



22 CHANCERY LANE London EC4

City of London

An Archaeological Evaluation

June 2006



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

**22 Chancery Lane
LONDON
EC4**

City of London

An Archaeological Evaluation

NGR 531155 181310

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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 22 Chancery Lane, London, EC4. The report was commissioned from MoLAS by PKS Architects on behalf of the client Standard Life.

A historic cellar, possibly part of the 17th-century Symonds Inn was exposed in a single trench. Modern basements have truncated deposits below the level of archaeological remains and occupy most of the area of the site. A single-storey area at the side was without basements and this was the area investigated by an evaluation trench, limited in size because of the proximity to load-bearing walls.

The results of the field evaluation have helped to refine the initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site. No archaeological deposits were exposed below the level of the cellar. The area of archaeological potential is limited to that of the single-storey structure and the remains exposed are potentially of a historically significant structure – featured in Bleak House by Charles Dickens. The cellar was backfilled by demolition rubble and there were no significant portable finds. The cellar is thought to be of greater local, literary and historical significance than archaeological potential.

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 the remains of the historic cellar.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The evaluation took place at the site of 22 Chancery Lane EC4. It lies on the east side of Chancery Lane (see Fig 1), and is bounded on the north by Lonsdale Chambers, on the south by the Public Records Office and on the east by the Rolls Building. The Ordnance Survey National Grid reference is 531155 181310. The site code is CCQ06.

A desk-top *Archaeological impact assessment* was previously prepared, which covers the whole area of the site (MoLAS 2004). 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.

1.2 Planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Archaeological impact assessment* which formed the project design for the evaluation (see Section 2, MoLAS 2004).

1.3 Planning background

Redevelopment has been granted (Reg Plan No. 05/00690/full). The archaeological evaluation is proposed to satisfy Condition 9.

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report has been commissioned from the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) by PKS Architects on behalf of the client Standard Life. 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):

The archaeological brief is essentially limited to establishing the levels and nature of surviving archaeological deposits, and to ensure that the digging of the evaluation trench does not involve unnecessary destruction of such deposits. Nevertheless, in addition, a few broad research questions can be outlined:

- What is the nature and level of natural topography?
- What are the earliest deposits identified?
- Is there any evidence for Roman activity in the area?
- Is there any evidence for the Roman cemetery?
- Is there any evidence for medieval activity in the area?
- Do features from the 17th century Symonds Inn survive?

The results of observations obtained by monitoring the evaluation will be used to gauge the extent and importance of archaeological survival. This information will be used to inform the writing of a written scheme of investigation for a programme of archaeological works to support condition 10 on the planning consent.

2 Topographical and historical background

A detailed description of the geology, archaeology and history of the site, including gazetteers of local observations and excavations, was provided in the earlier *Archaeological impact assessment* (MoLAS 2004). The main points are summarised below.

2.1 Topography

Natural brickearth was predicted on the site at *c* 15.00–16.00m OD, 1.5–2.5m below modern street level adjacent to the site at 17.50m OD on Chancery Lane.

2.2 Prehistoric

To date, little prehistoric activity has been recorded in the immediate vicinity although a Palaeolithic stone axe was found in Chancery Lane.

2.3 Roman

The site lies 250m from the main London – Silchester Road, entering the city at Newgate and north of a smaller road along the Strand, Fleet Street, and in through Ludgate. The site lies within the Western Cemetery, external to the built-up area of Roman London. Archaeological investigations nearby have exposed a variety of burials and quarries.

2.4 Medieval

The middle Saxon commercial urban concentration nucleated around the beach market of the Strand, an area historically known as *Lundenwic*. The walled city remained an administrative, ceremonial and religious centre. The site lay between the two but nearer to Lundenwic. A 9th century coin hoard was found at Hare Court south-west of the site. This hoard consisted of more than 250 coins and was deposited in about 842 AD.

Chancery Lane, is known from 1160–2, when it was created by the Knights Templar. In 1227, Chancery Lane was described as ‘the street called New Street, in the suburbs of London, running between the Old Temple and the New’ (the Templar churches).

In addition to evidence for cultivation medieval structures have been observed close to the study area. These include late-14th century chalk-lined cess pits and a series of 13th–15th century rubbish pits.

In the later middle ages the locality became a suburb settled by the Inns of Chancery and their function was the training and housing of the medieval Chancery Clerks who were responsible for preparing the writs for the King’s courts. Clifford’s Inn to the south was established in 1345 and Furnival Inn to the north in 1383.

2.5 Post-medieval

Tudor London was the centre of a commercial empire with global ambitions and the population grew accordingly. The alienation of former church land allowed space the population to settle. By the time of the 1658 Faithorne and Newcourt map, the site had been developed and houses can be seen. Symonds inn predates the Great Fire of London and is mentioned in 1621-60 (Cal. Ch. Proceedings, 2nd Series, III.)¹.

After the Great Fire, the rebuilding programme included the area around the site. The Ogilby and Morgan map of 1676 shows Symonds Inn, The Rolls Chapel, Rolls House and a garden ground to the south of the site (see cover illustration). In 1831 the master of the Rolls proposed that the Rolls Estate should be used as the central repository for state and public records. Symond's Inn can be seen on Horwood's map of 1799 and more clearly on the 1873 map. The 19th-century Inn is described in Bleak House, "Symond's Inn, Chancery Lane - a little, pale, wall-eyed, woebegone inn like a large dust-binn of two compartments and a sifter. It looks as if Symond were a sparing man in his way and constructed his inn of old building materials which took kindly to the dry rot and to dirt and all things decaying and dismal, and perpetuated Symond's memory with congenial shabbiness. Quartered in this dingy hatchment commemorative of Symond are the legal bearings of Mr. Vholes"². It was demolished in 1873 and a new building was erected on its site for offices and chambers.

¹ From: 'Symond's Inn', A Dictionary of London (1918). URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.asp?compid=2542>. Date accessed: 13 June 2006.

² Chapter 39, <http://www.literaturepage.com/read/dickens-bleak-house-626.html> Date accessed: 13 June 2006.

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 2006), and the *MoLAS Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS 1994).

A single evaluation trench was excavated in the one area of the site not to have been truncated by modern basements, formerly a Telecoms communications room, located in a masonry structure separate from the main construction. It was limited to 600mm in width to avoid destabilising the walls of the building in which it was located.

The ground was broken out and cleared by contractors excavated by hand. The work was monitored by a member of staff from MoLAS. It became apparent that below modern slab levels was demolition rubble filling a historic cellar (described below), the floor of which was reached at 1.5m below ground level. A smaller area was excavated below the cellar floor, to test earlier deposits and also to attempt to find dating evidence for the construction of the cellar.

The locations of the evaluation trenches was recorded by MoLAS, offset from adjacent standing walls and features on the OS 1:1250 map.

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 by comparison with a nearby spot height.

The site has produced: 1 trench plan and 1 trench record sheet.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code CCQ06 in the MoL archive.

3.2 Results of the evaluation

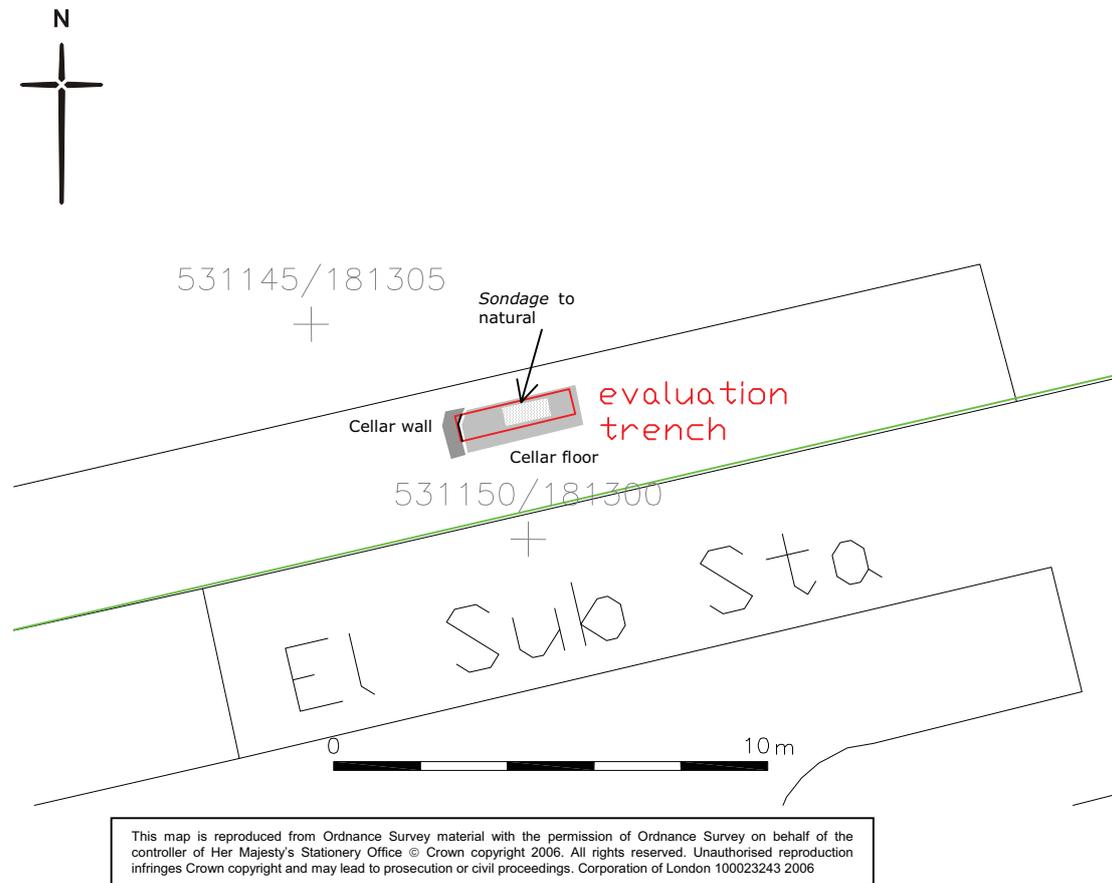


Fig 2 Trench Plan

<i>Evaluation Trench 1</i>	
Location	Single-storey side building
Dimensions	2m x 600mm
Modern ground level/top of slab	17.6m OD (approx.)
Base of modern fill/slab	17.4m OD (approx.)
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	15.9m OD (approx.)
Level of base of deposits observed	15.6m OD (approx.)
Natural observed	15.8m OD

The trench was dug through the backfill of a historic cellar, the wall of which formed the west end of the trench.



The cellar wall was made of soft red bricks, 55–60mm x 105mm x 220mm, set in creamy lime mortar and whitewashed. A single offset stood on a floor of thinner, 50mm-thick, bricks – 1.5m below ground level. A scar in the wall, one course above the offset, may indicate a wooden floor was inserted above the brick floor. A smaller 800mm x 500mm sample area was dug through the floor, revealing 150mm of bedding material for the floor, including rough-hewn chalk to 100mm diameter. This lay above very sandy natural brickearth and natural gravel at 2.0m below ground level, approximately 15.6m OD.

Fig 3 The trench, looking west

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 sample exposed was limited in area but consists of a sizable proportion of the area of the site that is to be reduced.

4 Archaeological potential

4.1 Realisation of original research aims

What is the nature and level of natural topography?

Natural gravels were observed at 15.5m OD, above which was 300mm of clean, very sandy, brickearth

What are the earliest deposits identified?

The earliest remains are that of an historic cellar. This has not been dated securely but it may be part of the 17th-century Symonds Inn (see below)

Is there any evidence for Roman activity in the area?

There is no evidence of remains earlier than the brick cellar.

Is there any evidence for the Roman cemetery?

As above, there is no evidence of remains earlier than the brick cellar.

Is there any evidence for medieval activity in the area?

As above, there is no evidence of remains earlier than the brick cellar.

Do features from the 17th century Symonds Inn survive?

The cellar exposed was probably part of Symonds Inn.

4.2 General discussion of potential

The evaluation has shown that there is little potential for survival of ancient ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification) on the site. There is potential for survival of cut features, below the level of the cellar but none were exposed. The remains exposed consist of part of a cellar to a large building or complex of buildings. Its potential is limited to adding detail to the historically important structure, Symonds Inn, part of a complex of such courtyard houses that characterised the legal district.

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 22 Chancery Lane involves the reduction of ground below the area currently occupied by an unbasemented single-storey outbuilding. This will result in the removal of an historic cellar. There is limited potential for truncated earlier remains below the level of the cellar.

The assessment above does not suggest that preservation *in situ* would be the only appropriate mitigation strategy. MoLAS considers that preservation by record in advance of any further ground reduction would be the appropriate response to the remaining archaeological deposits.

The decision on the appropriate archaeological response to the remains exposed in the evaluation rests with the Local Planning Authority and their designated archaeological advisor.

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7 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

OASIS ID: molas1-15684

Project details

Project name	22 Chancery Lane EC4
Short description of the project	A historic cellar, potentially part of the 17th-century Symonds Inn, was exposed in a single evaluation trench. The majority of the area of the site is truncated by modern basements.
Project dates	Start: 08-06-2006 End: 12-06-2006
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	ccq06 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices
Monument type	CELLAR Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Test-Pit Survey'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CITY OF LONDON CITY OF LONDON 22 Chancery Lane EC4
Postcode	EC4
National grid reference	TQ 3115 8131 Point
Height OD	Min: 15.60m Max: 15.90m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MoLAS
Project brief originator	MoLAS project manager
Project design originator	MoLAS
Project director/manager	Nick Bateman
Project supervisor	David Sankey
Sponsor or funding body	Standard Life

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Media available	'Images raster','Images vector','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Media available	'Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	22 Chancery Lane EC4, an Archaeological Evaluation
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Sankey, D.
Date	2006
Issuer or publisher	Museum of London
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	A4 report
Entered by	David Sankey (DSankey@museumoflondon.org.uk)
Entered on	15 June 2006