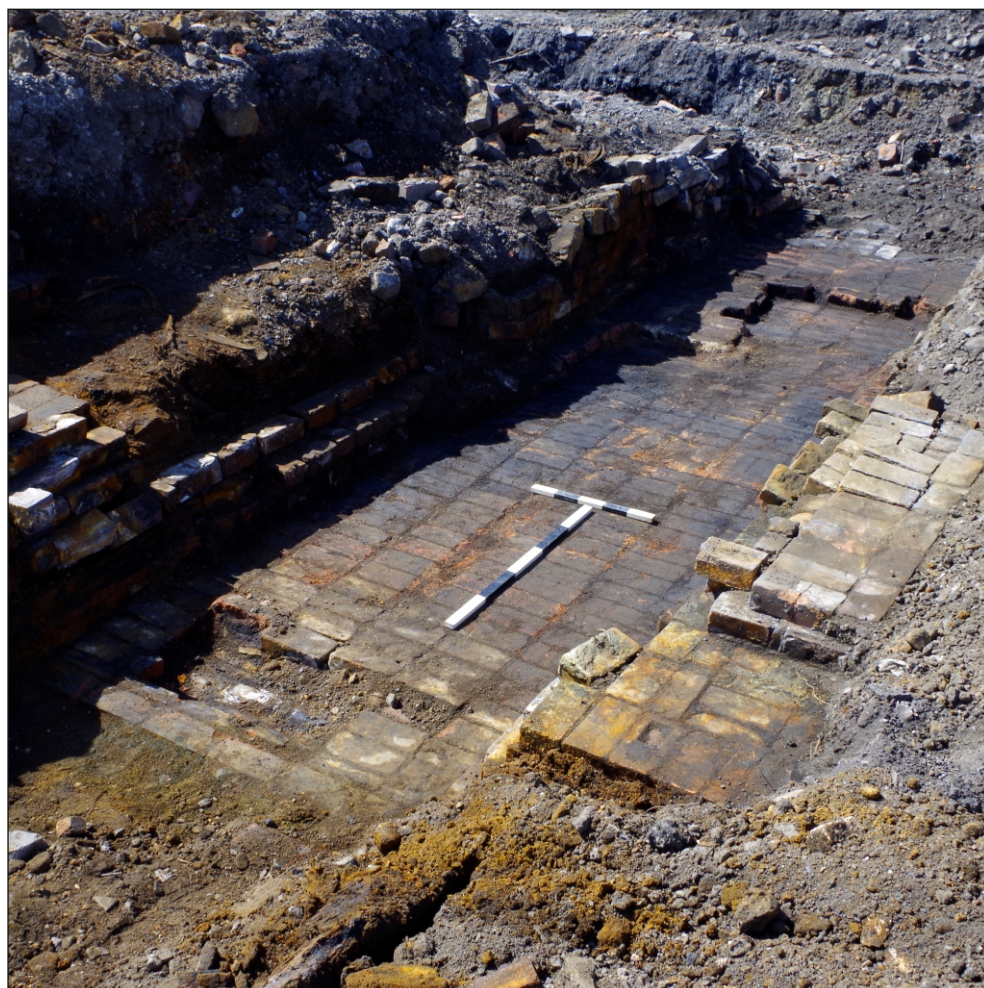




making sense of heritage

Lidl Supermarket, Ffordd Parc Ynysderw Pontardawe, Neath Port Talbot Borough

Archaeological Watching Brief



Planning Ref: P2015/1090

Ref: 112550.02

June 2016



**Lidl Supermarket, Ffordd Parc Ynysderw
Pontardawe, Neath Port Talbot Borough**

Archaeological Watching Brief

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Lidl Supermarket, Ffordd Parc Ynysderw Pontardawe, Neath Port Talbot Borough

Archaeological Watching Brief

Contents

Summary	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Project background	1
1.2 The Site.....	1
2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND	1
2.1 Summary.....	1
3 METHODOLOGY.....	3
3.1 Aims and objectives	3
3.2 Fieldwork methodology	3
4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS.....	4
4.1 Introduction	4
4.2 Description	4
4.3 Conclusions.....	5
5 STORAGE AND CURATION	5
5.1 Museum	5
5.2 Archive	5
5.3 Storage	5
5.4 Discard policy.....	5
5.5 Copyright.....	5
5.6 Security copy.....	6
6 REFERENCES.....	6
6.1 Bibliography	6
7 APPENDICES.....	7
7.1 Appendix 1: Context descriptions	7

Figures

- Figure 1: Site location, showing trial pits and watching brief trenches
Figure 2: Plan of furnace 403



Plates

Plate 1: Furnace 403 in southern corner of Site, view from north-east (scales = 0.5 and 1 m)



Lidl Supermarket, Ffordd Parc Ynysderw Pontardawe, Neath Port Talbot Borough

Archaeological Watching Brief

Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by Walsingham Planning to undertake an Archaeological Watching Brief to monitor groundworks associated with the construction of a Lidl food store and associated service yard and car park at Ffordd Parc Ynysderw, Pontardawe, Neath Port Talbot Borough, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) 272190, 203725.

A planning application (P2015/1090) was submitted to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council for the demolition of the existing Lidl building and construction of a larger store and associated car parking. Following advice from the Archaeological Planning Officer at the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust, an archaeological watching brief was requested in order to mitigate the impact of the groundworks on potential archaeological remains.

Fieldwork was undertaken between the 12th and 31st May 2016. The only feature of archaeological significance revealed was the remains of a rectangular, brick built possible annealing furnace in the southern corner of the Site. The furnace formed part of the Pontardawe Tinplate works, founded in 1843, though this element can be reasonably confidently dated to the period of World War I expansion on the basis of cartographic evidence and post-1895 stamps noted on several of the bricks used in its construction.



Lidl Supermarket, Ffordd Parc Ynysderw Pontardawe, Neath Port Talbot Borough

Archaeological Watching Brief

Acknowledgements

The watching brief was commissioned by Walsingham Planning, on behalf of Lidl UK GmbH. The fieldwork was undertaken by Mark Bagwell and Liam Powell. The report was compiled by Sam Fairhead and edited by Phil Andrews, with illustrations by Nancy Dixon and Elizabeth James. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Grace Corbett.



Lidl Supermarket, Ffordd Parc Ynysderw Pontardawe, Neath Port Talbot Borough

Archaeological Watching Brief

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Project background

1.1.1 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Walsingham Planning to undertake an Archaeological Watching Brief to monitor groundworks for the construction of a Lidl food store and associated service yard and car park at Ffordd Parc Ynysderw, Pontardawe, Neath Port Talbot Borough (hereafter 'the Site'; **Figure 1**). The Site is located at National Grid Reference (NGR) 272190 203725.

1.1.2 A planning application (P2015/1090) had been submitted to Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council for the demolition of the existing Lidl building and construction of a larger store and associated car parking. Following advice from the Archaeological Planning Officer at the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust (GGAT), an archaeological watching brief was requested in order to mitigate the impact of the groundworks on potential archaeological remains.

1.2 The Site

1.2.1 The Site is located within the town of Pontardawe in the Tawe valley, just over 10 km north-east of Swansea (**Figure 1**). The Site was mostly surrounded by modern development, with housing to the north-east and south-east, a small modern retail park to the north-west and an empty brownfield plot containing the remains of a former industrial building to the south-west. The River Tawe was situated approximately 130 m to the south-east. The Site was level at approximately 33 m above Ordnance Datum (aOD).

1.2.2 The town is situated around the confluence of the River Tawe and Upper Clydach River, in a steep sided valley with the land rising up to a semi-upland landscape of high hills to the north-west and south-east, these forming the southern foothills of the Brecon Beacons. Bedrock geology within the Site comprises sandstone of the Rhondda Member with a superficial Alluvial Fan deposit of sand and gravel. Local borehole records record at least 10 m of alluvial sand and gravel capped in most places by approximately 2 m of made ground (British Geological Society online viewer, accessed February 2016).

2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Summary

2.1.1 The following is summarised from the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) (WA 2016).

2.1.2 The settlement at Pontardawe developed around a junction of the route up the Tawe valley between Swansea and Brecon and a drover's road between Llandeilo and Neath that crossed the river at this point. It is not known at what date the settlement originated, however it is likely to have been fairly small prior to 18th and 19th century growth.



- 2.1.3 The uplands to the north-west and south-east of the town are the location of numerous prehistoric monuments including Bronze Age cairns, ring cairns, a standing stone and a stone circle. To the south-west are a number of possible Neolithic chambered tombs. Many of these prehistoric monuments are Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The proliferation of prehistoric monuments suggests settlement in the area during the Neolithic and Bronze Age, however no sites of this period are known from within the town itself.
- 2.1.4 No Romano-British remains are known from the vicinity of Pontardawe. Furthermore, no medieval features are recorded from within the town, though several medieval churches, some early Christian inscriptions and a chapel site are known from the surrounding countryside. Other medieval features in the uplands include settlement sites and the location of a medieval mill.
- 2.1.5 The earliest features in Pontardawe date from the post-medieval period. In 1796 the Swansea Canal was opened which facilitated the industrial development of the area and subsequent expansion of the settlement. The canal ran parallel to the River Tawe and passed the Site approximately 150 m to the north-west; the section of the canal running past the Site is no longer extant.
- 2.1.6 The earliest industry at Pontardawe consisted of an iron works built in 1835 which was superseded by a tinsplate works founded in 1843. Other 19th-century industries in the town included a chemical works, coal mining and pottery manufacture. The 19th-century Pontardawe tinsplate works were located close to the Site. The 1877 first edition Ordnance Survey map shows the main works building located a short distance to the west of the Site adjacent to the canal. The area occupied by the Site itself is shown on the 1877 map as an agricultural field with a short section of road in the south-west corner.
- 2.1.7 Over the course of the 19th century the tinsplate works expanded and by the end of the 19th century was of considerable size, producing both steel and tinsplate and exporting worldwide. The second edition Ordnance Survey map dating from 1898 shows the tinsplate works having expanded to the north-east, with the main buildings located immediately beyond the Site to the north-west. The south-western corner of the Site is located within the grounds of the works and a tramway is shown crossing this part of the Site.
- 2.1.8 During World War I when demand was high, the steel and tinsplate works expanded to the south-east into the area of the Site. This expansion can be seen in the 1918 Ordnance Survey map which shows a large, new works building partially situated within the Site. This building occupies the south-western end of the Site with another building at the north-east end and several other smaller buildings. A tramway can be seen to pass through the Site with sidings linking the various buildings.
- 2.1.9 During the mid-20th century the steel and tin plate industry declined with the works closing in 1962. By the 1970s most of the buildings had been removed, although some of the early 20th-century buildings located within the Site can be seen as extant on available mapping up until the 1990s. According to the geo-environmental investigation report (Opus International Consultants 2015) the remaining buildings within the Site were removed in 2006. A derelict building that was the only surviving remains of the works, situated to the immediate south-west of the Site, was demolished in 2015.
- 2.1.10 The geo-environmental investigation report (Opus International Consultants 2015) indicated that the Site was covered with a deposit of made ground between 1.9 m and 3.8 m deep. This was recorded in eight trial pits (see **Figure 1**) as comprising loose and locally compacted grey or black granular sand and gravels, burnt shale, clinker, concrete, coal, granite and sandstone, with occasional pockets of timber and metal. It is likely that much of

this material is a deposit related to the demolition of the former early 20th-century tin plate and steel works, but it may contain *in situ* structural remains related to the buildings formerly on the Site.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Aims and objectives

3.1.1 With due regard to the ClfA *Standard and guidance: archaeological watching brief* (ClfA 2014a), the principle aim of the archaeological watching brief was to record the archaeological resource during development within a specified area using appropriate methods and practices, and in compliance with the *Code of conduct* and other relevant by-laws of ClfA.

3.1.2 In furtherance of the project aim, the following objectives were defined:

- *to allow, within the resources available, the preservation by record of archaeological deposits, the presence and nature of which could not be established (or established with sufficient accuracy) in advance of development or other potentially disruptive works; including*
 - *To ensure their preservation by record to the highest possible standard;*
 - *To confirm the approximate date or date range of the remains, by means of artefactual or other evidence;*
 - *To determine or confirm the approximate extent of any remains;*
 - *To determine the condition and state of preservation of the remains; and*
 - *To determine the degree of complexity of the horizontal and/or vertical stratigraphy present.*
- *to provide an opportunity, if needed, for the watching archaeologist to signal to all interested parties, before the destruction of the material in question, that an archaeological find has been made for which the resources allocated to the watching brief itself are not sufficient to support treatment to a satisfactory and proper standard; and*
- *To prepare a report on the results of the watching brief.*

3.2 Fieldwork methodology

3.2.1 The fieldwork consisted of the monitoring of groundwork and ground reduction, including service runs, across the Site.

3.2.2 The watching brief was undertaken by at least one experienced archaeologist, subject to the number of site operations being undertaken at any one time. The mechanical excavation was, where possible, undertaken using a toothless ditching bucket and under constant supervision by WA. Machine excavation proceeded to the required construction levels or the top of archaeological levels whichever was the higher. Where practicable and without causing unreasonable delay to the groundwork programme, groundwork was temporarily halted whilst investigations were carried out by WA staff.

3.2.3 WA staff investigated archaeological deposits and features by excavation and recording commensurate with the scale of work and using WA's pro forma recording system. Where practical, and towards meeting the aims of the watching brief, excavation included sampling of features and deposits in order to recover artefacts, ecofacts and dating evidence, and in

order to determine stratigraphic relationships. Recording included written, drawn, and photographic elements as conditions allowed.

- 3.2.4 Archaeological features and deposits were surveyed using a Total Station/GPS and related to Ordnance Survey.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 The watching brief largely involved the monitoring of the machine excavation of approximately 230 m of foundation and service trenches in the south-western third of the Site where the new store was to be built; the remaining two-thirds was designated largely for car parking requiring no significant ground reduction. A series of trial pits excavated in the car park area to ascertain ground stability were also monitored. The trenches observed (1 – 5; see **Figure 1**) lay largely within the footprint of the new store, covering an area of approximately 70 m by 35 m, and were between 2 m and 7 m in width. The wider trenches were dug where deeper excavation necessitated stepping of the sides.

- 4.1.2 The majority of the Site was covered by layers of modern made ground consisting of demolition debris and crushed rubble (see **Appendix 1** for details). These substantial deposits typically existed to a depth of 1.5–2 m below ground level (bgl), though in some areas were in excess of 2.5 m deep. Where the natural geological deposits were encountered they consisted of mid orange clayey sand and gravels with moderate medium to large cobble inclusions.

4.2 Description

- 4.2.1 The only feature of archaeological significance revealed during the watching brief was a brick built furnace towards the south-west end of Trench 4 in the southern corner of the Site (**Figure 1**). Fortunately, virtually the full extent of this furnace was exposed within the excavation trench, which was widened to approximately 7 m here. Other features included two manholes in Trench 1 and the remains of a concrete ramp at the junction of Trenches 3 and 4, all likely to have been associated with the former tinsplate works.

- 4.2.2 Furnace **403**, rectangular and approximately 6.2 m by 3.2 m in extent, comprised a floor surface constructed of frogged, machine-cut red bricks which also acted as the foundation for two parallel, brick built, side walls approximately 1.6 m apart and oriented north-east to south-west (**Plate 1**). These two walls were bonded at the north-eastern end to a return wall oriented north-west to south-east (largely removed), and were all approximately 0.8 m thick; they survived to a maximum height of six courses. The side and end walls were built of the same frogged, machine cut red bricks as the floor, with many showing evidence of heat damage or vitrification. The internal length of the furnace, open at the south-west end (but with a shallow, rectangular step in the floor), was 5.4 m. The remains of a possible supporting buttress appeared to abut the outside of the north-east end of the south-eastern side wall, though this may have been part of the rear wall of an adjoining furnace (**Figure 2**).

- 4.2.3 The makers stamp 'SJ GRAIGDDU BRITISH MADE' was noted on several of the bricks, and this can be attributed a date after 1895 when E Southwood Jones took over the Graigddu Brick Company based at Pontnewynydd. Kelly's Directory of 1895 lists this company in its fire brick section.

- 4.2.4 Apart from the stamped bricks, no other finds of interest or significance were noted during the course of the watching brief, and none of the bricks has been retained.



4.3 Conclusions

- 4.3.1 The south-western end of the Site, where the furnace was revealed, is shown as being unoccupied land on the 1913 Ordnance Survey map, whilst the 1918 map shows an extension of the nearby steel and tinplate works into this area. The furnace is therefore almost certainly associated with the expansion of these works during World War I, and it certainly post-dates 1895 on the evidence of the bricks.
- 4.3.2 The Pontardawe Tinplate Works produced a range of products during World War I, including Siemens steel, tin plates, aluminium coated plates, galvanized steel, and high carbon and soft steel billets. The furnace located during the watching brief perhaps served for annealing during one of these processes, as the interior had certainly been subject to high temperatures, though the form suggests a secondary rather than a primary, smelting or melting function.

5 STORAGE AND CURATION

5.1 Museum

- 5.1.1 The designated receiving museum is National Museum Wales. The Curator of Archaeology was contacted in advance of the fieldwork to obtain information regarding the appropriate archive preparation standards. A copy of the archive index will also be submitted to the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales (RCAHMW).

5.2 Archive

- 5.2.1 The complete site archive, which will include paper records, photographic records, graphics, and digital data, will be prepared following the standard conditions for the acceptance of excavated archaeological material by National Museum Wales, and in general following nationally recommended guidelines (SMA 1995; Brown 2011; ADS 2013; ClfA 2014b).
- 5.2.2 All archive elements will be marked with the unique Wessex Archaeology site code and a full index will be prepared.
- 5.2.3 The site archive will be prepared for long-term storage in accordance with current guidelines (e.g. Walker 1990). It is proposed in principle that, subject to the wishes of the landowner, the entire archive will be donated to and deposited with National Museum Wales. Provision has been made for the cost of long term storage in the post-fieldwork costs.

5.3 Storage

- 5.3.1 Until final deposition with the museum the archive will be stored at the offices of WA Southern Region in Salisbury.

5.4 Discard policy

- 5.4.1 WA follows the guidelines set out in *Selection, Retention and Dispersal of Archaeological Collections* (SMA 1993), which allows for the discard of selected artefact and ecofact categories which are not considered to warrant any future analysis.

5.5 Copyright

- 5.5.1 The full copyright of the written/illustrative archive relating to the Site will be retained by WA Ltd under the *Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988* with all rights reserved. The Museum, however, will be granted an exclusive licence for the use of the archive for educational purposes, including academic research, providing that such use shall be non-profitmaking, and conforms to the *Copyright and Related Rights Regulations 2003*.



5.6 Security copy

- 5.6.1 In line with current best practice (e.g. Brown 2011), on completion of the project a security copy of the written records will be prepared, in the form of a digital PDF/A file. PDF/A is an ISO-standardised version of the Portable Document Format (PDF) designed for the digital preservation of electronic documents through omission of features ill-suited to long-term archiving.

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7 APPENDICES

7.1 Appendix 1: Context descriptions

Trench 1			Dimensions: 7m x 4m x 1m
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
101	layer	Topsoil, compact mid brown sandy silt, moderate fine gravel inclusions	0-0.3m
102	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments.	0.3-1m+

Trench 2			Dimensions: see survey (restricted access due to H&S)
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
201	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments.	0-0.6m
202	str	Concrete foundation of original Lidl store	0-0.6m

Trench 3			Dimensions: see survey (restricted access due to H&S)
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
301	str	Concrete access ramp	-
302	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments.	0-0.5m
303	layer	Made ground/hardcore, mixed gravels and rubble fragments	0.5-0.7m
304	layer	Made ground, dark grey and black gravels and industrial waste (iron slag and clinker)	0.7-1.5m

Trench 4			Dimensions: 30m x 7m x 1.4m
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
401	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments and industrial waste	0-1.35m
402	str	NW/SE brick wall, returning SW to form chamber of furnace	0.34m
403	str	Brick floor of furnace	1.4m
404	str	NW/SE brick wall/buttress abutting 402	0.3m

Trench 5			Dimensions: see survey, foundation trenches
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
501	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments and industrial waste	0-0.5m+



Trial pit 1			
Dimensions: 3.7m x 1.1m x 2.2m			
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
601	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments and industrial waste	0-2.2m
602	layer	Natural, mid orange sandy clay	2.2m+

Trial pit 2			
Dimensions: 3.4m x 1.1m x 2.6m			
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
701	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments and industrial waste	0-2.3m
702	layer	Natural, mid orange sandy clay	2.3m+

Trial pit 3			
Dimensions: 3.9m x 1.1m x 3.9m			
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
801	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments and industrial waste	0-2.9m
802	layer	Natural, mid orange sandy clay	2.9m+

Trial pit 4			
Dimensions: 2.4m x 1.1m x 2m			
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
901	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments and industrial waste	0-1.1m
902	layer	Natural, mid orange sandy clay	1.1m+

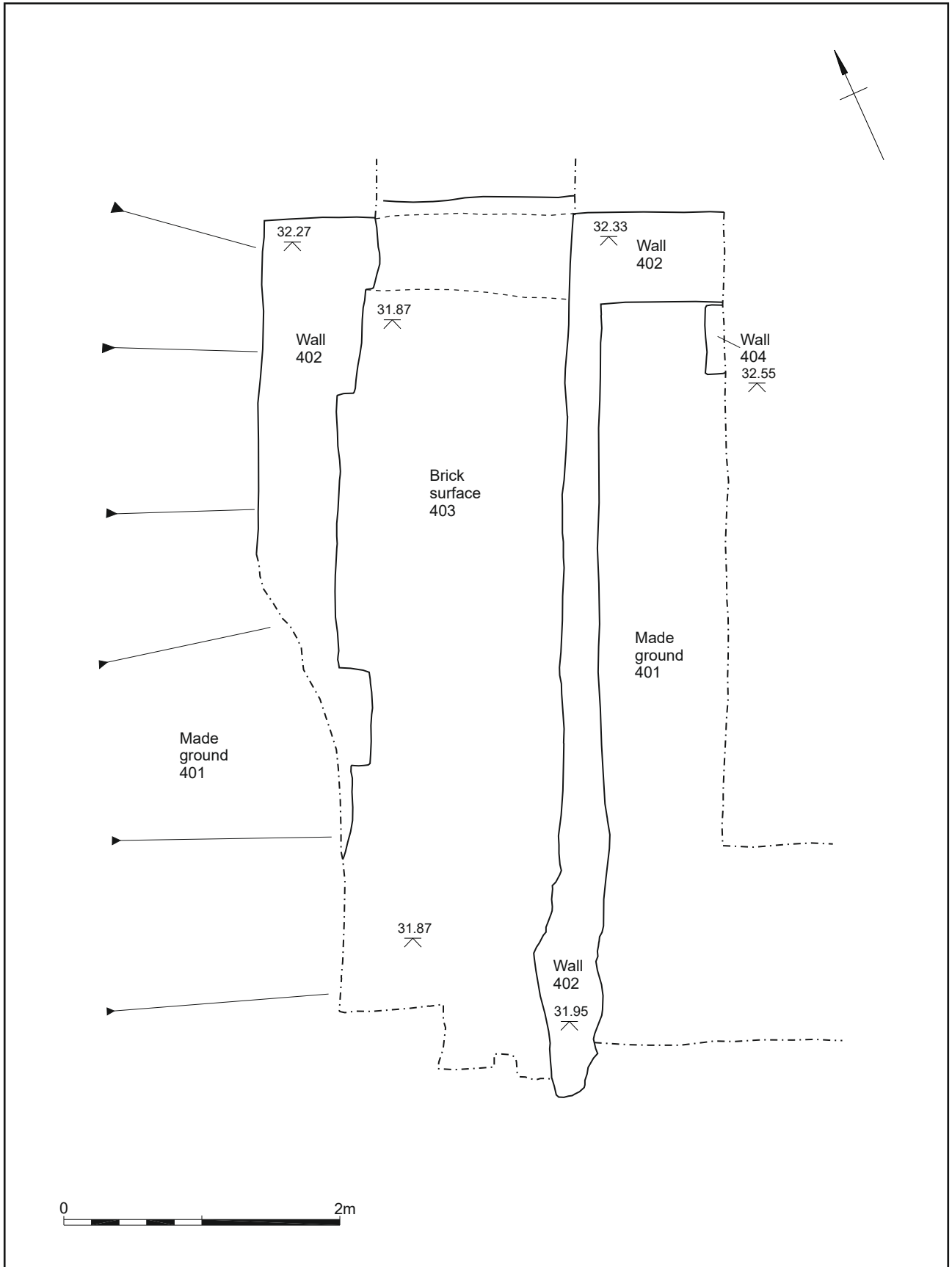
Trial pit 5			
Dimensions: 2.9m x 1.1m x 1.7m			
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
1001	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments and industrial waste	0-1m
1002	layer	Natural, mid orange sandy clay	1m+


Trial pit 6			
Dimensions: 2.7m x 1.1m x 2.2m			
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
1101	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments and industrial waste	0-1.5m
1102	layer	Natural, mid orange sandy clay	1.5m+



Trial pit 7			
Dimensions: 2.7m x 1.1m x 2.7m			
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
1201	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments and industrial waste	0-2.2m
1202	layer	Natural, mid orange sandy clay	2.2m+

Trial pit 8			
Dimensions: 2.9m x 1.1m x 3.2m			
Context	Description		Depth below surface (m)
1301	layer	Made ground, light to dark grey gravels and sands, common sub-angular cobbles, brick and concrete rubble fragments and industrial waste	0-2.9m
1302	layer	Natural, mid orange sandy clay	2.9m+




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Plan of furnace 403

Figure 3



Plate 1: Furnace 403 in southern corner of Site, from north-east (scales = 0.5 and 1 m)

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