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ABSTRACT

Excavation of five trenches at the proposed Police Station Ilford

revealed ten phases of natural and archaeological activity dating from the Pleistocene to the present day. The brickearth on the site revealed layers of tufa and ice wedges.

INTRODUCTION

The Passmore Edwards Museum undertook a two week archaeological evaluation at the site of the new police station, High Street, Ilford, for the Metropolitan Police, who kindly provided the funding. The trenches were located across the site in a way that was aimed at recording the maximum potential for archaeological deposits. Trench 5 used the cellar of a demolished building to explore the sequence of sub-soil deposits. The other trenches were excavated to a maximum depth of 1.40m. The work started on the 19/10/92 and finished on the 30/10/92. The site was negotiated for and directed by Dr Frank Meddens. It was supervised by Chris Jarrett and Alice Hodgins, Joanne Saunders and Chris Tripp made up the work force.

There were two methods of excavation. Firstly the removal of material by machine to a depth of 1.40m or to the top of archaeological deposits, or whichever came first. Secondly the sections and the base of the trenches were cleaned by trowel and shovel to reveal features which were subsequently excavated and recorded. Information taken from the sections did not always allow the contexts complete shape and dimensions to be fully recorded and this is indicated within the text.

GEOLOGY OF THE SITE

A brief description of the geology of the site may be of help in understanding the deposits encountered in the excavation. The information was obtained from a bore hole survey carried out by London Analytical Surveys Ltd. The geology was as follows with depths recorded from the surface:

Made ground	0.00m - 0.90m
Brickearth	0.90m - 3.00m
Sand, gravel and clay layers associated with the Taplow River Terrace	3.00m - 7.50m
Taplow River Terrace Gravel	7.50m - 14.40m
London Clay (bore hole finishes)	14.40m - 17.00m

GROUP DISCUSSION: TRENCH 1

Trench 1 matrix

Group 1.1	80
	I
	81
.....	I.....
	I
GROUP 1.2	I I

82 84
I I
83 85
I I
I 86
I I

..... I

GROUP 1.3 I
 87
 I
 88
 I
 89

..... I

GROUP 1.4 I
 90
 I
 91

..... I

GROUP 1.5 I
 92
 I
 93
 I
 94
 I
 96
 I
 79

..... I

GROUP 1.6 I
 97
 I
 98

..... I

GROUP 1.7 I
 99

..... I

GROUP 1.8 100

..... I

GROUP 1.9 I
 101
 I

102 103
I I

..... I

GROUP 1.10 I
 104
 I
 106
 I
 105

Group 1.1	Height m. A.O.D.
80 - layer, concrete paving slabs	12.53 - 12.49
81 - layer, orange yellow sand	12.54 - 12.36

This group represents the most recent surface layer of the trench and consisted of paving slabs (80) laid on a bed of sand (81). The paving represented the street pavement in front of the shops fronting the High Street.

C/S: 1,31-36
 B/W; 2,4-12
 Section: 7
 Plan: -
 Phase: IXB

Group 1.2	
82 - fill, dark grey clay silt	12.54 - 12.00

83 - cut, abrupt edges from top to base, rounded base 2.00m (N-S) x 0.75m (E-W) x 0.52m deep	12.54 - 12.00
84 - fill, dark grey clayey silt	12.55 - 11.34
85 - fill, ceramic pipe	12.35 - 12.09
86 - cut, steep edges from top to base, rounded base 2.90m (NW-SE) x 0.95m (NE -SW) x 0.67m deep	12.55 - 11.34

This group represented cuts for utility service pipes. Cut (83) contained lead water pipes and cut (86) contained a ceramic utility pipe. This group probably dates to the 20th century.

C/S: 1.31-36
B/W: 2.4-12
Section: 7
Plan: -
Phase: IX A

Group 1.3

87 - layer, light brown sandy clay layer	12.53 - 12.38
88 - layer, light brown clayey silt sand	12.48 - 12.22
89 - layer, orangey brown clay	12.40 - 11.70

These layers probably represent make-up layers to level up the ground. The cuts from Group 1.2, (83) and (86) were excavated into layer (87). The clay layer (89) was deposited to level the ground, filling a hole left by cut (91) in the proceeding group. These layers were probably deposited for the building of the present road and shop frontage on the High Street.

C/S: 1.31-36
B/W: 2.4-12
Section: 7
Plan: -
Phase: IX A

Group 1.4

90 - fill, very dark grey sandy silty clay	11.99 - 11.54
91 - cut, sloping edge , rounded base 1.60m (N-S) x 1.30m (E-W) x 0.88m deep	12.18 - 11.54

This group represented a cut of an uncertain function, however its fill contained a small amount of domestic rubbish mainly pottery dating the layer to the 19th Century and appeared to have a high humic content. The cut appeared to have been open for some time as it was only partially filled with (90) and was completely back filled when layer (89) was deposited to level the area.

C/S: 1.31-36
B/W: 2.4-12
Section: 7
Plan: -

Phase: VIII C

Group 1.5

92 - fill, reddish brown sandy clay, frequent gravel	12.27 - 11.98
93 - fill, brown sandy clay	12.12 - 11.30
94 - fill, brown clay sand	11.55 - 11.15
95 - fill, dark grey sandy clay	11.23 - 11.06
96 - cut, steep edges, flat base 2.00m (N-S) x 1.83m (E-W) x 1.21m deep	12.27 - 11.06
79 - layer, orange sandy clay with frequent gravel	12.30 - 12.14

This group represents a cut and its fills and the layer the cut truncated. The top fill, (92) of cut (96) was essentially comprised of gravel and may represent a final capping backfill to this cut. This fill was truncated by the later cut (91). Fills (93), and (94) had no finds to indicate the function of this cut and were deposited probably as a result of natural silting and back filling. The lowest fill (95) in the pit was dark and organic and probably indicated that the pit was open for some time with wet conditions prevailing which probably allowed vegetation to grow and rot and therefore give its excavated appearance. Clay tobacco pipes found in the latter fill dated

this cut to the 19th Century. Cut (96) was excavated into layer (79) containing frequent gravel and this layer may represent a make-up or a surfacing layer.

C/S: 1.31-36
B/W: 2.4-12
Section: 7
Plan: -
Phase: VIII B

Group 1.6

97 - fill, dark brown silty clay sand	12.19 - 11.86
98 - cut, concave sides, rounded sides	12.19 - 11.86

This cut represents a linear ditch orientated NNW - SSW and is dated by the finds in the cut fill (97) to the 19th Century. The function of this ditch was possibly related to boundary demarcation.

C/S: 1.31-36
B/W: 2.4-12
Section: 7
Plan: -
Phase: VIII A

Group 1.7

99 - layer, light brown silty sand	12.12 - 11.71
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This layer probably represents a buried soil which has been leached. It probably formed after the deposition of the underlying brickearth (100) until it was buried by 19th Century activity, building of roads and pavements and shops along the High Street. There were no finds from this layer.

C/S: 1.31-36
B/W: 2.4-12
Section: 7
Plan: -
Phase: VII

Group 1.8

100 - layer, light brown sandy clay 11.89 - 11.23

This layer represents the natural brick earth which was probably deposited during the last glaciation by aeolian/wind activity transporting airborne sand, clay and more often silt over long distances from areas in front of the ice sheets. Brickearths are

also thought to have been deposited by fluvial action during the last glaciation period.

C/S: 1.31-36
B/W: 2.4-12
Section: 7
Plan: -
Phase: VI

Group 1.9

101 - layer, light reddish brown silty clay
102 - layer, reddish brown sand 11.44 - 11.30
103 - layer, light reddish brown silty sand 11.33 - 11.16

These layers appear to have been associated with the deposition of the gravels and sands on the site by different sortings of particle size by fluvial actions but is not connected with the Taplow River Terrace which is some 6 metres below this level according to bore hole report.

C/S: 1.31-36
B-W: 2.4-12
Section: 7
Plan: -
Phase: V

Group 1.10

104 - layer, grey brown sandy clay 11.17 - 10.97
106 - wedge, reddish brown sand, moderate 10.48 - 10.19
gravel
105 - layer, yellow brown clay sand 10.97 - 9.93

This group of contexts were exposed to correlate the sediments in Trench 1 and Trench 5 and therefore a sondage was excavated in the base of Trench 1 at its Eastern end by machine. Layer (104)

underlay (103) and the former layer appeared to have been a leached or disturbed, redeposited layer of brickearth. Layer (104) overlay (105) a deposit of brickearth which may also have been redeposited. Within layer (105) was a wedge of sandy material which probably represented an ice wedge. This possible ice wedge showed no evidence from which layer, (104 or 105) it formed at their past surface level. In the sections of Trench 5, the ice wedges there did not always show as being formed at a surface level and although there was always evidence of the ice wedge forming at a surface level they also appeared to be within sediments. The possible ice wedge in Trench 1 also differed from those in Trench 5 as (106) was composed of a sorted sand but with gravel localised on its edges whereas the Trench 5 ice wedges were composed entirely of only a sand. Therefore

(106) may not be an ice wedge and could be a lens of sand and gravel.

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

Group 2.1

33 - layer, sandy silt

This layer represents modern demolition from the shops fronting the High Street.

C/S: 1.24-30

B/W: 1.32-36

Section: 3

Plan: -

Phase: X

Group 2.2

34 - feature, bricks set on concrete	12.27m - 12.08m
35 - fill, tar	12.22m - 12.00m
36 - cut, steep edge, flat base	12.22m - 12.00m

This group represents a cut, a levelling fill, and a brick surface. Feature (34) was a pavement made up of black bricks set on concrete. Underlying (34) was a fill of tarmac (35) probably used to level the brick pavement and this filled cut (36), a construction trench for the pavement.

C/S: 1.24-30

B/W: 1.32-36

Section: 3

Plan: -

Phase: IX B

Group 2.3

37 - fill, dark brown sand silt	12.28 - 11.85
38 - wall, bricks	12.27 - 11.85
39 - fill, concrete	11.85 - 11.65
40 - cut, steep edges, rounded base	12.28 - 11.65

This Group of contexts consisted of fills and a brick wall for a construction cut. Cut (36) of Group 2.3 cut fill (37), a back fill overlying a brick wall (38), which was laid upon a fill of concrete (39) which was poured into the construction trench (40) for a foundation.

C/S: 1.24-30

B/W: 1.32-36

Section: 3

Plan: -

Phase: IX B

Group 2.4

41 - layer, very dark grey silty sand	12.40 - 11.89
42 - layer, dark grey sandy clay	12.05 - 11.80
43 - layer, light grey mortar	11.97 - 11.82

44 - layer, grey sandy silt	11.97 - 11.72
45 - layer, light grey mortar	11.84 - 11.65

This group consisted of five layers of dumped material. Layer (41) was cut by (40) from Group 2.3. All these layers seemed to have varying percentages of building materials and layers (43) and (45) contained only building mortar. These layers probably date from the time of the construction of the shops fronting the High Street.

C/S: 1.24-30
B/W: 1.32-36
Section: 3
Plan: -
Phase: IX B

Group 2.5

46 - fill, brown silty clay	11.96 - 10.91
47 - fill, ceramic pipe	11.11 - 10.95
48 - cut, steep sides, rounded base 2.00m (E-W) x 0,56m (N-S) x 1.02m deep	11.96 - 10.95
49 - fill, orange brown sandy clay	11.99 - 11.22
108 - fill, ceramic pipe	11.56 - 11.44
109 - cut, abrupt edges, rounded base 2.00m (E-W) x 0.44m (N-S) x 0.77 m deep	11.99 - 11.22

This group consisted of two cuts for two utility service pipes. Layer (41) from the above group overlay fills (46) and (49). Fill (46) overlay a ceramic pipe (47) which was laid in cut (48). Fill (49) overlay a ceramic pipe (108) which was laid in cut (109). Cuts (48) and (109) were excavated into layer (110) in the group below.

C/S: 1.24-30
B/W: 1.32-36
Section: 3
Plan: -
Phase: IX A

Group 2.6

110 - layer, very dark grey silt sand clay	12.01 - 11.65
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This layer represented a buried soil which probably accumulated from the deposition of the underlying brickearth to the time when the building of the shops led to the soil being buried. It contained no finds to date it more accurately.

C/S: 1.24-30
B/W: 1.32-36
Section: 3
Plan: -
Phase: VII

Group 2.7

111 - brown, sandy silt

11.85 - 11.25

This group consisted of a brickearth probably deposited in the post-glacial period by fluvial or aeolian methods. A fluvial mechanism of deposition involves a body of water transporting material; sand, silt and clay, which will be deposited when the amount of material becomes too heavy for the water to continue holding it in suspension, or when the velocity of the body of water is negated. Aeolian or wind blown deposits occur when in dry conditions high pressure weather cells build up around ice sheets and winds pick up sand, silt and clay particles from glacial erosion and transport them over wide areas, perhaps sorting them and finally they are deposited.

C/S: 1.24-30
B/W: 1.32-36
Section: 3
Plan: -
Phase: VI

Group 2.8

112 - layer, orange brown sandy clay

11.56 - 10.70

Underlying the brickearth from the above group was a deposit of sandy clay material that was probably deposited by a fluvial mechanism. This trench was not excavated beyond the depth of this layer to uncover the underlying stratigraphy as the maximum depth formulated in our health and safety regulations had been reached.

C/S: 1.24-30
B/W: 1.32-36
Section: 3
Plan: -
Phase: V

GROUP DISCUSSION: TRENCH 3

Trench 3 matrix

Group 3.1		21	
		I	
		18	
		I	
		22	
		I	
		20	
		I	
		I	
Group 3.2	I	I	I
	26		24
	I		I
	27		19
	I		I

	28	25
	I	I
	29	I
	I	I
	23	I
	I	I
.....	I
	I	
Group 3.3	30	
.....	I
	I	
Group 3.4	31	
.....	I
	I	
Group 3.5	32	

Group 3.1

21 - fill, dark grey silty sand	12.39 - 11.91
18 - fill, concrete,	11.91 - 11.71
22 - cut, steep sides, flat base 0.90m (E-W) x 0.70m deep	12.39 - 11.71
20 - layer, orange brown sandy clay	12.09 - 11.97

This group represented a cut for a probable foundation trench and a layer of top soil. Cut (22) contained a fill consisting largely of modern building materials, brick and concrete, lying on top of a fill of concrete (18). This when compared to similar cuts and associated fills in other trenches on the site suggested a foundation cut for a wall, which was probably just outside the area of the trench and not seen in the section. Layer (20) was a

top soil truncated by cut (22) and this layer contained rubble incorporated in to it from recent demolition.

C/S: 1.9-14
 B/W: 1.13-21
 Section: 2
 Plan: -
 Phase: IX B

Group 3.2

24 - fill, dark brown sandy clayey silt	11.91 - 11.30
19 - fill, ceramic pipe	11.63 - 11.45
25 - cut, abrupt edges, steep base 2.00m (E-W) x 0.50m (N-S) x 0.60m deep	11.91 - 11.30
26 - fill, dark brown orange sandy clay	12.08 - 11.25
27 - cut, steep concave sides, flat base 2.00m (E-W) x 1.20m (N-S) x 0.80m deep	12.08 - 11.25
28 - fill, dark grey sandy clayey silt	12.03 - 11.56
29 - cut, steeply concave sides undulating base	12.03 - 11.56
23 - layer, orange brown sandy clay	12.09 - 11.97

This group consisted of a number of cuts and a layer. Layer

(20) sealed fill (24), a backfill for a utility service pipe (19) laid in cut (25). Cut (26) had no discernible function, it was fairly large in size. The latter cut truncated fill (28) of cut (29) and its function remained unclear. Cut (29) was excavated into layer (23) which was a dump layer.

C/S: 1.9-14
B/W: 1.13-21
Section: 2
Plan: -
Phase: IXA

Group 3.3

30 - layer, dark grey sandy silt 12.04 - 11.79

This group represents a buried soil which accumulated after the underlying brickearth had finished being deposited until the time when the shops fronting the High Street were built.

C/S: 1.9-14
B/W: 1.13-21
Section: 2
Plan: -
Phase: VII

Group 3.4

31 - layer, orange brown silty sand with worm casts 11.92 - 11.31

This context represents the brickearth which was probably deposited during the last glaciation, probably by wind action.

C/S: 1.9-14
B/W: 1.13-21
Section: 2
Plan: -
Phase: VI

Group 3.5

32 - layer, orange brown silty sand with moderate gravel 11.81 - 11.43

Layer (32) represents a deposit of natural gravel underlying the brickearth (31). This layer of gravel contained lenses of sand gravel and clay which suggests some form of fluvial sorting. Health and safety requirements stopped this layer from being completely excavated.

C/S: 1.9-14
B/W: 1.13-21
Section: 2
Plan: -
Phase: V

