

Archaeological evaluation at New Gardens, Great Tew, Oxfordshire

Worcestershire Archaeology
for RPS Group

January 2020



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NEW GARDENS GREAT TEW OXFORDSHIRE

Archaeological evaluation report



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SITE INFORMATION

Site name: New Gardens, Great Tew, Oxfordshire
Local planning authority: Oxfordshire County Council
Planning reference: 16/00971/OUT
Central NGR: SP 39760 28492
Commissioning client: RPS Group
Client project reference: 25670
WA project number: P5777
WA report number: 2783
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Archaeological Evaluation at New Gardens, Great Tew, Oxfordshire

By Jesse Wheeler

With contributions by Jane Evans

Illustrations by Carolyn Hunt

Summary

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken at New Gardens, Great Tew, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 39760 28492) between the 15th and 17th January 2020. It was commissioned by RPS Group on behalf of Great Tew and Bantham Estates LLP, in advance of the restoration of a walled garden which has been disused for some years. Planning permission for the development has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works.

Nine trenches were excavated across the 5ha site. The trenches revealed two limestone walls, a large cut garden feature, a garden path depicted on early Ordnance Survey maps and two bedding trenches for plants. It is thought that these features date to the latter half of the 19th Century.

Report

1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken by Worcestershire Archaeology (WA) in January 2020 at New Gardens, Great Tew, Oxfordshire (NGR SP 39760 28492). The project was commissioned by RPS Group on behalf of Great Tew and Bantham, Estates LLP, in advance of the restoration of the walled garden. Planning permission has been granted subject to a programme of archaeological works (16/00971/OUT).

The archaeological advisor to the local planning authority considered that the proposed development has/had the potential to impact upon possible/specific heritage assets.

The project conforms to a brief prepared by Hugh Coddington, the Archaeological Officer for Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) and advisor to the Local Planning Authority (LPA). A WSI was prepared by RPS Group (25670) and approved by Hugh Coddington, as above. The evaluation/excavation also conforms to the industry guidelines and standards set out by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists in *Standard and guidance: for archaeological field evaluation* (CIfA 2014)

1.2 Site location, topography and geology

The site is located in Great Tew, Oxfordshire and comprises a walled garden within an area of woodland at a height of approximately 185m AOD. Great Tew is an historical parish, which previously included Little Tew and Worton, which were removed within the historic period. The parish was located in the historic Hundred of Wootton and the historic County of Oxfordshire.

The site is an area covering some 5ha located on the south side of a plateau formed by an east to west ridge, and is bounded to its north by the Little Tew to Ledwell Road. To the northeast lies The Grove, a part of Great Tew Park. The eastern edge of the site is bounded by New Gardens Cottage and agricultural fields. To the northwest of the site there is a coppice, and the rest of the site is bounded by agricultural fields.

The proposal site contains two different formations. The lower and older formation is the Chipping Norton Limestone Formation, a sedimentary ooidal limestone formed in the Jurassic 165 to 168 million years ago (BGS 2020). Overlying this in places is the Sharp's Hill Formation, an Argillaceous Rock with subordinate sandstone and limestone bands also formed 165 to 168 million years ago in the Jurassic Period.

2 Archaeological and historical background

2.1 Introduction

An archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (DBA) has been prepared for the site which provides information on the site's archaeological background (JMHS: Appendix 1).

The report states that there are no known archaeological assets within the site that pre-date the 19th century, and that the site is likely to have comprised agricultural land prior to its use as a garden. However, the DBA also stated that there was a high potential for the presence of archaeological remains relating to the layout of the former kitchen garden and its associated buildings.

The report also highlighted a number of earthworks within the site which may relate to the former use of the site as a kitchen garden but which may have other origins.

3 Project aims

The specific aims of archaeological trial trenching were to:

- To identify and record archaeological remains relating to the former kitchen gardens;
- To clarify whether or not the site is likely to contain archaeological evidence pre-dating the 19th century;
- Clarify the presence/absence, extent, condition, nature, character, date and significance of any archaeological remains encountered; and,
- Identify any artefacts relating to the occupation or use of the site.

4 Project methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by RPS Group (25670). Fieldwork was undertaken between the 15th and 17th of January 2020.

Nine trenches, amounting to 268m² in area, were excavated over the 5ha site. The location of the trenches is indicated in Figure 2.

The trenches were laid out were non-gridded and positioned to interrogate areas that would be impacted by the construction of six lodges, underground parking, a restaurant, swimming pool and the leisure facilities. Any variations are listed below:

- Trench 1 was shortened at its north-western end due to dense vegetation over the area occupied by three rectangular structures on the 1st edition mapping
- Trench 4 was moved away from the east-west aligned bank south of the walled garden as the ground here was too steep to allow safe excavation.
- Trench 6 was rotated clockwise to avoid an extant brick wall in the area south of the walled garden

Deposits considered not to be significant were removed under constant archaeological supervision using a 360° tracked excavator, employing a toothless bucket. Subsequent excavation was undertaken by hand. Clean surfaces were inspected and selected deposits were excavated to retrieve artefactual material and environmental samples, as well as to determine their nature. Deposits were recorded according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012) and trench and feature locations were surveyed using a differential GPS with an accuracy limit set at <0.04m. On completion of excavation, trenches were reinstated by replacing the excavated material.

All fieldwork records were checked and cross-referenced. Analysis was undertaken through a combination of structural and artefactual 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 Shropshire Museum.

5 Archaeological results

5.1 Introduction

The features recorded in the trenches are shown in Figures 2-4 and Plates 1-9. The trench and context inventory is presented in Appendix 1.

5.2 Trench descriptions

5.2.1 Trench 1

The natural in Trench 1 (102) consisted of yellow mudstone and limestone loose brash in a sandy clay matrix, that was overlain by a moderately compact mid greyish brown silty clay subsoil (101) 0.38m thick, and a 0.1m thick soft dark greyish black clayey silt topsoil (100).

Trench 1 contained a square structure (103) and (104) of the natural limestone and mudstone, made of slabs of mixed size, bonded with a sandy clay mortar. This measured 3m x 3m in the trench but extended to the east beyond the area of excavation. Its walls were 0.60m in thickness and the interior was filled with a redeposited natural (105).

5.2.2 Trench 2

The natural substrate in Trench 2 (202) was the same as (102) and was overlain by a moderately compact mid yellowish brown silty clay subsoil (201) 0.32m thick, and a 0.38m thick soft mid grey brown clayey silt topsoil (200).

Trench 2 contained the remains of a burnt out rootball of a substantially sized tree, 4m from the north-western end of the trench, comprising abundant charcoal fragments and heat affected clays, and attributed to the vegetation clearance activities of 10 years previous.

5.2.3 Trench 3

The natural substrate in Trench 3 (302) was the same as (102) and was overlain by a moderately compact mid yellowish brown silty clay subsoil (301) 0.15m thick, and a 0.2m thick soft mid grey brown clayey silt topsoil (300).

Trench 3 contained a single north-south aligned shallow gully [303], attributed to a bedding trench for horticulture surrounding the walled garden. It measured 1.12m in width and 0.14m in thickness, containing a highly rooted soft mid yellowish brown clayey sand mix (304).

5.2.4 Trench 4

The natural substrate in Trench 4 (402) was the same as (102) and was overlain by a moderately compact mid orangey brown silty clay subsoil (401) 0.38m thick, and a 0.1m thick soft mid grey brown clayey silt topsoil (400). No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

5.2.5 Trench 5

The natural substrate in Trench 5 (502) was the same as (102) and was overlain by a moderately compact mid orangey brown silty clay subsoil (501) 0.18m thick, and a 0.28m thick soft mid grey brown clayey silt topsoil (500). No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

5.2.6 Trench 6

The natural substrate in Trench 6 (601) was the same as (102) and was overlain by a 0.26m thick soft mid greyish brown clayey silt topsoil (600).

Trench 6 contained a single east-west aligned wall (605) made of rough slabs of natural limestone and mudstone with a sandy clay mortar, stretching over 3m, with a possible entrance 2.5m from its visible western extent. A steep concave cut [604] for an indeterminate garden feature to the southwest of this wall contained two fills- the lower an effective subsoil (603), and the upper a mixed silty clay with well mixed charcoal fragments (602) to a combined thickness of 0.64m, and extending the remaining 15m of the trench to a shallow bedding trench [608] at the south-western end of the trench. This bedding trench is likely associated with the cut garden feature and walling as it runs perpendicular to these features and was a shallow and amorphous cut with a single fill (607) highly disturbed by bioturbation.

5.2.7 Trench 7

The natural substrate in Trench 7 (702) was the same as (102) and was overlain by a moderately compact mid yellowish brown silty clay subsoil (701) 0.60m thick, and a 0.20m thick soft mid grey brown clayey silt topsoil (700). No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

5.2.8 Trench 8

The natural substrate in Trench 8 (802) was the same as (102) and was overlain by a moderately compact mid yellowish brown silty clay subsoil (801) 0.47m thick, and a 0.22m thick soft mid grey brown clayey silt topsoil (800). No archaeological features were observed in this trench.

5.2.9 Trench 9

The natural substrate in Trench 9 (902) was the same as (102) and was overlain by a layer of moderately compact dark yellowish brown silty clay made ground 0.75m thick, and a 0.3m thick soft dark blackish brown clayey silt topsoil (900).

Trench 9 contained the northern end of a path that quartered the walled garden and led to the greenhouses against the northern edge. This was constructed from a mound of compacted gravels and sub-angular mudstone and limestone, edged on its eastern edge by purple tiles, and measured 2.10m at its base.

6 Artefactual evidence

6.1 Introduction

The artefact report conforms to standards and guidance issued by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA 2014), as well as further guidance on pottery analysis, archive creation and museum deposition created by various pottery study groups (PCRG/SGRP/MPRG 2016), the Archaeological Archives Forum (AAF 2011), and the Society of Museum Archaeologists (SMA 1993).

6.2 Aims

This assessment aimed to identify, sort, spot date, and quantify all artefacts and describe the range of artefacts present. The information has been used to provide a preliminary assessment of the significance of the artefacts.

6.3 Methodology

6.3.1 Recovery policy

Artefacts were recovered according to standard Worcestershire Archaeology practice (WA 2012).

All artefacts collected in the field were recovered by hand.

6.3.2 Method of analysis

All hand-retrieved finds were scanned, identified, quantified and dated to period. The finds did not justify any detailed analysis but are summarised below.

6.3.3 Discard policy

Artefacts from topsoil and subsoil and unstratified contexts will normally be noted but not retained, unless they are of intrinsic interest (e.g. worked flint or flint debitage, featured pottery sherds, and other potential 'registered artefacts'). Large assemblages of post-medieval or modern material, unless there is some special reason to retain (such as local production), may be noted and not retained, or, if appropriate, a representative sample will be 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.

6.4 Results

Only a handful of finds were recovered, all from Trench 6 and all modern. Fill 602 produced a rim from a flower pot (37g). Fill 607 produced: two sherds of modern china (6g) broadly datable to c AD 1880-2000; two further sherds of flower pot (31g); and a fragment of modern brick (11g).

6.5 Significance

No finds of significance were recovered. The finds confirm that there was no activity pre-dating the garden and are consistent with this use of the site.

6.6 Recommendations

6.6.1 Further analysis

No further analysis is required.

6.6.2 Discard/retention

None of the finds justify retention

7 Discussion

The results of the archaeological trenching across New Gardens revealed a range of built and dug horticultural features both within and around the walled garden. These would be directly related to the construction and management of the garden and date to the latter half of the 19th Century.

The small stone structure (103 and 104) (3 x >3m) in Trench 1 is not visible on the historic maps consulted for the desk-based assessment, and its construction from materials other than those used in the walled garden structure suggests a different date or phase of building. The use of the local stone instead of brick, may suggest it was a secondary structure and of lesser importance such as a raised bed that would not necessarily have been illustrated on the main plans of the garden. However only the foundation levels are visible, and brick may have been used in the above ground construction. It is, however, small and the internal layer (105) of redeposited natural gives no clear indication whether it is a small structure or a raised bed, and its orientation does not respect the general garden layout as it is seen today. A small area of single coursed bricks (106) and a possible brick foundation edge (107) present in the north-western end of the trench lies above the subsoil and can be seen as the lower of three rectangular dotted shapes north of the walled garden (Oxfordshire XV.6, 1881), although the nature of these shapes remains unclear. As they are illustrated in a broken line rather than the solid line used for the walled garden itself, they may be bedding or planting alignments.

The bedding trench in Trench 3 was somewhat mixed in fill and amorphous in shape. It lies on a boundary depicted on the 1st edition mapping between an area of open lawn to the south and a formal, possibly hedged garden to the north. Although its alignment does not match perfectly it seems likely that this is a consequence of the limited view afforded by trenching, and it is also likely that this boundary would have been modified and replanted throughout its existence.

Trench 6 contained a brick wall with similarly aligned cut to its southwest and a bedding trench 15m away aligned in a perpendicular fashion. These are all likely to be contemporary garden features, partitioning and demarcating the area immediately south of the walled garden. A dotted pathway around the outside of the walled garden is illustrated on the second edition OS map, and it is possible that these are the features it is illustrating. Finds from this trench were limited to modern white china and fragmented flower pots.

Trenches 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8 contained no archaeological features however the disturbed and varied state of the natural in these areas reflect the mixed and change in the pattern of planting which occurred between the 1st and 2nd edition maps.

In the event, it was not possible to safely excavate a trench over the earthwork band to the south due to the steep incline. The earthworks within the site generally follow the boundaries of the garden and are likely to be contemporary.

8 Project personnel

The fieldwork was led by Tim Cornah, ACIfA, assisted by Jesse Wheeler, ACIfA, and Hazel Whitefoot.

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

9 Acknowledgements

Worcestershire Archaeology would like to thank the following for the successful conclusion of the project: Richard Smalley (RPS Group) for commissioning the project, Great Tew and Bantham Estates LLP for providing access and their help during the fieldwork. The project was monitored by Hugh Coddington, Archaeological Advisor to the Local Planning Authority and Worcestershire Archaeology would also like to thank them for their advice.

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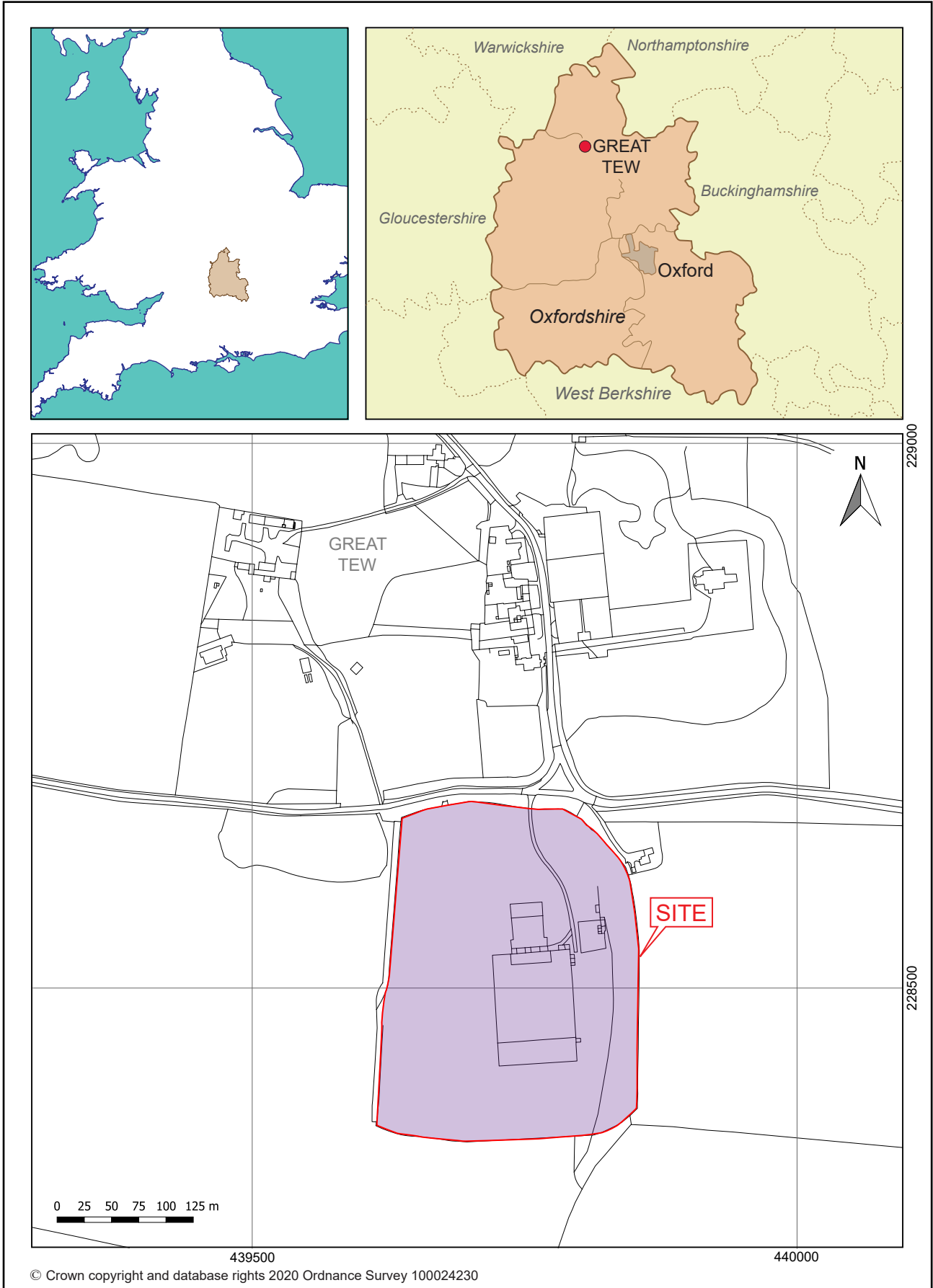
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Figures



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Location of the site

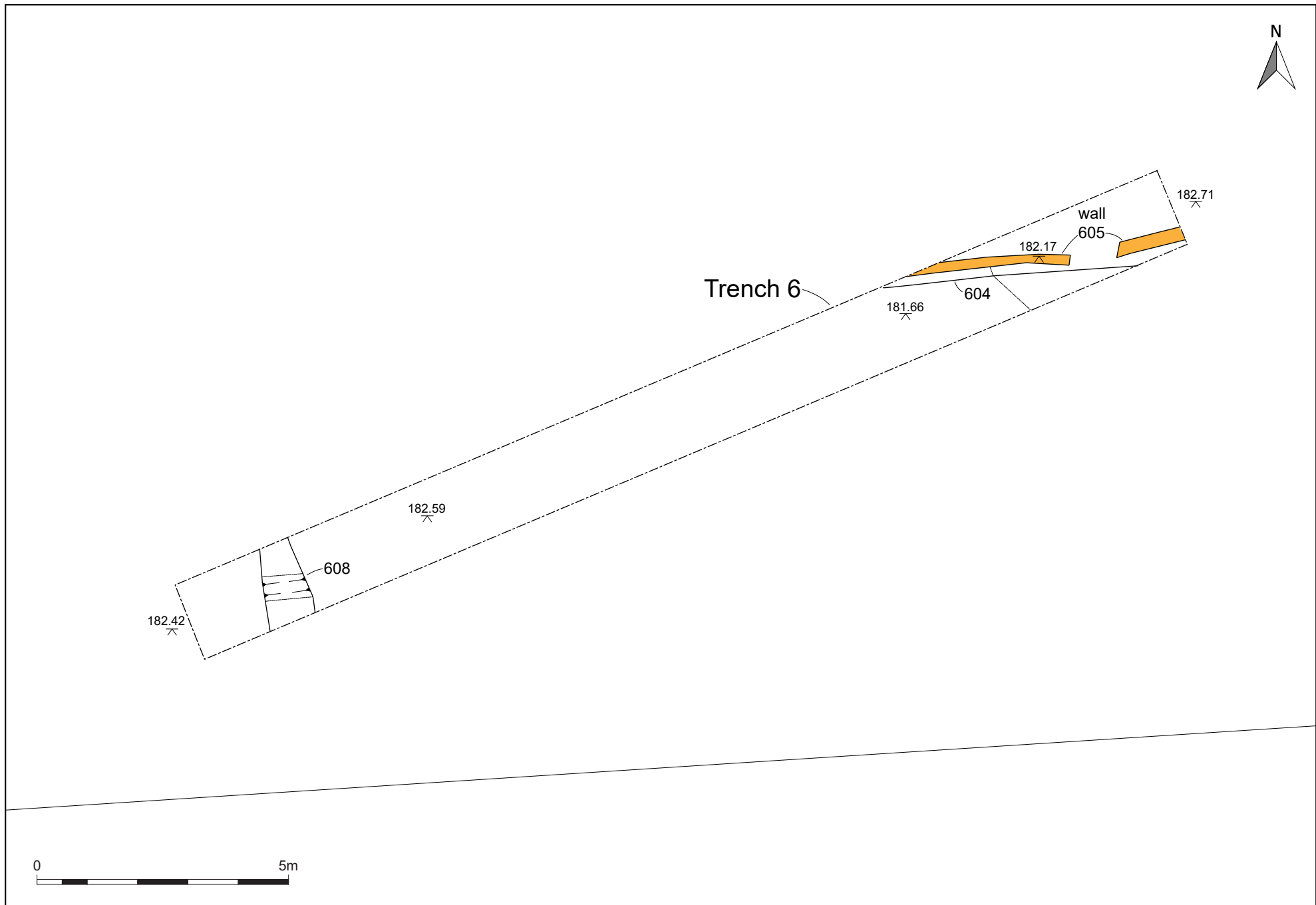
Figure 1

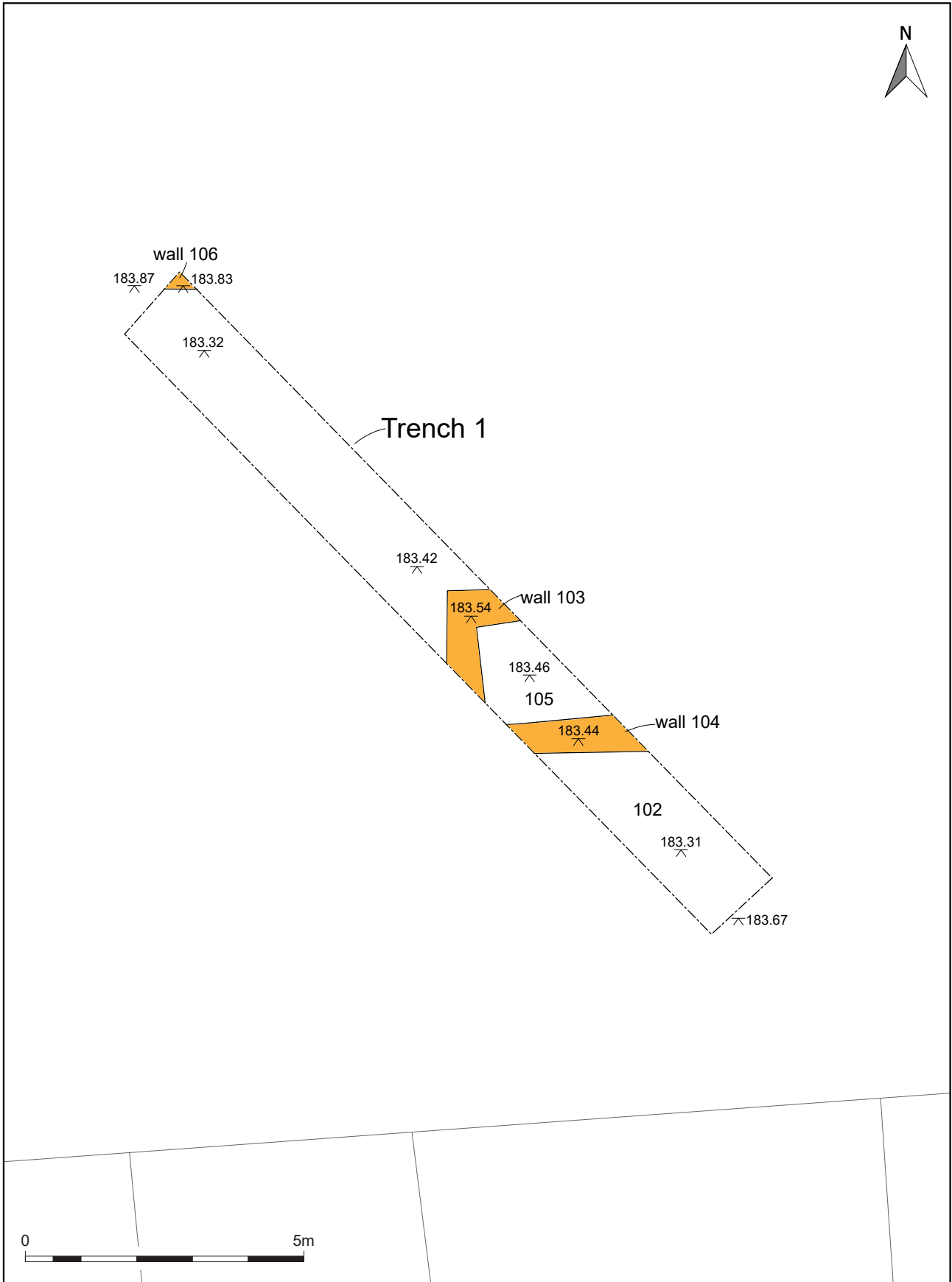


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Trench location plan

Figure 2





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Plan of Trench 1

Figure 3

Plates



Plate 1: Tr 1, Walls (103) and (104), looking east, 2 x 1m scales



Plate 2: Tr 1, Wall (104), looking north, 1m scale



Plate 3: Tr 3, looking north-east, 2 x 1m scales



Plate 4: Tr 3, Bedding trench [303], looking south-west, 1m scales



Plate 5: Tr 5, looking south-east, 2 x 1m scales



Plate 6: Tr 6, Walling (605), looking north-east, 1m scales



Plate 7: Tr 6, bedding trench [608], looking south-east, 1m scale



Plate 8: Tr 8, looking northwest, 2 x 1m scales



Plate 9: Tr 9, pathway (903), looking north, 1m scale

Appendix 1: Trench descriptions

Trench 1

Length: 8m

Width: 8m

Orientation: North-west to south-east

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
100	Topsoil	Layer	Rich, humic topsoil		Soft greyish black clay silt
101	Subsoil	Layer			
102	Layer	Layer	Natural. Yellow clay and Charmouth mudstone brash with Cotswold limestone.		Compact yellow
103	Wall	Structure	Corner of wall. W 0.60m, L >1.44m N facing, > 1.3m E facing. Material - Cotswold stone. Size of material - mix - slabs between 2-6cm thick & 10-30cm sq. Finish - rough. Coursing - one visible. Form - wall footings. Faces - exterior corner faces N & W. Bonding material - sandy yellow mortar. Rough wall footings with floor bedding between it and (104). Assumed to be the same structure and contemporary. Small structure.	0.09m	
104	Wall	Structure	W 0.60m, L >2.07m. Materials - Cotswold stone. Size of materials - mixed - slabs 2-6cm thick & 10-30cm sq. Finish - rough. Coursing - 4 courses visible. Form - wall footings. Faces - E-W aligned. Bonding material - sandy yellow mortar.	0.28m	
105	Layer	Layer	Sandy silt layer with moderate med sub-angular stone, v occasional large pieces sub-angular stone (these probably from the wall/feature this sits between). Assumed to be levelling/base layer for whatever the walled		Moderately Compact yellow sandy silt
106	Wall	Structure	Material - machine-made brick. Size - 215mm x 110mm x 60mm. Finish - good. Coursing - single course stretcher. Form - wall/bedding division. Faces - exterior SE. Bonding material - white sandy shell mortar. Possible border division in f lower or vegetable beds.		

107	Unknown	Structure	<p>Material - machine-made brick fragments & mortar. Size of materials - various. Finish of stones - rough. Coursing/bond - rough coursing, stretcher bond-ish. Form - wall footings? Faces - in north-eastern area of trench. Mortar - white sandy shell mortar. Possible brick footings, only c0.3m seen in N-eastern side of trench so direction & form cannot be ascertained.</p>	0.12m
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Trench 2

Length: 20m Width: 20m Orientation: North-west to south-east

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
200	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.38m	Soft greyish brown clay silt
201	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.32m	Moderately Compact yellowish brown silty clay
202	Natural	Layer	Natural. Charmouth mudstone brash/Cotswold limestone mix with brown sandy patches.		Compact yellow
204	Unknown	Fill	Patch of charcoal and heat-affected clays 4m from north-western end of trench. Possible burning of a tree in-situ. Undated but covered by 6cm band of topsoil/turf so not recent, c 4m long.	0.6m	

Trench 3

Length: 20m

Width: 20m

Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
300	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.20m	Soft greyish brown clay silt
301	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.15m	Moderately Compact yellowish brown silty clay
302	Natural	Layer	Natural. Charmouth mudstone brash/limestone mix with some small patches of brownish sand.	0.07m	Compact yellow
303	Linear	Cut	W 1.12m, L >1.6m. Cut of an apparent linear feature running just off N-S across the trench. Very shallow with a lot of evidence of rooting. Possibly an old planting line?	0.14m	
304	linear	Fill	W 1.12m, L >1.6m. Moderate sm-med sub- angular limestone pieces, v occasional large sub-angular limestone pieces, occ sm charcoal pieces. Single fill of shallow linear feature [303].	0.14m	Soft yellowish brown clayey sand

Trench 4

Length: 20m

Width: 20m

Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
400	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.10m	Soft greyish brown clay silt
401	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil.	0.38m	Moderately Compact orangey brown silty clay
402	Natural	Layer	Natural. Charmouth mudstone brash/limestone mix at western end of trench, brownier clayey sand with abundant limestone pieces at eastern end.	0.16m	Compact yellowish brown clayey sand
403	Unknown	Cut	Cut of possible feature. Unexcavated.		
404	Unknown	Fill	Fill of unexcavated feature [403].		

Trench 5

Length: 20m

Width: 20m

Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
500	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.28m	Soft greyish brown clay silt
501	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil	0.38m	Moderately Compact orangey brown silty clay
502	Natural	Layer	Natural. Mid orangey-yellow gravels with mid brown sandy clay patches.		Loose orangey yellow

Trench 6

Length: 20m

Width: 20m

Orientation: North-east to south-west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
600	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.26m	Soft greyish brown clay silt
601	Natural	Layer	Natural. Charmouth mudstone brash.		Compact yellow
602	Unknown	Fill	Upper fill of cut [604]. Silty clay with frequent sm charcoal pieces.	0.30m	Moderately Compact orangey brown silty clay
603	Unknown	Fill	Lower fill of cut [304]. Silty clay with occ small charcoal pieces.	0.38m	Moderately Compact brownish orange silty clay
604	Unknown	Cut	Cut of (probable) garden feature.		
605	Wall	Structure	Cotswold dry stone wall. W 0.40m, L >3.3m. Material size variable - D 4cm - 8cm, L/W 15cm sq - 30cm sq. Rough finish. Roughly 4 courses, exterior facing south. No bonding material but footings packed by (603). Possible entrance way.	0.30m	
606	Wall	Layer	Redeposited natural on inside of wall 605. Contained		
607	Linear	Fill	W 0.80m, L >1.6m. Fill of probable bedding trench [608]. Frequent charcoal flecking, rooting and burrowing.	0.14m	Moderately Compact brownish grey silty clay
608	Linear	Cut	W 0.80m, L >1.6m. Cut of probable garden feature/bedding trench.	0.14m	

Trench 7

Length: 20m

Width: 20m

Orientation: North to south

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
700	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.20m	Soft greyish brown clay silt
701	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil. Silty clay with moderate small charcoal pieces.	0.60m	Moderately Compact yellowish brown silty clay
702	Natural	Layer	Natural. Charmouth mudstone brash/brown sand patches mix.		Compact yellow

Trench 8

Length: 20m

Width: 20m

Orientation: North-west to south-east

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
800	Topsoil	Layer	Topsoil	0.22m	Soft greyish brown clay silt
801	Subsoil	Layer	Subsoil. Silty clay with occasional small charcoal pieces	0.47m	Moderately Compact yellowish brown silty clay
802	Natural	Layer	Natural. Charmouth mudstone brash/Cotswold limestone pieces mix.		Compact yellow

Trench 9

Length: 20

Width: 20

Orientation: East to west

Context summary:

Context	Feature	Context	Description	Height/ depth	Deposit description
900	Topsoil	Layer		0.30m	
901	Modern Layer	Layer	Layer of made ground within walled garden. Silty clay with moderate small charcoal pieces + occasional small sub-angular limestone.	0.75m	Moderately Compact yellowish brown silty clay
902	Natural	Layer	Natural. Yellow Charmouth mudstone brash/Cotswold limestone mix.		Compact yellow
903	Modern Layer	Structure	Mound of local natural, c 2.10m wide at the base, levelled with a more compacted layer of gravels/natural. Then a further layer of limestone pieces c 4cm sq – 10cm sq laid on top of this as a base for the path. Edging of vertical tiles surviving on eastern side of path only. Original path surface not surviving.		

Appendix 2: Summary of project archive

TYPE	DETAILS*
Artefacts and Environmental	Ceramics,
Paper	Context sheet, Diary (Field progress form), Matrices, Photograph, Plan, Report, Survey
Digital	Database, GIS, digital photography, Text

*OASIS terminology