

Evaluation at King Georges Avenue, Beckton.

London Borough of Newham.

HW - KG 92.

LDPEM/ACHW/181.

Level III Report.

M. Beasley.

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Introduction.

An archaeological evaluation was conducted by members of the Passmore Edwards Museum between 20th. July 1992 and 24th. July 1992, on an area of land adjoining King Georges Avenue, Beckton. The evaluation was conducted in advance of development in order to assess any surviving archaeological remains, particularly a large ditch thought to be of Medieval date shown on plans of the area. In addition, it is thought that two Roman roads may run to the east and west of the site. The evaluation took the form of machine-dug trenches, with an additional resistivity survey.

The site was funded by the East London Housing Association, directed by Ken MacGowan for the Passmore Edwards Museum, and supervised by the author.

Abstract.

The evaluation revealed evidence for a sizeable ditch, back-filled with late 20th. century rubble, and dumping of 20th. century date. Timber samples of considerable antiquity were also recovered.

Historical Background.

The site represents the meeting point of three old fields, as well as a proportion of all three. The ditch and bank system visible on the site are the remnants of a late Medieval or early post-Medieval drainage and flood defence system.

The bank, three fields, and dividing ditches are shown on the 1742 James map, the bank being a counterwall to the parallel common sewer, all lying in the Trinity Marsh. The marsh and sewer had been managed by the Court of Sewers since 1563, though the sewer and counterwall probably date from at least the 14th. or 15th. centuries when the complex feudal tenure made repairs to flood defences difficult during periods of severe flooding.

In 1742 the field to the east of the wall (field 61 in the James survey) belong to Lady Deval (Duchess Chando(i)s) and was called "Great Lords Marsh". The field to the south-west of the wall (field 62) belonged to Mr. Richard Wooton and was called "Horse Leaze". The field to the north-east of the wall (field 117) belonged to Mrs Mary and Sarah Crowders.

Excavation Summary.

Three excavation trenches were opened up using machine at pre-selected points on the site. Trench 1 was located at the north end of the site, oriented north-west to south-east, and measured 14.5m. x 1m. The trench was a re-excavation of a previously opened soil mechanics test-pit. This cut through a large U-shaped ditch, (12), back-filled with modern material, fills (7), (8), (9), (10), (11), (13), and (14). The top fills of this ditch were cut to the north-west by a 20th. century feature, (6).

Underlying these two cuts a deep layer of brown grey clay was revealed, layer (5). It is thought that this is a natural floodwash deposit. This in turn overlay a layer of highly organic peat, layer (16). This was reached at a depth of c. 2.0m. below ground level.

Trench 2 was located at the southern end of the site, also across the ditch. This measured 10m. x 5m., orientated east - west, but extended a further 10m. south in a dog-leg, to reveal the ground surface immediately to the west of the ditch.

After removing topsoil, (50), the fills of the ditch, (55), were revealed, fills (51), (52), (56), and (57). These overlay two layers of natural floodwash clay, layers (58) and (59). These overlay a metre deep layer of organic peat, (61), which overlay silt deposits, (62). An area of grey clay, (60), coinciding with the bottom of the ditch cut, is thought to be natural gleying of the floodwash, (59).

To the west of the ditch cut, in the extended area, two features of 20th. century date were excavated, cuts (64) and (68).

Trench 3 was located on the eastern boundary of the site, between trenches 1 and 2. It was sited to the side of the ditch ((12), (55)) to examine the deposits on the rest of the site, in part of the central strip covered in the resistivity survey. The trench revealed topsoil, (22), overlying a possible plough-soil, (20). This overlay natural clay floodwash, (21).

Resistivity Survey.

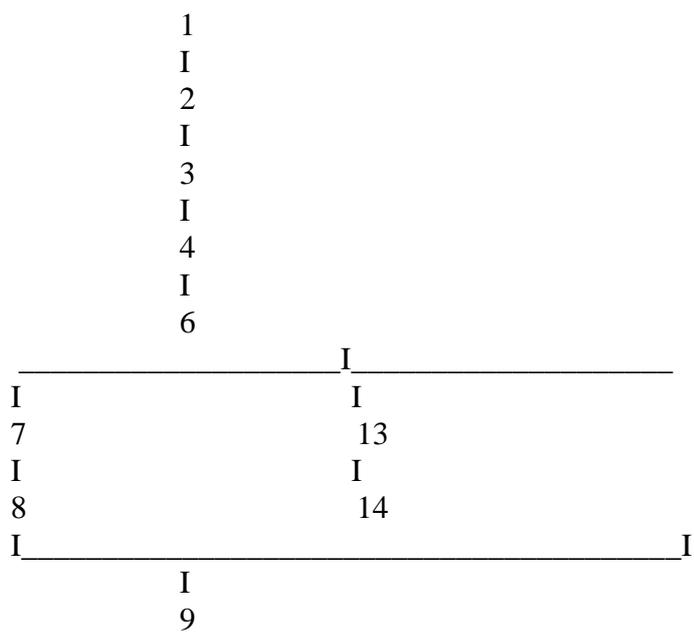
A survey was conducted on a strip 20m. wide running east -west across the middle of the site. The object of the survey was to locate the line of ditch (12/55) between trenches 1 and 2 without the use of intrusive methods, and to identify other archaeological features to either side.

The survey was conducted using the museums Geoscan RM15 Basic resistivity meter with twin array, and processed using Geoplot software. Two 20m. x 20m. squares were surveyed with a 1m. sample and zig-zag traverse interval. The machine parameters were set for a gain of x10 at a current of 1mA.

The processed survey data indicated a strip of high resistance material bounded by two strips of low resistance material running north to south across the plot. This was interpreted as the rubble in-filling of the ditch with softer organic deposits remaining to either edge. This had been revealed in trenches 1 and 2. To the east of the plot an area of uniform high resistance readings were plotted. These were unexplained and a

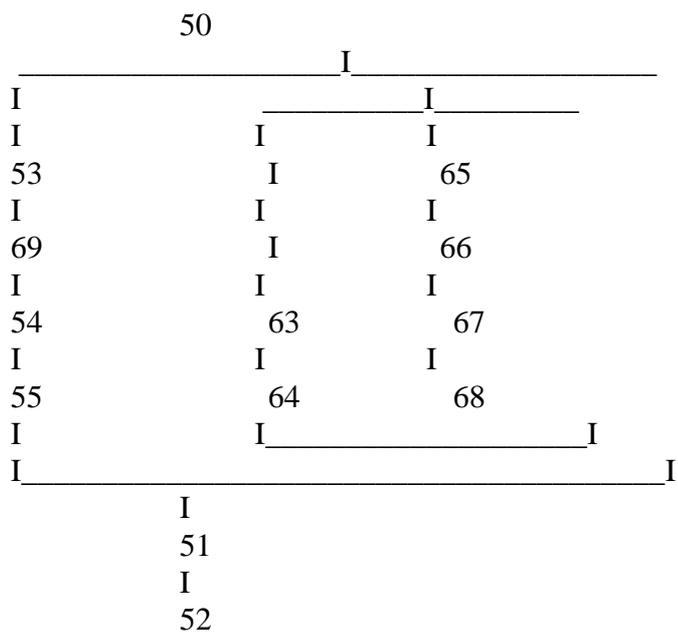
trench, Trench 3, was planned to investigate this area. Confused readings to the west of the plot were interpreted as being disturbed ground.

Trench 1 Matrix.



I
 10
 I
 11
 I
 12
 I
 15
 I
 5

Trench 2 Matrix.



Group Discussion.

Trench 1.

Group 1a.

1 layer;dark brown clay silt 1.840m.- 1.440m.

1 layer

Topsoil. 20th. century.

Plan: -- Section: 1

C/S: --

B/W: --

Phase: 6

Group 1b.

2 fill;mid brown clay silt 1.440m.- 1.270m.

3 fill;red yellow brick rubble 1.270m.- 1.100m.

4 fill;black cinder and tarmac 1.100m.- 0.940m.

6 cut;possibly linear, abrupt top to
concave sides, abrupt to flat bottom 1.440m.- 0.940m.

2 fill

I

3 fill

I

4 fill

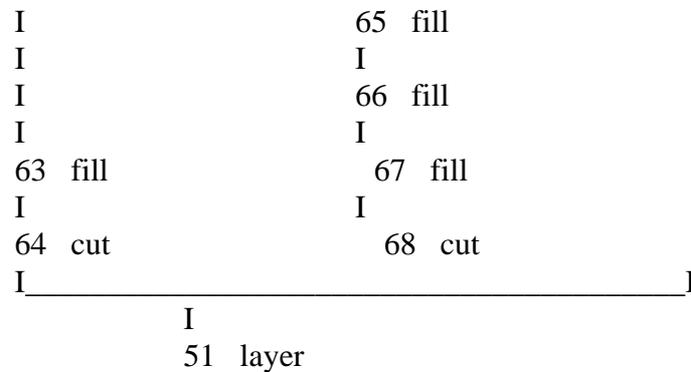
I

6 cut

B/W: --
Phase: 5

Group 2c.

- 51 layer;light grey brown silt with rubble 1.680m.- 1.660m.
- 63 fill;black sandy silt 0.990m.- 0.870m.
- 64 cut;circular, abrupt top to uneven sides,
gradual to uneven bottom 0.990m.- 0.870m.
- 65 fill;dark grey silty sand with clay 1.140m.- 0.990m.
- 66 fill;wooden barrel with metal casing 1.140m.- 0.990m.
- 67 fill;dark grey silt sand 1.140m.- 0.990m.
- 68 cut;sub-round, abrupt top to straight
sides, abrupt to flat bottom 1.140m.- 0.990m.

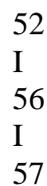


Two probable rubbish pits, with associated fills, cutting subsoil. 20th. century.

Plan: 64, 68 Section: --
C/S: 1.14,15,16,17
B/W: 1.9,10,11,12
Phase: 5

Group 2d.

- 52 layer;black clay silt 1.290m.- 1.410m.
- 56 layer;mid grey brown silt 1.410m.- 1.260m.
- 57 layer;light reddish brown silt 1.260m.- 1.170m.

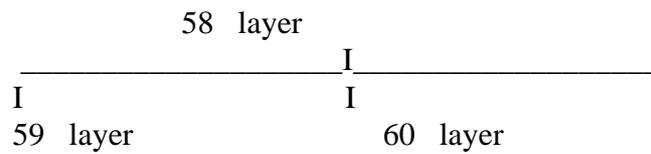


Three dump layers. 20th. century.

Plan: -- Section: 2
C/S: --
B/W: --
Phase: 4

Group 2e.

58	layer;mid brown clay	1.210m.- 0.010m.
59	layer;mid brown clay	0.010m._-0.190m.
60	layer;dark brown blue clay	-0.190m._-0.290m.

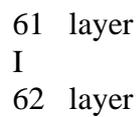


Two layers of natural floodwash with blue grey gleying.
Dating uncertain.

Plan: -- Section: 2
C/S: --
B/W: --
Phase: 2

Group 2f.

61	layer;dark brown peat	-0.290m._-1.165m.
62	layer;light grey silt	-1.165m.-----



Natural silt and peat deposits. Dating uncertain.

Plan: -- Section: 2
C/S: 1.10,11
B/W: 1.7,8
Phase: 1

Trench 3.

Group 3a.

22 layer;mid grey brown sandy silt clay

22 layer

Topsoil. 20th. century.

Plan: -- Section: 3
C/S: 1.5,6
B/W: 1.2,3
Phase: 6

Group 3b.

20 layer;mid-dark brown silty clay

20 layer

Possible ploughsoil. Dating uncertain.

Plan: -- Section: 3
C/S: 1.5,6
B/W: 1.2,3
Phase: 3

Group 3c.

21 layer;dark grey brown clay

21 layer

Natural clay floodwash. Dating uncertain.

Plan: -- Section: 3
C/S: 1.5,6
B/W: 1.2,3
Phase: 2

Phasing Discussion.

Phase 1; consists of group 2f.

This is the earliest phase of the site, consisting of silt and peat deposits. The phase is undated, although a quantity of preserved wood was recovered from the peat in trenches 1 and 2. It may be possible to date the phase from these samples.

Phase 2; consists of groups 1d, 2e, 3c.

The groups constituting this phase represent build up of natural floodwash deposits. They overlie the peat deposits of Phase 1, and appear in all three trenches. Phase 2 is undated.

Phase 3; consists of group 3b.

This is the next phase of the site, and consists of a possible buried ploughsoil in Trench 3. The phase overlies the floodwash deposits of Phase 2. Again, this phase is undated.

Phase 4; consists of group 2d.

Phase 4 is the next set of deposits on the site. they consist of dump layers of 20th. century date and were recorded only in Trench 2. They overlie the floodwash deposits of Phase 2, like the deposits of Phase 3, but are of much later date.

Phase 5; consists of groups 1b, 1c, 2b, 2c.

The deposits in this phase are by far the most numerous on the site. They consist of modern cuts and fills, and include the main ditch on the site, and its' associated fills. The phase dates to the 20th. century.

Phase 6; consists of groups 1a, 2a, 3a.

Phase 6 is the final phase of the site, and consists of 20th. century topsoil.

Interpretation and Conclusions.

The lowest deposits on the site, Phase 1, are archaeologically of the most interest. The peat and silt deposits revealed in Trenches 1 and 2 are comparable to deposits recorded the length of the Thames Estuary, and have revealed significant finds in other excavations. Although no positive dates exist for the deposits on this site, the stratigraphy is consistent with Tilbury III levels, dated to the Bronze Age (T.J. Wilkinson and P. Murphy "Archaeological Survey of an Inter-tidal Zone: The Submerged Landscape of the Essex Coast, England. in Journal of Field Archaeology vol. 13 1986.). This may be verified by future analysis of peat and timber samples retained from the site. In addition speciating the timber will reveal information about the landscape of the area.

The next phase, Phase 2, consists of deep clay deposits. This would indicate regular heavy inundations of floodwater, presumably from the Thames. No stratified finds were recovered from these deposits, and they are, therefore, undated.

This is overlain in Trench 3 by a layer of disturbed clay provisionally interpreted as being ploughsoil. This is the only indication of land use prior to the 20th. century, and is, unfortunately, also undated.

The 20th. century deposits show the usual mix of dump layers and rubbish cuts underlying the topsoil, including the fills of the large central ditch. This ditch is puzzling in itself, appearing as it does to cut 20th. century dump layers, and been filled with 20th. century debris, while being shown on maps dating to 1742. One possible explanation of this phenomena is that the ditch was re-excavated and back-filled during the late 20th. century, after a period of disuse. This would mean that the cut recorded is actually a 20th. century re-cut and not the cut for the original ditch at all. If this is the case, the re-cut has destroyed any trace of the original ditch cut and any silting deposits therein.

No structural remains were detected on the site, a fact that would indicate that the site was agricultural land, a theory supported by the presence of a ploughsoil in Trench 3.

Acknowledgements.

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4	1	--	1	--	--
5	1	--	1	--	--
6	1	--	1	--	--
7	1	--	1	--	--
8	1	--	1	--	--
9	1	--	1	--	--
10	1	--	1	--	--
11	1	--	1	--	--
12	1	--	1	--	--
13	1	--	1	--	--
14	1	--	1	--	--
15	1	--	1	--	--
20	3	--	3	1.5,6	1.2,3
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50	2	--	2	--	--
51	2	--	2	--	--
52	2	--	2	--	--
53	2	--	2	--	--
54	2	--	2	--	--
55	2	--	2	--	--
56	2	--	2	--	--
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60	2	--	2	--	--
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