



**PROPOSED TICKET OFFICE
6–7 Old Palace Yard &
The Jewel Tower Garden
London
SW1**

City of Westminster

An archaeological watching brief report

August 2006



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

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The Jewel Tower Garden
London
SW1

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An archaeological watching brief report

National Grid Reference: 530160 179390

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Summary (non-technical)

This report has been commissioned by the Parliamentary Estates Directorate in order to record and assess the results of a watching brief carried out at 6-7 Old Palace Yard, City of Westminster, SW1.

Work on an area of new paving and a disabled access ramp was monitored in June 2006 during redevelopment works for a new ticket office.

Archaeological deposits comprising of several 18th century brick walls and a section of medieval wall were recorded in an area located behind the listed building (6-7 Old Palace Yard) within the Scheduled Ancient Monument; the natural ground was not observed.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The watching brief took place at 6-7 Old Palace Yard and the Jewel Tower Garden, City of Westminster, SW1, hereafter called 'the site'. It is bounded on the west and south by the precinct wall of Westminster Abbey, on the north by Old Palace Yard, and to the east by Abingdon Street (see Fig 1). The Ordnance Survey National Grid reference is 530160 179390. The site lies in a world heritage site, is partly bounded by a grade I listed structure, contains both a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a grade II* listed building. It also lies within an archaeological priority zone (as defined by the local planning authority) and a conservation area. Modern ground level immediately adjacent to the site is 4.90m OD and the site code is OYD06.

A desktop *Archaeological impact assessment* was previously prepared by MoLAS, which covers the whole area of the site (Barber 2006). This document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site, and the initial assessment of its archaeological potential.

This document informed the design (*Method Statement*) for the watching brief which was carried out in June 2006.

1.2 The planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Archaeological impact assessment* that formed the project design for the watching brief (see Section 2, Barber 2006)

1.3 Planning background

The works involve creating a ticket office in 6-7 Old Palace Yard and disabled access to that office. Planning permission and Scheduled Monument Consent were granted with conditions attached requiring an archaeological watching brief.

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Parliamentary Works Services Directorate 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).

The purpose of the watching brief was to determine whether archaeological remains or features were present on the site and, if so, to record the nature and extent of such remains. A number of more site-specific research aims and objectives were established in the preceding *Method Statement* (section 4.3), and are outlined in the following section.

The purpose of the present report is to analyse the results of the watching brief against the original research aims, and to suggest what further work, including analysis or publication (if any), should now take place.

1.5 Aims and objectives

The following research aims and objectives were established in the *Method Statement* for the watching brief (Section 4.3):

- *Can the data add to the topographic understanding of Thorney Island?*
- *Can the land-use of the western part of the site, as a part of Westminster Abbey, prior to its inclusion in the Palace of Westminster, be described?*
- *Can the land-use of the area be defined after the site became part of the Palace precinct in 1365?*
- *Can any further information be added to the constructional history of the Jewel Tower and precinct wall?*
- *Can the massive east-west wall uncovered in the 1997 CAS work be dated and explained in terms of the development of the palace complex?*
- *Can the land-use in the post-medieval period be described?*
- *Can the sequence of use within the Parliament Office be described?*
- *Is there any evidence for the constructional history of 6-7 Old Palace Yard?*
- *Is there any evidence for the constructional history of 5 Old Palace Yard?*

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

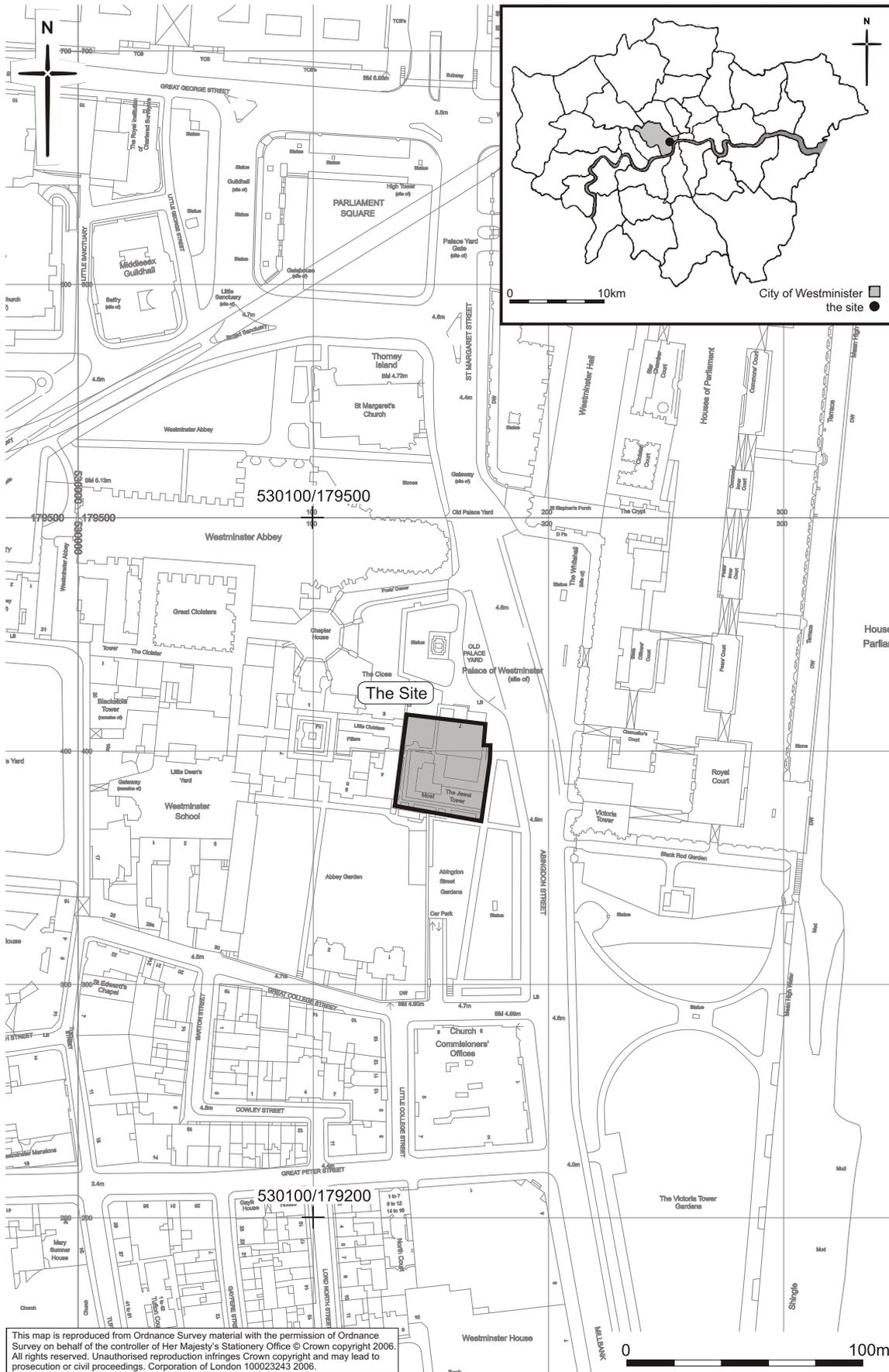
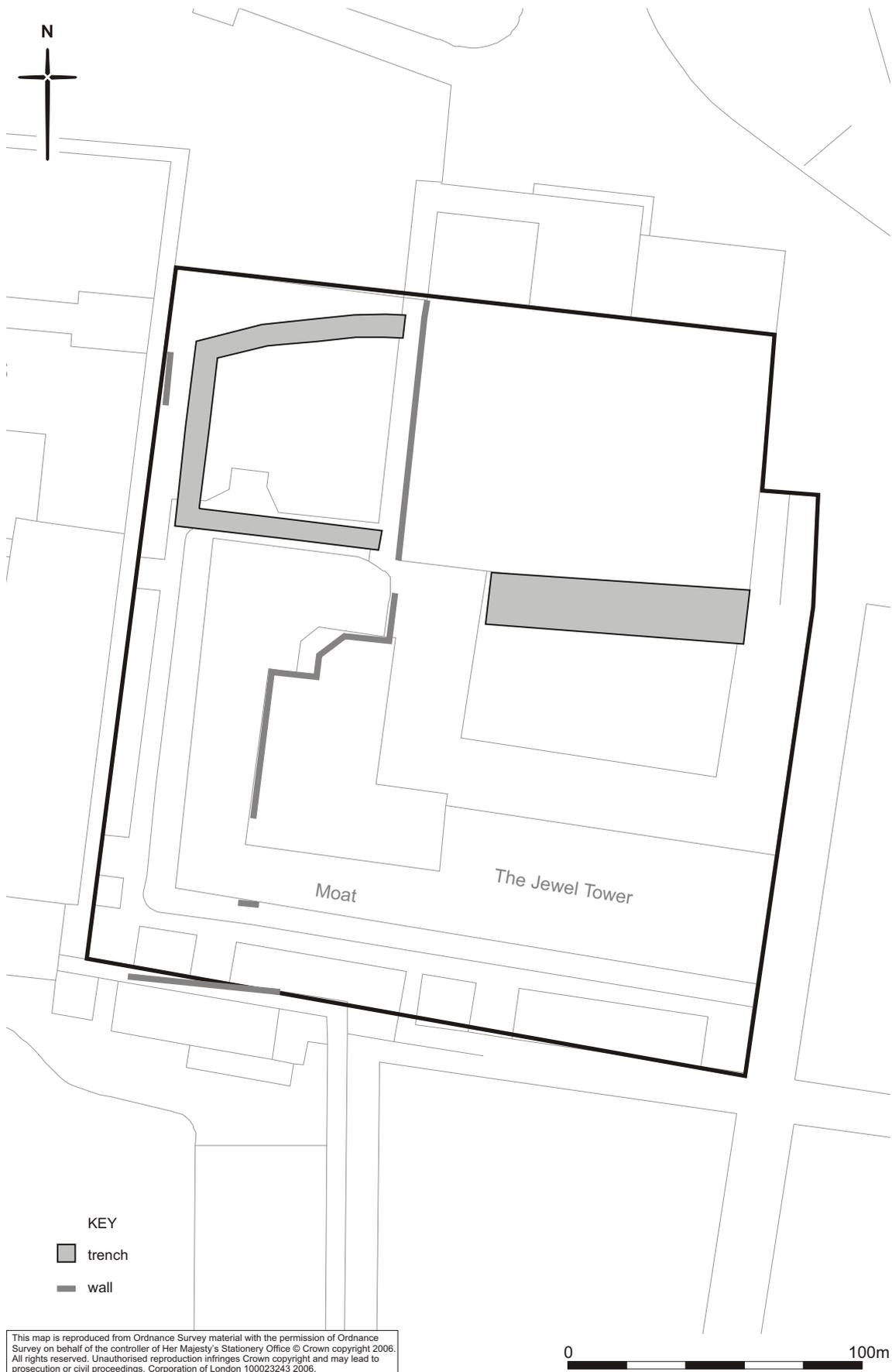


Fig 1 Site location



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Fig 2 Areas of investigation

2 Topographical and historical background

For a more comprehensive survey of the topographic and historical background the Section 3 of the Archaeological Impact Assessment (Barber, 2006).

2.1 Topography

The site lies on the southern edge of Thorney Island, a large sand and gravel island that was formed by the bifurcation of the River Tyburn where it met the Thames. The site probably lies on a plateau of the natural River Terrace gravel (locally capped with sand) at about 0.50m OD and natural gravel is at *c* 1.10m OD.

2.2 Prehistoric

Thorney Island seems to have been exploited since shortly after its formation at the end of the last Ice Age and was perhaps occupied in some form from an early date. Some evidence of prehistoric occupation in the form of struck flints has been found in previous excavations in the area. Evidence from the late Mesolithic, Neolithic and early Bronze Age indicate that the island was occupied and possibly farmed (Thomas *et al* 2005).

2.3 Roman

Evidence for Roman occupation on Thorney Island is slight, recently Roman pottery has been found on controlled excavations and a possible robbed-out Roman wall was excavated beneath Parliament Square (Thomas 1993, 15). A Roman wall, hypocaust and sarcophagus have all been reported from beneath Westminster Abbey in the 19th century (Thomas *et al* 2005)..

2.4 Saxon

In *c.* AD 960 St Dunstan founded Westminster Abbey for Benedictine monks. It may have been built on the site of an earlier church, as a reputedly genuine charter of Offa of Mercia (AD 757–96) refers to the church and community in ‘Thornea at...Westminster’. Little archaeological evidence of Saxon occupation has been found on Thorney Island itself. Immediately to the north of the island a substantial timber hall with pits dating from the late 8th and 9th centuries is thought to be part of a farmstead (Cowie 2005).

2.5 Medieval

After Edward the Confessor had established his palace at Westminster the Island grew in importance. Both the Abbey and the Palace were rebuilt and Henry II established Westminster as the principal court.

Nearby are medieval remains of, the Jewel Tower (SAM 55, and listed as grade I) that was built in 1365 by Henry Yevele, as part of the re-arrangement of the south-western corner of the defences of the Palace of Westminster. It was built on land originally part of the precinct of Westminster Abbey and stood immediately north of the waterfront. The moat (listed as grade II) to the south and west of the tower, although much restored, was an original feature.

The present Westminster Abbey precinct wall (listed as grade I) was built *c* 1365 after an earlier boundary was encroached on by the extension of the Palace of Westminster. Much of this wall stands to its full height today as the west and part of the south site boundary.

2.6 Post-medieval

Westminster expanded during the 17th and 18th centuries and much of the marshland on the fringes was drained and built upon. The River Tyburn along the west side of the former Island had become known as the Long Ditch and was probably little more than a stream. The Jewel Tower was used from 1621 to store the House of Lords records and was known as the Parliament Office. Rocque's map of 1746 shows a range of buildings running north from the Jewel Tower to the west of Old Palace Yard. This building was demolished to make way for 6-7 Old Palace Yard (listed as grade II*), which was built in 1756.

The original design consisted of two properties separated by a central, vaulted passageway designed to provide access from Old Palace Yard to the Jewel Tower. Both were of three stories excluding cellars and attics, and were altered principally in the 1790s.

A southern range, at least partly cellared, originally connected 6-7 Old Palace Yard to the Jewel Tower and was demolished in the 1950s.

3 The watching brief

3.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and recording during the watching brief was done in accordance with the *Method Statement* (Thomas 2006) and the MoLAS Archaeological Site Manual (MoLAS 1994).

The ground slab was broken out and cleared by the contractors by hand under MoLAS supervision. The locations of the areas of excavation were recorded by MoLAS surveying team; this information was then plotted onto the OS grid. The heights of observations were recorded relative to Ordnance Datum via a traverse to the OS benchmark of 4.89m OD on the corner of the Church Commissioners' House, Abingdon Street. An overall plan was drawn at 1:20; and numbered contexts were allocated where appropriate.

The site has produced: 1 trench location plan; 19 context records; and 3 1:20 drawings.

The site records can be found under the site code OYD06 in the Museum of London archive.

3.2 Results of the watching brief

Two separate interventions were recorded (see Fig 2). There follows a brief description of the archaeological deposits found.

Main trench

Located in area of grass to west of 6-7 Old Palace Yard

Dimensions: 14m (N/S) x 3.40m (E/W)

Beneath *c* 0.25m of turf and topsoil the following archaeological features were recorded (see Fig 3):

Context [01]

3 York slabs laid flat forming a possible cellar floor at 2.75m OD.

Context [02]

A small section of red brick wall of unknown function, probably 18th century, at 2.70m OD.

Context [03]

A section of red brick wall at 2.82m OD and projecting from the standing building to the north.

Context [04]

A small north-south section of brick wall and a limestone slab at 2.69m OD and projecting from the standing building to the north.

Context [05]

A north-south section of red brick wall, probably 18th century date, at 2.70m OD.

Context [06]

A section of brick wall, probably 18th century date, at 2.73m OD and does not continue north to join up with [05]

Context [07]

A section of brick wall, probably 18th century date, at 2.71m OD and possibly the same as [06].

Context [08]

An L shaped fragment of red brick wall, probably 18th century date, at 2.74m OD and probably forms the corner of a cellar.

Context [09]

This is a north-south section of masonry wall constructed of ragstone and light grey mortar at 2.81m OD. This is one of the walls that were seen in an excavation in the 1950s and is probably medieval in date.

Context [10]

A section of yellow brick wall, probably 18th century date, at 2.74m OD.

Context [11]

A north-south yellow brick wall, at 2.80m m OD, continues to the north and south beyond limit of excavation.

Context [12]

An L shaped section of yellow brick wall, probably 18th century date, at 2.72m OD and abutting wall [11] to east.

Context [13]

A north-south section of red brick wall, probably 18th century date, at 2.83m OD, projecting from underneath the building to the north. Possibly a fireplace, the corresponding section has been removed by later activity.

Context [14]

A small section of yellow brick floor probably associated with [11] and [12], at 2.78m OD.

Context [15]

An east-west section of red brick wall, probably 18th century date, at 2.71m OD and abutting wall [16] to east.

Context [16]

A north-south section of red brick wall, probably 18th century date, at 2.70m OD, projecting from the standing building to the north.

Context [17]

A north-south section of red brick wall, probably 18th century date, at 2.68m OD, projecting from the standing building to the north.

Context [18]

An east-west section of red brick wall, probably 18th century date, at 2.64m OD, with wall [06] built/rebuilt over it.

Context [19]

An east-west section of red brick wall though upper course is yellow stocks, probably 18th century date, at 2.55m OD, abutting wall [05] to east.

In addition there were several sections of modern ceramic drainpipes, and a concrete encased metal tank that was located in the southwest corner of the trench at 2.79m OD.

Access ramp

Located in grassed area and a previous paved path in area to north of 6-7 Old Palace Yard.

An L shaped area 1.20m wide was stripped, this was from 0.15m to 0.30m deep, and only modern topsoil was found; there were no archaeological features.

When the paved path was removed only modern deposits were observed, there were no archaeological features.

4 Potential of the archaeology

4.1 Original research aims

The following research aims were set out in the archaeological method statement (Thomas 2006):

- 1. Can the data add to the topographic understanding of Thorney Island?*
- 2. Can the land-use of the western part of the site, as a part of Westminster Abbey, prior to its inclusion in the Palace of Westminster, be described?*
- 3. Can the land-use of the area be defined after the site became part of the Palace precinct in 1365?*
- 4. Can any further information be added to the constructional history of the Jewel Tower and precinct wall?*
- 5. Can the massive east-west wall uncovered in the 1997 CAS work be dated and explained in terms of the development of the palace complex?*
- 5. Can the land-use in the post-medieval period be described?*
- 6. Can the sequence of use within the Parliament Office be described?*
- 7. Is there any evidence for the constructional history of 6-7 Old Palace Yard?*
- 8. Is there any evidence for the constructional history of 5 Old Palace Yard?*

4.2 New research aims

The work has not lead to any new research aims.

4.3 Significance of the data

Whilst the archaeological remains are undoubtedly of local significance there is nothing to suggest that they are of regional or national importance excepting possibly, the wall, perhaps of medieval date, seen in the southern section. This may relate to one of the medieval buildings noted in the 1950s and would, if correctly, assigned, be part of a structure relating to the medieval palace. The building to which it relates and the function of that building remain unknown but its location is now accurately established.

5 Publication and archiving

Information on the results of the excavation will be made publicly available by means of a database in digital form, to permit inclusion of the site data in any future academic researches into the development of London.

The site archive containing original records and finds will be stored in accordance with the terms of the *Method Statement* (Thomas, 2006) with the Museum of London within 12 months of the end of the excavation.

In view of the limited potential of the material (Sections 4) and the relatively limited significance of the data (Section 4.3) it is suggested that a short note on the results of the watching brief should appear in the annual round up of the *London Archaeologist*

6 Conclusions

The watching brief uncovered evidence of 18th-century buildings to the south of 6-7 Old Palace Yard. In addition, a fragment of what appeared to be medieval masonry was found. This is probably a fragment of wall uncovered in the 1950s and allows it to be more accurately located. There was no evidence as to its function.

The watching brief has confirmed that archaeological horizons survive to immediately beneath the existing turf or paving around the Jewel Tower.

7 Acknowledgements

MoLAS is grateful to the Parliamentary Works Services Directorate for commissioning the watching brief, and particularly for the assistance of Keith Perry of Perry Jackson Designs, who managed the project and to Jeremy Ashbee of English Heritage.

8 Bibliography

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9 OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM

9.1 OASIS ID: molas1-17696

Project details

Project name 6-7 Old Palace Yard, City of Westminster, SW1

Short description of the project Work on an area of new paving and a disabled access ramp was monitored during redevelopment works for a new ticket office. Archaeological deposits comprising several 18th century brick walls and a section of medieval wall were found, the natural ground was not observed

Project dates Start: 06-06-2006 End: 20-06-2006

Previous/future work No / Not known

Any associated project codes OYD06 - Sitecode reference

Type of project Recording project

Site status Scheduled Monument (SM)

Current Land use Other 15 - Other

Monument type BUILDINGS Medieval

Monument type BUILDINGS Post Medieval

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Scheduled Monument Consent

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON CITY OF WESTMINSTER
WESTMINSTER 6-7 Old Palace Yard, City of
Westminster

Postcode SW1

Study area 50.00 Square metres

National reference grid TQ 3016 7939 Point

Project creators

Name of MoLAS
Organisation

Project originator brief English Heritage/Department of Environment

Project originator design MoLAS

Project director/manager Chris Thomas

Project supervisor Tony Mackinder

Sponsor or funding body Parliamentary Estates Directorate

Project archives

Physical recipient Archive LAARC

Physical Exists? Archive No

Digital recipient Archive LAARC

Paper recipient Archive LAARC

Project bibliography

1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title 6-7 Old Parliament Yard, City of Westminster, SW1

Author(s)/Editor(s) Mackinder, T

Date 2006

Issuer or publisher MoLAS

Place of issue or publication London

Description A4, spiral bound, with figures

Entered by Tony Mackinder (Tonym@molas.org.uk)

Entered on 25 August 2006
