. A smaller amount of late Iron Age pottery suggests earlier occupation.

The Roman Road Bathwick to Poole Harbour (60189) aligns largely with the line of the later Pultney Road / Darlington Street directly adjacent to the south-west of Sydney Gardens.

The east of the Site is part of an area identified in the HER as a Roman cemetery (61413 – “Sydney Gardens and Bathwick Roman Cemetery”), postulated to be present in this area due to the frequency of coffin finds. The principal areas for burial were to the north, east and west of the city, notably Sydney Gardens, Bathwick, Sion Hill, Julian Road and Locksbrook. This cemetery is likely part of the larger “Bathwick Roman Cemetery” (62029).

In 1861 a stone coffin was found at Sydney Gardens, with a cover, square at both ends, containing the skeleton of a female about 50 years old (66468). In addition, two Roman stone coffins were also found here in 1864 (66467). There is also a reference to two Roman stone coffins found in 1866, one of which contained a head of a horse. It is not clear whether this source is referring to the same finds or to two additional coffins. They are recorded as having been discovered in a pit of gravel, around 3 m deep.

Later, in 1914, whilst digging for gravel close to the tennis courts a Roman stone coffin was found at Sydney Gardens (66469). The coffin was Oolite and only broken bones were visible. It was sent to the Bath Museum.

The “Bathwick Roman Cemetery” (62029) does not lie along a known road, but a sufficient number of burials and tombstones have been discovered over the years to provide circumstantial evidence that a road did exist and to justify classifying the group as a cemetery. They stretch in a southeasterly direction from the vicinity of the present Cleveland Bridge, further evidence for there having been a river crossing at about this point in the Roman period and for the position of the putative early fort.

The Medieval village of Bathwick is noted on 1727 survey of Bathwick Manor (60534), and is identified in the Avon Historic Landscape Characterisation Survey. The Medieval settlement of Bathwick (Wica) is first mentioned in Domesday. The Bathwick Parish Church (60533), known to have existed in the Medieval village of Bathwick is shown on the 1727 survey of Bathwick Manor at the north end of the village. The centre of the village seems to have close to the river, near to St John's Church. Elements of the village seem to have survived the redesigning of the area in the eighteenth century, but were eventually demolished in the early nineteenth century.

It seems likely that Sydney Gardens was mostly in agricultural use until it was leased as ground for Pleasure Gardens in 1794.

3 Project aims

The aims of the watching brief were to observe and record archaeological deposits, and to determine their extent, state of preservation, date and type, as far as reasonably possible within the constraints of the geotechnical investigations.

4 Project methodology

An Archaeological Management Plan was prepared by RPS Consulting. Fieldwork was undertaken between 15th and 16th October 2019.

Three Trial Holes and ten Trial Pits were excavated across the site. The location of these is indicated in Figure 2. The three Trial Holes and six Trial Pits were excavated by hand while four Trial Pits were excavated using a mechanical excavator.

The trial holes were located on or close to the bridge crossing the Kennet and Avon Canal adjacent to a building known as The Bothy. Trial pits 01 and 02 were adjacent to The Loggia.

Trial Pit 03 was adjacent to public toilets Trial pits 04, 04a and 05 were in a childrens' play area, Trail Pits 06 and 07 were in the former Bowling Green Area, Trial Pit 09 was not excavated due to the presence of services, Trial Pits 08 and 09 were in an area south of the western entrance of the Gardens.

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision by hand or using a 360° tracked excavator employing a toothless bucket.

Observation of excavated test pits was undertaken during and after hand and machine excavation. The exposed surfaces were sufficiently clean to observe well-differentiated archaeological deposits, though any less clear may have not been identified.

Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was undertaken through a combination of structural, artefactual and environmental evidence, allied to the information derived from other sources.

The project archive is currently held at the offices of Worcestershire Archaeology. Subject to the agreement of the landowner it is anticipated that it will be deposited at an appropriate Museum.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Trial hole/pit descriptions

5.1.1 TH – BO1

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TH100	Imported topsoil	0.3m	0.00- 0.3m	Loose dark grey clay silt with frequent stone fragments – oolitic limestone, rooting and modern foam.
TH101	Crown of canal bridge	0.4m.	0.3-0.4m	Shaped Bath stone, slight ledge to north adjacent to bridge wall.

5.1.2 TH – BO2

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TH201	Topsoil – modern build up from vegetation	0.3m	0.00- 0.3m	Loose dark brown clay silt with oolitic limestone inclusions – some plastic at base
TH202	Imported clay – probably brought in the shore up edge of canal adjacent to revetment wall	0.25m	0.25m- 0.6m	Firm, homogenous yellow-brown clay

5.1.3 TH – BO3

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TH301	Imported topsoil	0.2m	0-0.2m	Loose dark brown clay silt with frequent angular limestone fragments
TH302	Imported clay	0.6m	0.2-0.8m	Firm, homogenous yellow-brown clay

5.1.4 Trial Pit 01

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TP101	Topsoil	0.2m	0-0.2m	Loose dark brown clay silt with oolitic limestone fragments
TP102	Made ground	0.25m	0.2m – 0.45m	Firm yellow clay with occasional cbm and slate

5.1.5 Trial Pit 02

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TP201	Topsoil	0.2m	0-0.2m	Loose dark brown clay silt with oolitic limestone fragments
TP202	Made ground	0.25m	0.2m – 0.5m	Firm yellow clay with occasional cbm and slate
TP203	Concrete base	0.5m+	0.5m+	Base of wall foundation

5.1.6 Trial Pit 03A

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TP301	Topsoil	0.6m	0-0.6m	Loose dark brown clay silt with oolitic limestone fragments
TP302	Made ground abutting toilet block	0.2m+	0.6-0.8m	Loose light grey -brown silty clay with frequent stones
TP303	Stone ledge of toilet block foundations	0.2m+	0.6-0.95m	Shaped limestone

5.1.7 Trial Pit 04

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TP401	Topsoil	0.25m	0-0.25m	Loose dark brown clay silt with oolitic limestone fragments
TP402	Made ground		0.25-1.15m	Loose light grey silt with frequent stones and cbm including tile and slate –

Note – wall abutting this pit was sooted below the ground surface to full depth

5.1.8 Trial Pit 04A

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TP4A01	Topsoil		0-0.25m	Loose dark brown clay silt with oolitic limestone fragments
TP4A02	Made ground		0.25-1.1m	Loose silty clay with frequent stones and frequent cbm
TP4A03	Wall foundation		0.25m+	Limestone

5.1.9 Trial Pit 05

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TP501	Topsoil		0-0.2m	Loose dark grey silt
TP502	Made ground		0.2-0.7m	Soft light brown sandy clay with brick fragments and shell
TP503	Made ground		0.7-1m	Mid brown homogenous clay

5.1.10 Trial Pit 06

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TP601	Topsoil		0-0.2m	Loose dark grey silt with ash and charcoal
TP602	Reworked natural ground		0.2-1.2m	Firm mid brown silty clay with sub-angular limestone gravel inclusions charcoal. One shaped and sooted limestone block recovered.
TP603	Lens of imported material		1.2m	Lens of loose light grey silt with brick fragments and oyster shell
TP604	Imported material		1.2m+	Firm mid-brown clay

5.1.11 Trial Pit 07

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TP701	Imported material for base of bowling green		0.0-0.5m	Loose sandy grey silt and clinker
TP702	Imported material for base of bowling green		0.5-0.55m	Layer of clinker
TP703	Made ground		0.55-1.2m	Mixed clay with ash and clinker with large flat limestone blocks at base – some brick inclusions
TP704	Possible natural		1.2m+	Mid brown sandy clay

5.1.12 Trial Pit 08

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TP801			0.03m	Loose mid brown clay stil
TP802			0.3-1m	Dark brown ashy clinker with brick fragments and a lens of light buff clay
TP803			1-1.8m	Firm Mid to light brown-orange clay
TP804			1.8m+	Light brown clay with weathered limestone

5.1.13 Trial Pit 10

Context	Brief description	Max depth (m)	Depth from ground surface (m)	Comments
TP1001	Topsoil			Loose dark brown clay silt with oolitic limestone fragments
TP1002	Made ground			Loose light grey -brown silty clay with frequent stones

6 Artefactual evidence by Rob Hedge

6.1 Artefact methodology

The finds work reported here conforms with the following guidance: for findwork by ClFA (2014), for pottery analysis by PCRG/SGRP/MPRG (2016), for archive creation by AAF (2011), and for museum deposition by SMA (1993).

6.1.1 Recovery policy

The artefact recovery policy conformed to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012; appendix 2).

6.1.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were examined. They were identified, quantified and dated to period. A *terminus post quem* date was produced for each stratified context. The date was used for determining the broad date of phases defined for the site. All information was recorded on a Microsoft Access database.

The pottery and ceramic building material was examined under x20 magnification and referenced as appropriate by fabric type and form according to the fabric reference series maintained by Worcestershire Archaeology (Hurst and Rees 1992 and www.worcestershireceramics.org).

6.1.3 Discard policy

Artefacts from topsoil and subsoil and unstratified contexts will normally be noted but not retained, unless they are of intrinsic interest (eg worked flint or flint debitage, featured pottery sherds, and other potential 'registered artefacts'). All artefacts will be collected from stratified excavated contexts, except for large assemblages of post-medieval or modern material, unless there is some special reason to retain such as local production. Such material may be noted and not retained, or, if appropriate, a representative sample may be collected and retained. Discard of finds from post-medieval and earlier deposits will only be instituted with reference to museum collection policy and/or with agreement of the local museum.

See the environmental section for other discard where appropriate.

6.2 Artefactual analysis, by Rob Hedge

The assemblage recovered is summarised in Tables 2 and 3. It comprised post-medieval horticultural pottery, building material, and domestic waste, from test pits 3, 4, 10, and 6. Using pottery as an index of artefact condition, this was generally fair: the mean sherd weight was, at 11.9g, slightly above average.

period	material	object type	count	weight (g)
medieval/post-medieval	ceramic	roof tile	1	54
post-medieval	animal bone	utensil handle	1	8
	ceramic	pot	1	9
	lead	window came	1	15
post-medieval/modern	ceramic	brick	1	146
		flowerpot	4	50
undated	shell	oyster shell	2	62
Totals			11	344

Table 2: Quantification of the assemblage

Pottery

All sherds have been grouped and quantified according to fabric type (Table 3). Diagnostic form sherds were dated accordingly; the remaining sherds were datable by fabric type to their general period or production span.

Broad period	fabric code	Fabric common name	count	weight (g)
Post-medieval	78	Post-medieval red ware	4	50
	90	Post-medieval orange ware	1	9
Totals			5	59

Table 3: Quantification of the pottery by period and fabric-type

Site dating

context	material	object type	Count	weight (g)	start date	end date	TPQ date range
302	ceramic	pot	1	9	1700	1800	AD 1700 - 1800
403	ceramic	roof tile	1	54	1400	1700	AD 1600 - 1900
	lead	window came	1	15	1600	1900	
1000	animal bone	utensil handle	1	8	1700	1900	AD 1950 - 1970
	ceramic	flowerpot	3	46	1700	1970	
		flowerpot	1	4	1850	1970	
6004	ceramic	brick	1	146	1600	1900	AD 1600 - 1900
	shell	oyster shell	2	62			

Table 3 Summary of context dating based on artefacts grouped in phase order

Discussion

The flowerpot from test pit 10 includes one example with a white-slipped rim, typical of flowerpots from the mid-19th century onwards (Currie 2001). The building material is not closely dateable. It is covered with traces of lime mortar. The roof tile has evidently been re-used in another structure, as the mortar covers the broken edge of the tile. The bone handle is of a long-lived post-medieval type; it is likely to be a fork or spoon handle of 18th or 19th century date.

6.3 Recommendations

Further analysis and reporting

No further work on the artefacts is required.

Discard and retention

Although associated with known archaeological sites, the assemblage adds little to the understanding of those. Although the final decision rests with the receiving museum, it is not considered worthy of retention. It may be suited to use as educational material.

7 Environmental evidence

Environmental sampling was approached using standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012). In the event, no deposits were excavated which were considered to be suitable for environmental analysis.

8 Discussion and conclusions

No archaeologically significant features or deposits were recorded during the watching brief. This is largely because the nature of the geotechnical works were to ascertain the depths of foundations around buildings as well as depths of largely made ground and for the most part did not disturb natural ground. It is clear from the work that, as might be expected, the Gardens have been subject to considerable landscaping and the importation of material. For example in TP04 it was evident that the wall below ground level had been exposed during the industrial era due to sooting from domestic coal fires and industry, but at a later date partially covered by imported material presumably for the creation of the childrens' play area.

There were also considerable depths of made ground in TP06 and TP07 in the area of the former bowling green and in TP08 and TP09 to the south of the entrance. Much of the ash and clinker in these areas may have been industrial waste brought in to facilitate drainage in the Gardens. A lens of grey sandy material at c1m depth in TP06 with considerable amounts of shell may indicate domestic waste and shaped stones recorded in TP06 and TP07 probably represent demolition waste.

Although it is likely that ground levels within the gardens have been modified on numerous occasions during their 225 year history, the potential for the survival for significant archaeological deposits remains.

The methods adopted allow a high degree of confidence that the aims of the project have been achieved. Conditions were suitable in all of the interventions to identify the presence or absence of archaeological features.

9 Project personnel

The project was managed and the fieldwork was led by Tom Rogers MSc MCIfA. The report was produced and collated by Tom Rogers. Specialist contributions and individual sections of the report are attributed to the relevant authors throughout the text.

10 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following: Susana Parker and Josh Evans of RPS Consulting.

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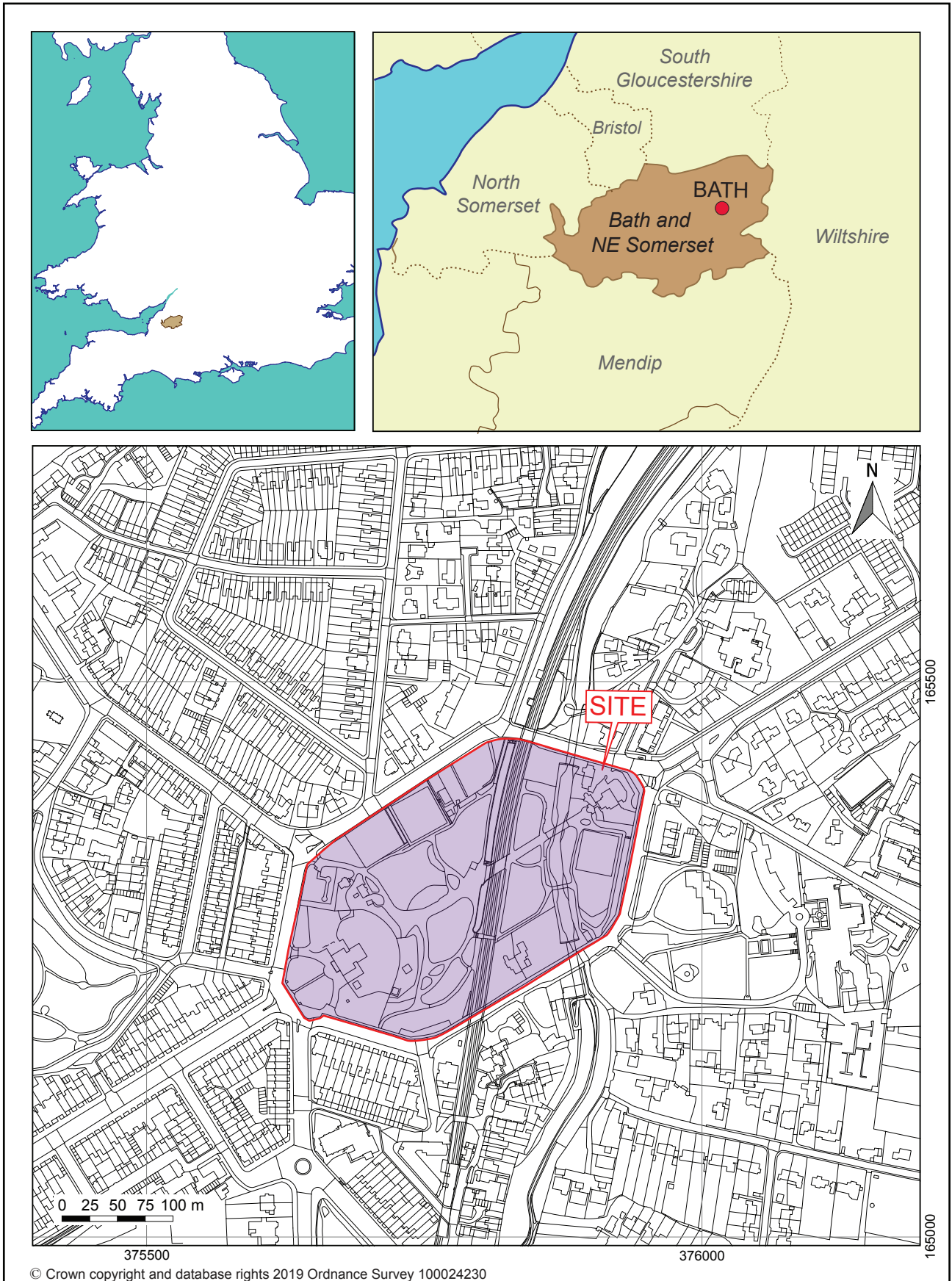
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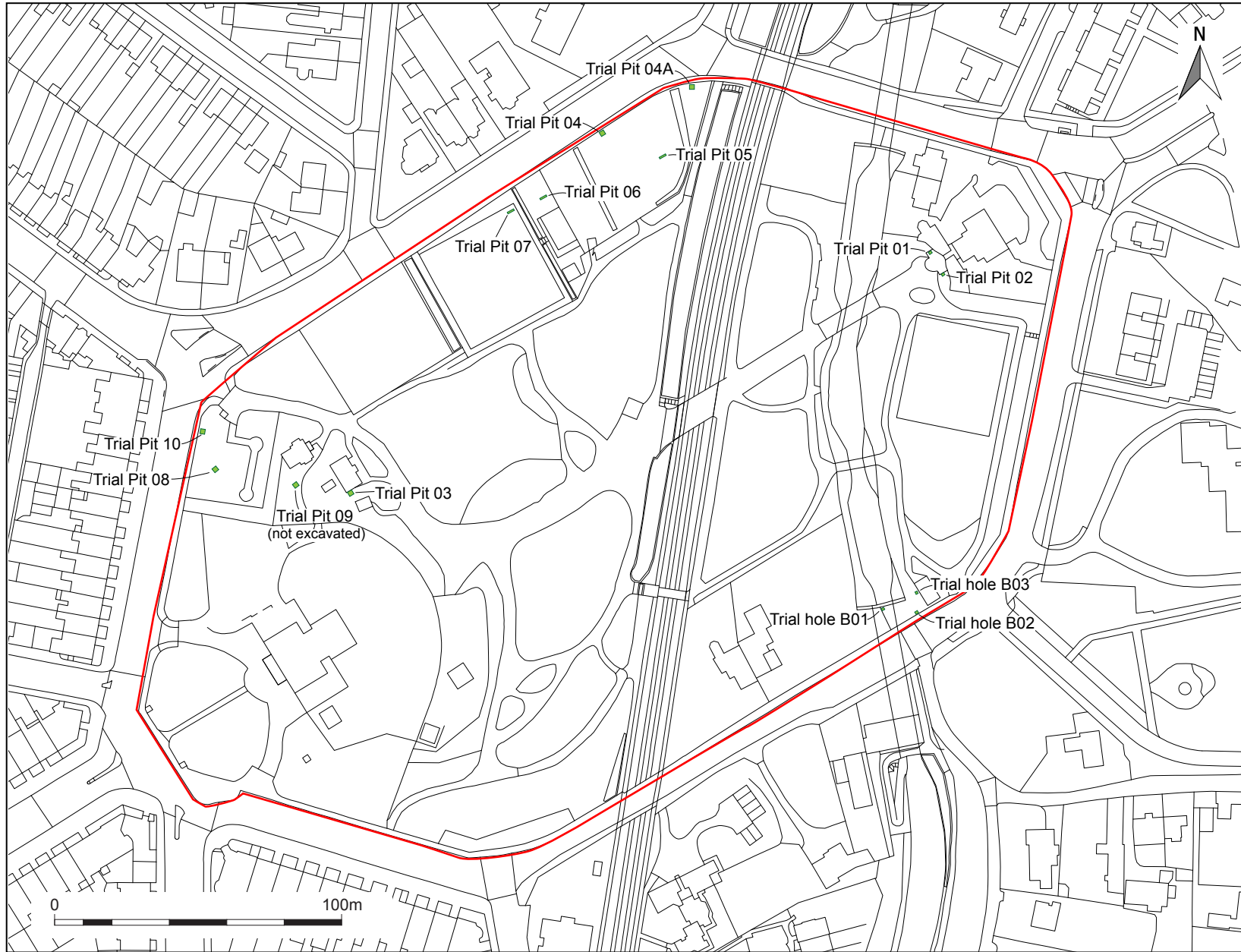
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Figures



Location of the site

Figure 1



Plates



Plate 1. Trial hole 1



Plate 2. Trial hole 2



Plate 3. Trial hole 3



Plate 4 Trial Pit 04



Plate 5. Trial Pit 05



Plate 6. Trial Pit 06



Plate 7. Trial Pit 07



Plate 8. Trial Pit 08



Plate 9. Trial Pit 10

Appendix 1: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	Animal bones, Ceramics, Environmental, Glass, Human bones, Industrial, Leather, Metal, Textiles, Wood, Worked bone, Worked stone/lithics, other
Paper	Context sheet, Correspondence, Diary (Field progress form), Drawing, Matrices, Photograph, Plan, Report, Section, Survey
Digital	Database, GIS, Geophysics, Images raster/digital photography , Spreadsheets, Survey, Text

**OASIS terminology*

The above terms are from the OASIS Project Archives page (see below) and should be deleted as appropriate. This Appendix should be filled out in conjunction with the OASIS page.

