



29-41 WEST HAM LANE
Stratford
London
E15

London Borough of Newham

An archaeological evaluation report

June 2005



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

29-41 WEST HAM LANE
Stratford
London
E15

London Borough of Newham

An archaeological evaluation report

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Summary (non-technical)

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service on the site of 29–41 West Ham Lane, Stratford, London, E15. The report was commissioned from MoLAS by Laing O'Rourke on behalf of the client.

Following the recommendations of a desk-based archaeological impact assessment (MoLAS 2005) four evaluation trenches were excavated on the site which have helped to refine the initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site. The site has been heavily truncated by post-medieval activity down to the natural gravels and clay in all of the four trenches examined. On the north part of site truncation by mid to late 19th century pitting and levelling and make-up deposits was recorded in association with drains and cess pits of contemporary date, which relate to the development of Victoria Street and West Ham Lane. The truncated remains of an earlier, but undated, north-south aligned ditch survived below this sequence.

The more southerly part of the site revealed gardens soils of 18th century date over a large east-west ditch. The early fills of this ditch were again undated.

Investigations in the south-western area of site showed that modern basements truncated all archaeological deposits down to natural alluvial clay, relating to the edge of the floodplain of the River Lea. This deposit may represent the top of the alluvial sequence and as such earlier remains may be present in the sequence below. There are uncertainties about the level of underlying natural geology due to the problems with establishing the exact depth and extent of ancient river channels.

In the light of revised understanding of the archaeological potential of the site the report concludes the impact of the proposed redevelopment is to remove all surviving archaeological deposits in the northern area of the site. The more westerly parts of site appear to be on the edge of the alluvial floodplain of the Lea River which potentially could conceal deep sequences of alluvium which may contain archaeological remains, but are unlikely to be significantly impacted upon by the present development.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The evaluation took place at 29–41 West Ham Lane, Stratford, London E15, hereafter called ‘the site’. It is located bounded by Victoria Street to the north, West Ham Lane to the west and Mark Street to the south. The OS National Grid Ref. for centre of site is 539047 184247. Modern ground level immediately adjacent to the site is 7m OD. The site code is WMN05.

A desk-top *Archaeological assessment* was previously prepared, which covers the whole area of the site (MoLAS, 2005) The *assessment* document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site, and the initial interpretation of its archaeological potential.

An archaeological field evaluation was subsequently carried out on a total of four trenches within the existing site area as detailed in the *Method Statement* (MoLAS 2005).



Fig 1 Site location

1.2 Planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Archaeological assessment*, which summarised the archaeological potential for the site (see Section 2, MoLAS, 2005).

1.3 Planning background

The field evaluation was undertaken to investigate the site ahead of the construction of a six storey building with single basement.

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Laing O'Rourke and produced by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 2001).

Field evaluation, and the *Evaluation report* which comments on the results of that exercise, are defined in the most recent English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage, 1998) as intended to provide information about the archaeological resource in order to contribute to the:

- formulation of a strategy for the preservation or management of those remains; and/or
- formulation of an appropriate response or mitigation strategy to planning applications or other proposals which may adversely affect such archaeological remains, or enhance them; and/or
- formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigations within a programme of research

1.5 Aims and objectives

All research is undertaken within the priorities established in the Museum of London's *A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002*

The following research aims and objectives were established in the *Method Statement* for the evaluation (Section 2.2, MoLAS, 2005) and are based on the recommendations highlighted in the Archaeological impact assessment (MoLAS, June 2005):

What is the nature and level of natural topography?

What are the earliest deposits identified?

What are the latest deposits identified?

Does any evidence survive of the medieval or post-medieval development of Stratford High Street?

2 Topographical and historical background

The site is situated close to the division between Thames Gravels and Alluvium of the Lea Valley floodplain. The BGS geological map (Sheet 256) indicates that associated fluvial deposits are lying within 20–30m of the site. Modern street level adjacent to the site is *c*7m OD.

The Roman London-Colchester road ran approximately 150m to the north of the site. A settlement and field systems have been detected west of the Lea at Old Ford, the crossing point of the River Lea. The line of this road has been traced in several places in the Stratford area. No settlement has yet been found here on the eastern side of the valley, although the evidence from the Stratford Market Depot shows land use of an unknown form, the excavations at Stratford Market Depot revealed evidence of cultivation dating to the 3rd century AD. Two significant changes appear to have occurred at Stratford in the later Roman period. The earlier Roman deposits are overlain by a layer of alluvial silt, formed by the river flooding. The top of the soil horizon appears to have been ploughed. As in the early Roman period, field boundaries were hard to define, and little evidence exists for domestic buildings.

Another major development in the area was the founding of Stratford Langthorne Abbey in 1134. Post-medieval place names for the surrounding area are in themselves suggestive, both Stratford Marsh and Abbey Marsh are named on Rocque's Map of 1744-46, but there is also some evidence of medieval wetland. The Abbey was temporarily abandoned due to flooding in the 14th century, and there are references to a field known as The Lake, on the east side of the Channelsea River and south of Channelsea Bridge, which might well have formed part of the Stratford Market site.

By the time of John Rocque's map of 1747 the area of the site has started to be developed, with a number of small houses running down Stratford Lane towards West Ham. It is not clear from this if, or how, the site itself has been developed, nor do the other late 18th century maps show sufficient detail. By the first Ordnance Survey map of 1869 (Fig 5), the site clearly does have some buildings on it. The Unitarian Church was erected in 1869, from yellow stock bricks, and first appears on the 1893 Ordnance Survey map (Fig 6), with a Sunday school to the rear.

3 The evaluation

3.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and monitoring during the evaluation was carried out in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (MoLAS, 2005), and the MoLAS *Archaeological Site Manual* (Museum of London, 1994).

Four evaluation trenches were investigated, although there were constraints to the extent of investigation in trench 4, due to water ingress from the west and south sides from the road above.

The slab/ground was broken out and cleared by contractors under MoLAS supervision. Trenches were excavated by machine by the contractors, and monitored by a member of staff from MoLAS.

The locations of evaluation Test Pits were recorded by MoLAS surveyors and plotted on to a survey (Dwg No. A/LO674/GF/SK Laing O'Rourke). This information was then plotted onto the OS grid.

A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was made in accordance with the principles set out in the MoLAS site recording manual (MoLAS, 1994). Levels were calculated from temporary benchmarks established by MoLAS archaeologists by traverse from temporary benchmarks provided by Laing O'Rourke on Victoria Street for trenches 1 and 2 and from Mark Street for trench 3.

The site has produced: 3 trench location plans; 29 context records; 3 section drawings at 1:20. In addition 1 box of finds was recovered from the site.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code WMN05 in the MoL archive.



Fig 2 Trench locations

3.2 Results of the evaluation

For trench locations see Fig 2.

<i>Evaluation Trench 1</i>	
Location	South of Victoria Street in car park
Dimensions	6m x 3.35m x 2.61m depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	6.54m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	6.10m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	2m
Level of base of deposits observed	3.93m OD
Natural observed	4.26m OD

Trench 1 was excavated to a level of 5.26m OD. A further central slot measuring 4.15m x 0.9m was excavated to a depth of 4.21m OD to reveal natural deposits (Fig 3).

Natural sandy gravels were recorded at the base of this trench at a height of 4.26m OD. These were overlain by a 0.45-0.5m of dirty sandy gravel [2] with lenses of greyish brown silt. Cut into this layer was a north-south aligned ditch or a pit [29] of unknown date containing a mid grey sandy silt [28]. The western extent of this feature continued beyond the limit of excavation, although the eastern extent was excavated to reveal a slightly concave profile of *c* 45 degrees. A bottom depth of 3.93m OD was recorded for this feature, which was sealed by a make-up layer consisting of a soft mid greyish green/brown silty sand containing 20% gravel [1]. This layer was dated to *c* 1800–1900 and was cut by a 19th century brick drain aligned east-west and continuing beyond both the west and east limits of excavation. A further silt sand make-up deposit sealed this layer and was overlain by layers of late 19th century sand, rubble and clinker deposits before being sealed by 20th century concrete and tarmac.

<i>Evaluation Trench 2</i>	
Location	South of Princess of Wales public house
Dimensions	6.02m x 2.6-3.3m x 1.2-1.8m depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	7.82m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	5.77m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	1m
Level of base of deposits observed	4.77m OD
Natural observed	4.99m OD

Trench 2 was excavated to a depth of 4.92m OD, revealing a fairly compact mid yellowish brown very sandy silt [15], which was cut by a number of features in the western part of the trench. In the eastern part of the trench a coarse greyish green silty sand levelling layer [13] was recorded, excavation of which revealed natural sandy gravels at a level of 4.99m OD.

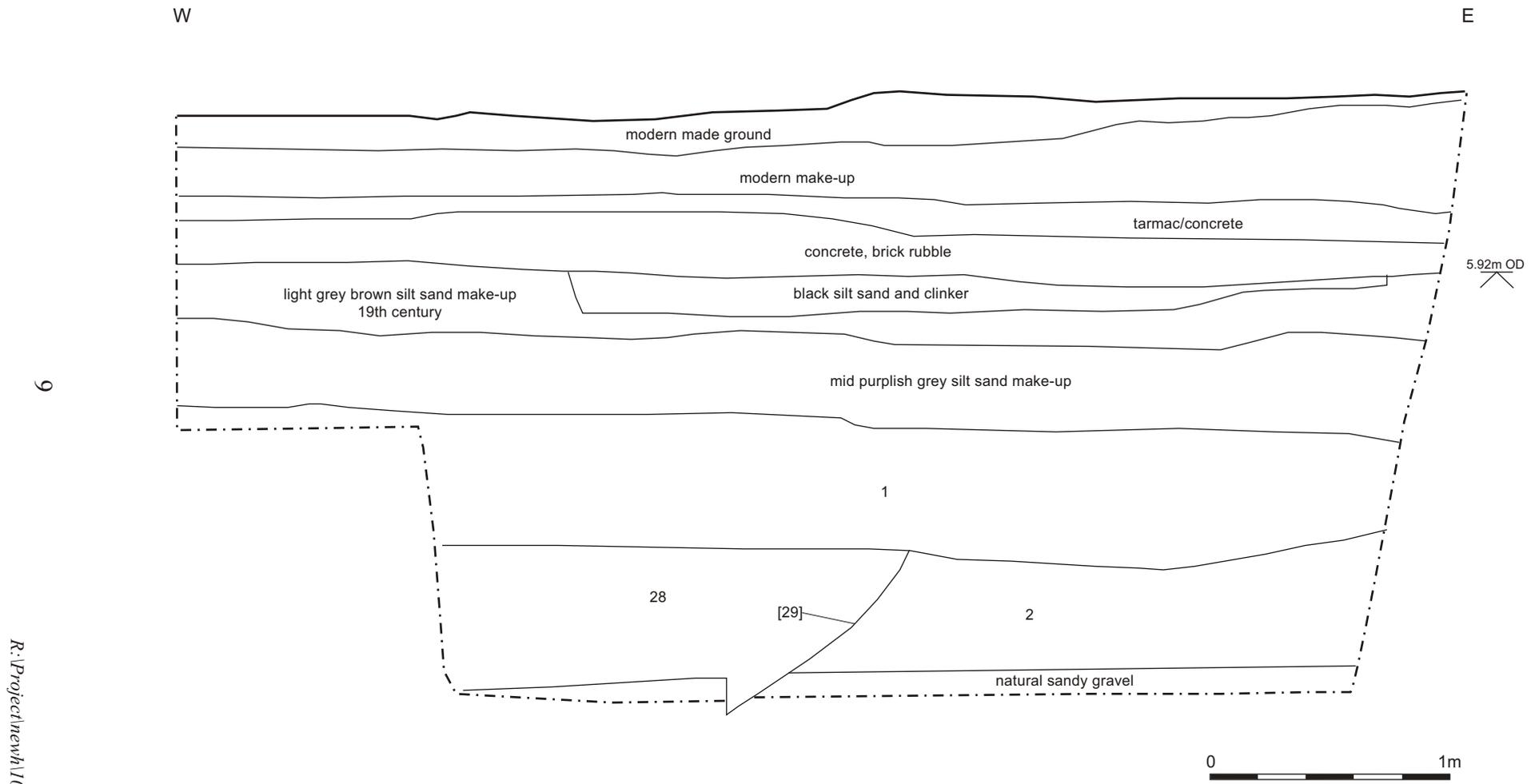


Fig 3 South facing section of Trench 1

Overlying this layer was a compact mid greyish brown sandy clay [12] containing occasional gravel and of unknown date. In the western part of the trench, cutting sand layer [15] was a large, steep sided pit with a flat base [11], filled with a compact, sticky gravel [10] and a north-south aligned linear feature [9] containing a whitish grey sandy silt fill with a high percentage of mortar and rubble [8]. The linear was approximately 1m in width and continued beyond the north and south limits of excavation. The fill suggests that it may have been a robbed out foundation, relating to earlier buildings within the area and was dated to between 1830 and 1900. Excavation of these features revealed natural gravels at depths of 4.78m OD and 4.97m OD respectively.

Each of these two features were truncated by a later large, rectangular pit containing pottery with a date range of 1830-1840 [7]. Only the southern extent of the pit was seen as the feature continued beyond the limits of excavation to the west and north. Excavation revealed a depth of 0.56m to a level of 4.77m OD revealing natural gravels below. The fill [6] consisted of soft, greyish black sandy silt containing frequent pottery, bone and gravel suggesting a domestic origin. The type of refuse indicates it may have originated from the nearby public house, The Princess of Wales which was built in the mid to late 19th century. The building can be seen, annotated PH, on the Ordnance Survey map of 1891 (Fig 6). A building of similar plan can also be seen on the Ordnance survey map of 1869 (Fig 5), which may be the same public house, although there is no annotation to confirm this. This pit was truncated by a square, brick lined cess pit [4] to the east, which contained pottery with a date range of 1830-1850. It appeared to be contemporary with a further, shallower brick lined pit [5] of rectangular form, attached to the east.

Sealing these features was an expansive, area of intercutting pits containing homogenous fills of early 20th century origin, which continued beyond all limits of excavation and contained domestic refuse such as animal bone and pottery.

<i>Evaluation Trench 3</i>	
Location	East of Unitarian Church
Dimensions	6.3m x 2.8m x 2.38m depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	6.74m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	6.05m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	1.69m
Level of base of deposits observed	4.36m OD
Natural observed	5.37m OD

Trench 3 was machine excavated to a depth of between 5.42m OD and 5.71m OD. A further central slot (4.9m x 0.9m x 1.10m) was machine excavated to a level of 4.92m OD to reveal natural deposits. A further slot was hand excavated to a depth of 4.36m OD to establish the full extent of an east-west aligned ditch. The southern end of the trench had been heavily disturbed by tree roots (Fig 4).

Natural sandy gravel [26] was revealed at a top level of 4.92m OD and was overlain by natural gravelly sand to a top level of 5.37m OD. Cutting this deposit was a large, c

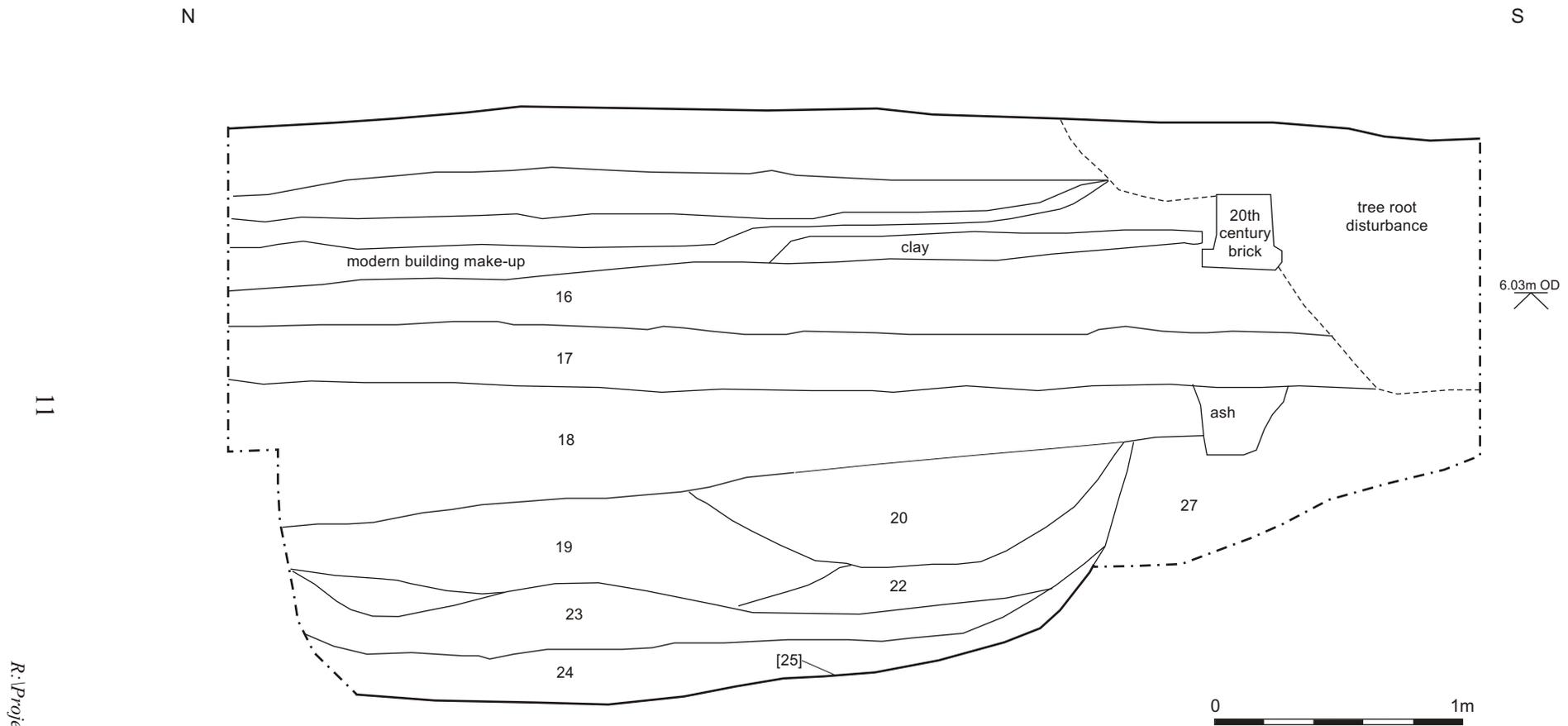


Fig 4 West facing section of Trench 3

3.5m wide, east-west aligned ditch [25]. The primary fill of the ditch was a moist silty sand deposit [24], probably relating to silting up of the ditch when in use. Grey and orange banded gravel within this deposit, probably relates to collapse of the natural gravel which formed the sides of the ditch. No dating evidence was retrieved from this fill. A moderately soft, mid brown, sandy silt [23] containing frequent small to moderate pebbles overlaid the primary fill, which in turn was overlain by a number of apparent dump deposits, which increase in size upwards through the sequence [21], [22], [19], [20].

Sealing the ditch were three successive layers of sandy silt garden soils [18], [17], [16]. Pottery dating to between 1700 and 1800 was found in both layers [17] and [18]. Dating the sealing of this feature to no earlier than the 18th century. Two sherds of residual medieval pottery were also found in deposit [18], suggesting earlier activity on the site area, although these finds may have come from elsewhere. In turn, these layers were sealed by a levelling layer of very firm grey clay on which was built a 19th century brick building. Footings of the building could be seen in the east and north sections. The building was truncated by *c* 0.7m of 20th century make-up and topsoil.

<i>Evaluation Trench 4</i>	
Location	Junction of Mark Street and West Ham Lane
Dimensions	6m x 6m x 4m depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	<i>c</i> 7.23mOD on Mark Street
Base of modern fill/basement	<i>c</i> 3.55m below ground level
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	<i>c</i> 4m below ground level
Natural observed	<i>c</i> 3.55m below ground level

Excavation of trench 4 revealed basements with a depth of 3.25m, beneath which lay 0.3m of contemporary make-up. Below the modern make up layers was a firm, light orangey yellow, silt clay layer, with grey mottling and occasional very small lenses of medium to coarse sand. This deposit was excavated to 0.4m in depth and appeared consistent throughout. Difficulties due to the ongoing waterlogging of this trench made further excavation impractical.

This is the most westerly of the four trenches and as such lies closer to the route of the Channelsea River. The site also lies approximately 50m from the BGS mapped distinction between Boyn Hill Gravels and alluvial floodplain of the Lea Valley to the west. The geological map (BGS, Sheet 256) indicates that associated fluvial deposits are lying within 20-30m of the site.

3.3 Assessment of the evaluation

GLAAS guidelines (English Heritage, 1998) require an assessment of the success of the evaluation ‘in order to illustrate what level of confidence can be placed on the information which will provide the basis of the mitigation strategy’.

In the case of this site the four trial trenches were placed in order to inform upon the level and nature of the present basements, the extent of horizontal truncation and the nature and depth of surviving archaeological deposits in the areas, which are specifically affected by the proposed development scheme.

Trench 1 was positioned south of Victoria Street within the footprint of the building on the north side. Natural sandy gravels were recorded at the base of this trench at a height of 4.26m OD and were excavated to a depth of 3.93m OD. These were overlain by a 0.45-0.5m of dirty sandy gravel [2] with lenses of greyish brown silt. Cut into this layer was a north-south aligned ditch or a pit [29] of unknown date containing a mid grey sandy silt [28]. No dating evidence was recovered from this feature. This was sealed by a post medieval 19th century make up layer which in turn was cut by a 19th century drain probably associated with earlier buildings fronting Victoria Street, which can be seen on the Ordnance Survey maps of 1869 and 1891 (Fig 5 and Fig 6). Preceding layers related to 19-20th century make up deposits and formed the top 0.85m of the sequence.

Trench 2 revealed natural gravels through excavation of sondages and 19th century features. The highest level of natural gravel lay at 4.99m OD and was observed at the base of features to a maximum depth of 4.77m OD. Features dating from *c* 1830 to 1900, cut make up layers which were later truncated by an extensive area of intercutting pits, which may relate to the nearby public house, The Princess of Wales, built in the mid to late 19th century, and can be seen on the Ordnance Survey map of 1893 (Fig 6). Approximately 0.25m of concrete lay directly over this pitting.

Trench 3 was located within the footprint of the building to the rear of the Unitarian free Christian church. Natural sandy gravels were recorded at a top level of 4.92m OD and were overlain by natural gravelly sand to a top level of 5.37m OD. Cutting this deposit was a large, *c* 3.5m wide, east-west aligned ditch [25]. The primary fill of this ditch was undated but was overlain by a sequence of garden soils dating to *c* 1700-1800 which were sealed by a building of 20th century date, which combined with preceding layers made up the top 0.6m of the sequence.

Trench four was located in the south-western area of the footprint of the building to reveal the extent of the present basements. Basements were seen to extend 3.25m below ground level with an associated 0.3m of make-up. A modern street level of 7.23m OD on Mark Street gives a maximum truncation level of 3.68m OD. What appeared to be natural clay alluvium of the eastern fringes of the Lea Valley floodplain were revealed beneath the basements and was then hand excavated a further 0.4m. The deposit was probably part of the top of an alluvial clay sequence which has dried and oxidised, and was possibly part of an overbank flooding event, or in an area where the natural deposit was inundated periodically. The clay may have been laid down in historical times, rather than as a depositional process, and as such the sequence below may contain evidence of earlier archaeological activity.

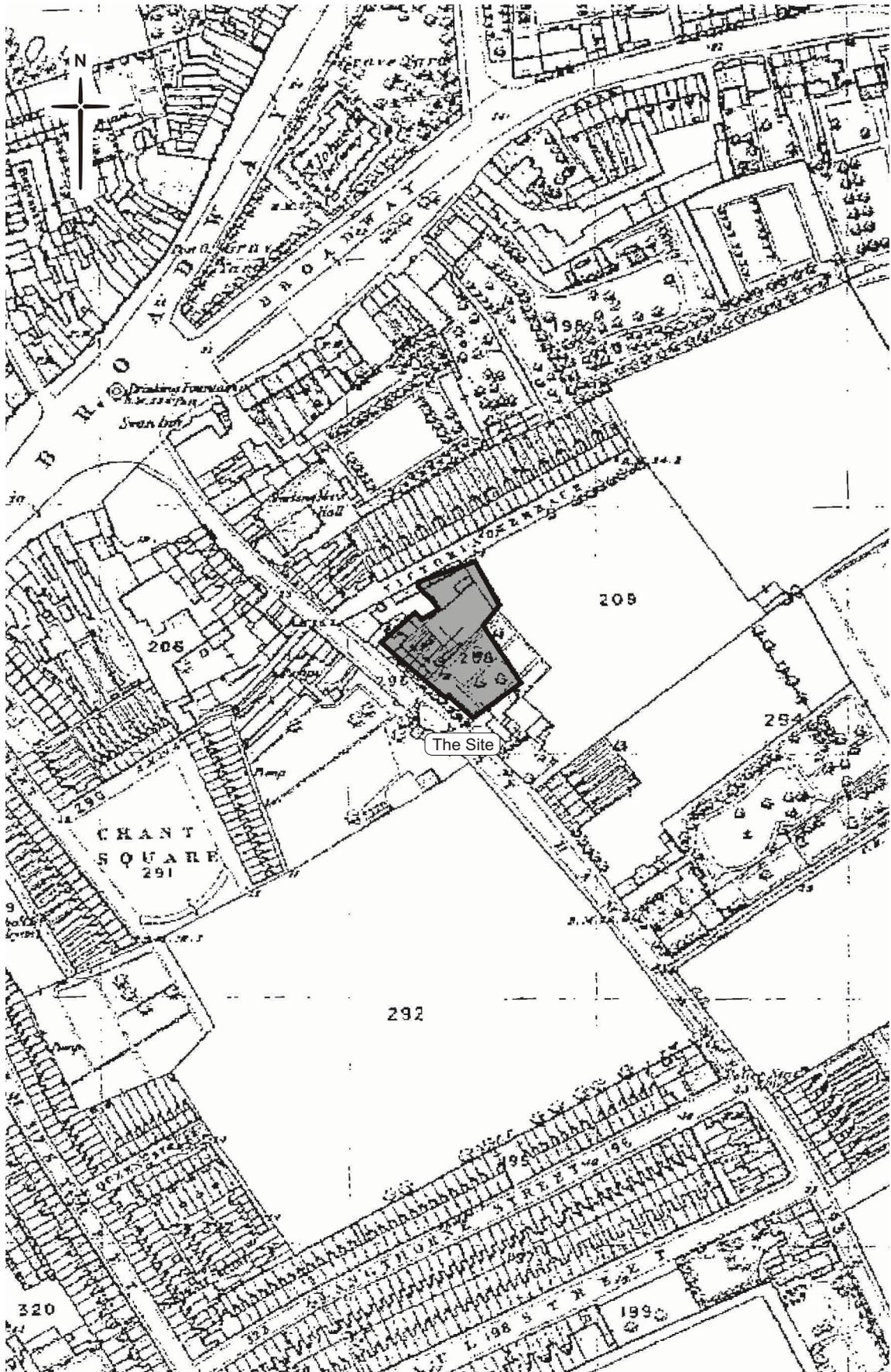


Fig 5 Ordnance Survey map of 1869

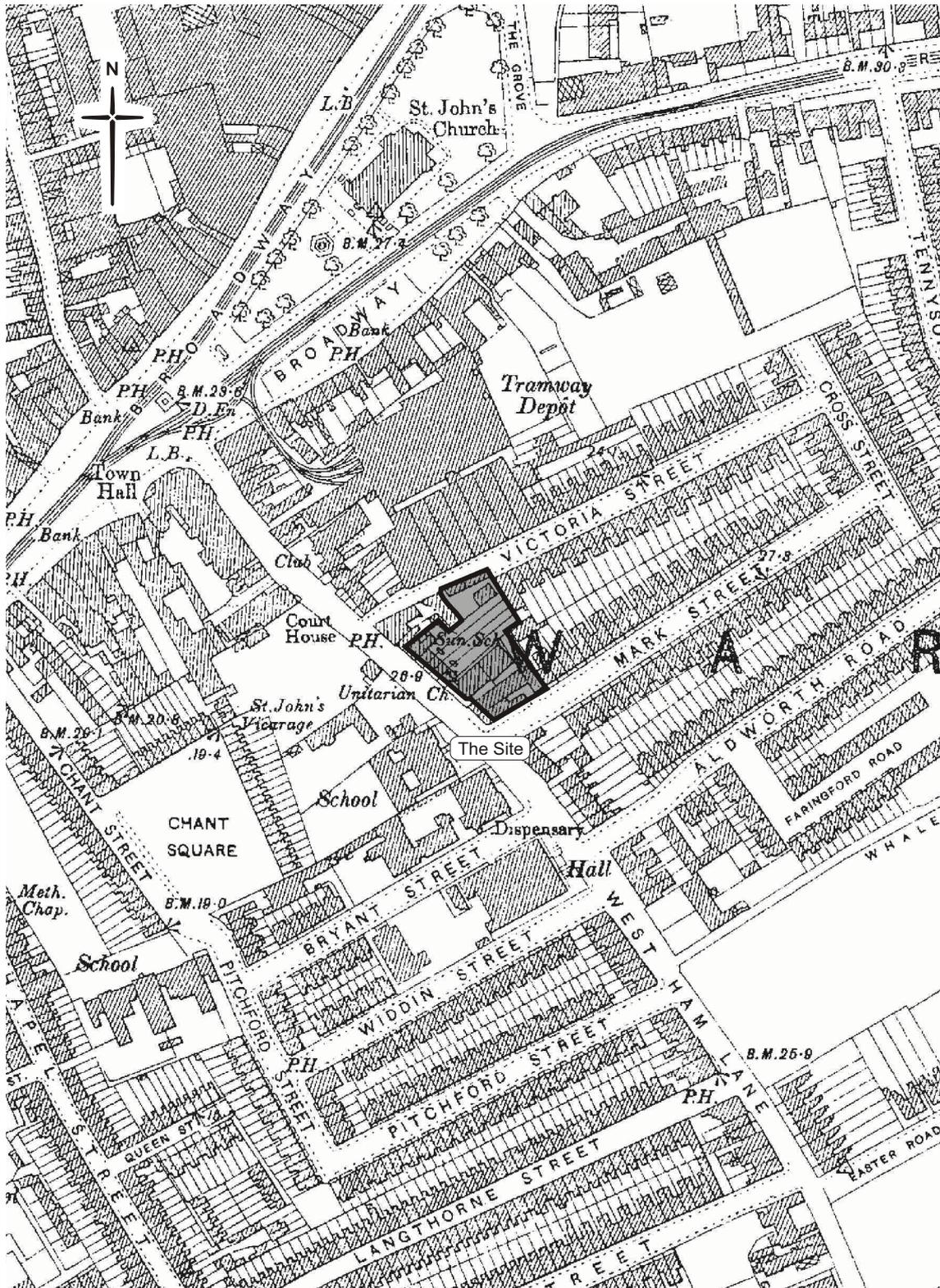


Fig 6 Ordnance Survey map of 1891

4 Archaeological potential

4.1 Realisation of original research aims

The research aims and objectives (below) were established in the *Method Statement* for the evaluation (Section 2.2, MoLAS, 2005). The extent to which the research questions can be answered, is directly dependant on the number and location of the test pits excavated.

What is the nature and level of natural topography?

In trenches 1 and 2 on the northern area of the site, natural sandy gravels were recorded at levels of between 4.26m OD and 4.99m OD respectively. In trench 3 on the eastern part of the site natural sandy gravels at 4.92m OD were overlain by a layer of natural gravelly sand at a top level of 5.37m OD. Comparison of the nature of archaeological deposits in the first two trenches with trench 3 suggest that any natural gravelly sand has been truncated by the more intense 19th century activity in the first two trenches.

Trench 4 revealed what appeared to be natural silt clay at a comparatively low level of *c* 3.7m (hand measured from ground level) and may be representative of the Lea floodplain alluvium. This would indicate a steep drop off of natural gravels to the west. If this is the case there is a potential for remains of the prehistoric and historic periods, when riverside locations were a valuable resource for communities. Previous work in the Lower Lea Valley has indicated that valuable prehistoric evidence can be found buried deep within alluvial deposits (Burton *et al* 2004).

What are the earliest deposits identified?

The earliest deposits identified were a ditch or pit in trench 1, which is undated but sealed by 19th century layers and a ditch in trench 3 which was sealed by 18th century garden soils.

What are the latest deposits identified?

The latest deposits identified were 19th century make up layers, pitting and garden soils.

Does any evidence survive of the medieval or post-medieval development of Stratford High Street?

The 19th century pitting and brick lined pits along with a potentially robbed out foundation are the only surviving evidence of development in the area of Stratford High Street.

4.2 General discussion of potential

The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of ancient ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification) on the site is low. Severe truncation by 19th

century activity appears to have removed earlier archaeological evidence on most of the site. There is a higher potential for survival of cut features, particularly of the post-medieval period. However such survival is likely to be extremely limited in certain areas due to truncation by basements.

4.3 Significance

Whilst the archaeological remains are undoubtedly of local significance there is nothing to suggest that they are of regional or national importance.

5 Proposed development impact and recommendations

The proposed redevelopment at 29–41 West Ham Lane involves the demolition of the present buildings and the construction of a new six-story housing development with basement parking. The impact of this on the surviving archaeological deposits will be to remove any surviving archaeological deposits.

The assessment above (Section 3.3) does not suggest that preservation *in situ* would be the only appropriate mitigation strategy. MoLAS does not consider that any further archaeological investigation of the site is merited..

The decision on the appropriate archaeological response to the deposits revealed within the trenches rests however with the Local Planning Authority and their designated archaeological advisor.

6 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Guy Fowler of Laing O'Rourke and Raoul Bull, Andy Daykin and Paul Thrale of MoLAS for their assistance and contributions to the evaluation.

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8 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

8.1 OASIS ID: molas1-8584

Project details

Project name 29-41 West Ham Lane

Short description of the project

Following the recommendations of a desk-based archaeological impact assessment four evaluation trenches were excavated on the site. The site has been heavily truncated by 19th century activity down to the natural gravels and clay in three of the four trenches examined. In the fourth trench 18th century garden soils sealed an undated ditch. On the north part of site truncation by 19th century date pitting and levelling and make-up deposits was recorded in association with contemporary drains and cess pits which relate to the development of Victoria Street and West Ham Lane. The truncated remains of an earlier north-south aligned ditch remained below this sequence but was undated. The more southerly part of the site revealed 18th century gardens soils. A large east-west ditch was found beneath this sequence which had been backfilled, however the early fills of this ditch were again undated. The south-western area of site investigated revealed present basements truncated all archaeological deposits down to natural alluvial clay, relating to the edge of the floodplain of the River Lea.

Project dates Start: 31-05-2005 End: 06-06-2005

Previous/future work No / Not known

Any associated project reference codes WMN05 - Sitecode

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status None

Current Land use Community Service 1 - Community Buildings

Current Land use Other 13 - Waste ground

Monument type DITCH Uncertain

Monument type DITCH Uncertain

Monument type GARDEN SOILS Uncertain

Methods & 'Targeted Trenches'
techniques

Development type Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)

Prompt Planning condition

Position in the Not known / Not recorded
planning process

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON NEWHAM STRATFORD 29-41 West Ham
Lane

Postcode E15

Study area 2500.00 Kilometres

National grid TQ 39047 84247 Point
reference

Height OD Min: 3.55m Max: 5.37m

Project creators

Name of MoLAS
Organisation

Project brief MoLAS project manager
originator

Project design MoLAS
originator

Project Ros Aitken
director/manager

Project supervisor Emily Burton

Sponsor or funding Laing O'Rourke

body

Project archives

Physical Archive LAARC
recipient

Physical Archive ID WMN05

Physical Archive No
Exists?

Digital Archive LAARC
recipient

Digital Archive ID WMN05

Digital Archive No
Exists?

Paper Archive LAARC
recipient

Paper Archive ID WMN05

Paper Archive No
Exists?

Project bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title 29-41 West Ham Lane

Author(s)/Editor(s) Emily Burton

Date 2005

Issuer or publisher MoLAS

Place of issue or MoLAS
publication

Description A4 bound report

Entered by Emily Burton (molas.archive@museumoflondon.org.uk)
Entered on 4 July 2005