

Watching Brief at Beechcroft Road, Woodford Green. Essex.

London Borough of Redbridge.

WO -BC 92.

LDPEM/ACWO/171.

Level III Report.

M.Beasley.

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#### Introduction.

A watching brief was conducted by members of the Passmore Edwards Museum on test pits dug on a disused factory site in Beechcroft Road, Woodford, on the 23rd. April 1992. The watching brief was intended to evaluate potential archaeological deposits on the site, in particular fluvial deposits from the nearby River Roding, in advance of development of the site by Weston Homes.

The watching brief was funded by Weston Homes, directed for the Museum by Frank Meddens, and supervised by the author.

#### Abstract.

The watching brief revealed evidence for extensive 19th. and 20th. century activity on the site.

#### Trench Summary.

The watching brief was conducted in four holes excavated by machine for soils investigation work (fig. 1). The first of these holes, Trench 1 (fig. 2), was located in the north-western corner of the site, aligned north to south, in an open area of concrete and grass that had served as a yard for the factory. After breaking out the concrete surface a layer of dark grey sandy clay was revealed (layer (4)), cut by a linear trench of twentieth century date, (3). This layer overlay a deep greyish orange sandy clay layer, which in turn overlay mid grey clay, interpreted as natural. The bottom of the trench was 2.70m. below present ground surface.

Trench 2 (fig. 2) was to the south of Trench 1, in the south-west corner of the yard area, and aligned east to west. The trench measured 3.4m. x 1m., and was excavated to a depth of 3.0m. The first deposit revealed was a layer of dark brown sandy clay, containing large quantities of rusted iron fragments, layer (7). This was 0.5m. - 0.6m. deep and overlay a layer of greenish grey sandy clay, heavily contaminated with diesel oil, layer (8).

This layer overlay layer (12), a layer 0.4m.- 0.5m. thick of orange sandy clay, cut in most of the trench by a large cut of modern date, (11), containing two fills, both heavily contaminated with the same diesel that impregnated layer (8).

Layer (12) overlay the natural mid brown clay, layer (13), at 2.2m. below current ground level.

Trench 3 (fig. 2) was located to the east of Trenches 1 and 2, close to the western wall of the factory buildings. The trench measured 2.4m. x 1m., and was excavated to a depth of 3.0m. It was aligned east-west. After breaking out concrete, layer (14), two intercutting cuts of modern date were revealed. The first proved to be a sewer pipe, set in concrete, running approximately north-west to south-east, cut (18). This cut a second larger cut of uncertain function, cut (21), only the eastern edge of which was shown in section. This cut cut a layer of dark grey sandy clay, layer (22). This extended to a depth of c. 1.7m. below ground surface, and overlay a layer of blue grey sandy gravel, layer (23). This in turn overlay mid brown sandy clay, a natural deposit.

Trench 4 (fig. 2) was located within the factory buildings themselves, and measured 2.1m. x 1.0m. After breaking out concrete flooring, layer (25), a 0.1m. depth of hard-core was removed, layer (26). This overlay layer (27), a yellowish brown sandy clay, which in turn overlay natural clay with gravel lensing to a depth of 3.0m.

Matrices.

Trench 1.

1  
I  
2  
I  
3  
I  
4  
I  
5  
I  
6

Trench 2.

7  
I  
8  
I  
9  
I  
10  
I  
11  
I  
12  
I  
13

Trench 3.

14  
I  
15  
I  
16  
I  
17  
I  
18  
I  
19  
I  
20  
I  
21  
I  
22  
I  
23  
I  
24

Trench 4.

25  
I  
26  
I  
27  
I  
I \_\_\_\_\_ I  
28 \_\_\_\_\_ 29

Group Discussion.

Trench 1.

Group 1a.

1 layer;concrete 20.510m.-20.410m.

1 layer

Concrete surfacing. 20th. century.

Plan: -- Section: 1  
C/S: --  
B/W: --  
Phase: 3

Group 1b.

2 fill;dark grey sandy silt with clay 20.410m.-19.710m.

3 cut;possibly linear, abrupt top to  
concave sides. gradual to concave  
bottom 20.410m.-19.710m.

4 layer;dark grey sandy clay 20.410m.-20.010m.

2 fill  
I  
3 cut  
I  
4 layer

Possibly linear cut of uncertain purpose, with associated  
fill, cutting dump layer. 20th. century.

Plan: -- Section: 1  
C/S: --  
B/W: --  
Phase: 3

Group 1c.

5 layer;orange grey sandy clay 20.010m.-18.410m.

6 layer;mid grey clay 18.410m-----

5 layer  
I  
6 layer

Layer of brickearth, overlying natural clay. Undated.

Plan: -- Section: 1  
C/S: --  
B/W: --  
Phase: 1

Trench 2.

Group 2a.

7 layer;dark brown sandy clay 20.520m.-19.990m.

8 layer;green grey sandy clay 19.990m.-19.420m.

7 layer  
I







Phasing Discussion.

Trench 1.

Phase 1.1; consists of group 1c.

This is the earliest phase in the trench, and consists of a layer of possibly natural brickearth, overlying natural clay. The phase is undated.

Phase 1.2; consists of group 1b.

The group in this phase consists of a linear cut cutting a dump layer overlying the natural deposits of phase 1, and is of 20th. century date.

Phase 1.3; consists of group 1a.

This is the latest phase in the trench and overlies the deposits of phase 1.2. It consists of concrete surfacing, and is of 20th. century date.

Trench 2.

Phase 2.1; consists of group 2c.

This is the earliest phase in the trench. It represents the natural boulder clay. The phase is undated.

Phase 2.2; consists of group 2b.

This group represents the next phase in the trench. It is composed of a deep cut of uncertain nature, with two fills, cutting a layer of clay sand. This layer overlies the natural of Phase 2.1. It is thought that this phase is of 20th. century date.

Phase 2.3; consists of group 2a.

This is the last phase in the trench and consists of two layers of 20th. century make-up.

Trench 3.

Phase 3.1; consists of group 3d.

This is the earliest phase in the trench and is composed of a layer of probably natural gravel, overlying natural boulder clay. The phase is undated. Phase 3.2; consists of group 3c.

This is the next phase in the trench, overlying the deposits of Phase 3.1. The phase consists of a cut of uncertain shape, with two fills, cutting a probable dump layer of dark grey sandy clay. It is thought this phase may date to the late 19th. or early 20th. century.

Phase 3.3; consists of group 3b.

This is the next phase in the trench, consisting of a linear drain cut, with ceramic drain pipe set in concrete, of 20th. century date. It cuts the top fill of the earlier cut in Phase 3.2.

Phase 3.4; consists of group 3a.

The last phase in the trench, this represents concrete surfacing. It covers the deposits of Phase 3.3.

Trench 4.

Phase 4.1; consists of group 4c.

The two contexts forming this phase are natural clay and gravel, constituting the earliest phase in Trench 4. The phase is undated.

Phase 4.2; consists of group 4b.

This is the next phase in the trench and consists of a make-up layer of sandy clay. This could be of 20th. century date, and overlies the natural deposits of Phase 4.1.

Phase 4.3; consists of group 4a.

This is the last phase in the trench, and represents the hard-core and concrete of the factory flooring. It overlies the deposits of the previous phase.

Inter Trench Phasing.

Phase 1; consists of trench phases 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, 4.1.

This is the first phase on the site, and appears in all four trenches. It represents the underlying natural deposits of the site; boulder clay and gravel. The phase is undated.

Phase 2; consists of trench phase 3.2.

These are the only deposits exposed on the site that are not either undatable natural deposits or of 20th. century date. The trench phase represented here appears in Trench 3, and consists of a layer of sandy clay. This is probably a dump layer of some sort, containing occasional flecks of tile or brick, with two sizeable fragments of peg tile being recovered, and cut by a cut of uncertain shape and size. The phase appears to be of late 19th. or early 20th. century date.

Phase 3; consists of trench phases 1.2, 1.3, 2.2, 2.3, 3.3, 3.4, 4.2, 4.3.

The groups in Phase 3 make up by far the majority of the deposits of the site. These are 20th. century deposits showing in all four trenches excavated, and overlying the deposits of the earlier phases.

#### Interpretation and Conclusions.

Phase 1 being the underlying geology of the site is consistent over the whole area, the natural deposits being revealed in all four trenches. These appear to be boulder clay with lenses of clay gravel, along with larger deposits of gravel, as revealed in Trench 3.

Overlying this in trenches 1, 2 and 3 is a layer of sandy clay. Although these have all been ascribed differently it is possible that they may be the same layer, stretching over the area to the west of the site currently used as a yard. This interpretation is, however, made difficult by the degree of diesel contamination in the area. This has meant that any full comparison has been obscured by contamination of the material from dumped fuel.

This has been cut, initially in Trench 3, by a cut of possible late 19th. or early 20th. century date during Phase 2, and then by various features of 20th. century date in Phase 3.

The sequence is then covered by the concrete forming the final deposits of Phase 3. The only trench not conforming to this general pattern of development is Trench 4. In this trench all previous deposits appear to have been destroyed by the 20th. century construction of the existing factory buildings.

The overall picture of the site indicates that archaeological deposits of any great age or interest will have been destroyed by subsequent development, particularly during the latter part of the 20th. century. The possible exception to this would be any features cut into the natural. The depth of build-up to the east of the site during the 19th. and 20th. centuries means that any development on the site has not been of sufficient depth to disturb the natural strata. Consequently, any

archaeological deposits directly associated with the natural clay and gravel would survive. Given the nature of the overlying deposits it would seem likely that activity prior to the 19th. century would indeed be associated with the natural. However, it must be pointed out that no such deposits were found.

#### Acknowledgements.

The author and the museum would like to thank Weston Homes for funding the project, and for allowing access to the site, Ken Sable for his work, and Graham Reed for the illustrations.

Level II Index.

context	plan	section	C/S	B/W
1	--	1	--	--
2	--	1	--	--
3	--	1	--	--
4	--	1	--	--
5	--	1	--	--
6	--	1	--	--
7	--	2	--	--
8	--	2	--	--
9	--	2	--	--
10	--	2	--	--
11	--	2	--	--
12	--	2	--	--
13	--	2	--	--
14	--	3	--	--
15	--	3	--	--
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27	--	4	--	--
28	--	4	--	--
29	--	4	--	--