

partially truncated the occupation layer suggesting a rise in water level. In addition deeper watercourses were observed to the east and west of the site. The north-south channel seen to the west of the main area of excavation was at least 52m long and 6m wide. It appears to have had a long life span, with deposits indicative of intermittent slow and fast water flow and some possible later re-cuts. These suggest human modifications to the channel. It was probably in existence in an early form during the period of prehistoric activity at the site and may well have continued as a navigable channel throughout the Roman period.

The slow and possibly episodic water ingress represented by the shallow watercourses appears to have led to the site being abandoned in the early Bronze Age. This was followed by more general inundation and flooding of the site, represented by the deposition of approximately 0.35m of dark grey clay, which was laid down before the Roman period. Further rising of the water level, possibly in the form of occasional flooding, led to the deposition of over a metre of brown clay, which contained finds of Roman and medieval date.

The substantial alluvial deposit masked the underlying prehistoric occupation and until fairly recently the prehistoric landscape of this area remained undiscovered. A 'vicious circle' developed whereby lack of evidence of occupation resulted in such evidence not being looked for¹². However, since the early 1980s it has become increasingly apparent that the remains of a well preserved landscape may survive beneath the alluvium.

12. N Merriman 'Predicting the unexpected: prehistoric sites recently discovered under alluvium in Central London' in S Needham and M G Macklin (eds) *Alluvial Archaeology in Britain* Oxbow Monograph 27 (1992) 261-7.

Excavations and post-excavation work

City of London. Museum of London Archaeology Service, Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB (020-7410 2200).

Croydon & District, processing and cataloguing of excavated and museum collections every Tuesday throughout the year. Archaeological reference collection of fabric types, domestic animal bones, clay tobacco pipes and glass ware also available for comparative work. Enquiries to Jim Davison, 28 Blenheim Park Road, South Croydon, CR2 6BB.

Greater London (except north-east and south-east London), by Museum of London Archaeology Service. Excavations and processing in all areas. General enquiries to MOLAS, Walker House, 87 Queen Victoria Street, London EC4V 4AB (020-7410 2200).

Borough of Greenwich. Cataloguing of excavated and other archaeological material, the majority from sites in the borough. For further information contact Greenwich Borough Museum, 232 Plumstead High Street, SE18 1JT (020-8855 3240).

Hammersmith & Fulham, by Fulham Archaeological Rescue

Conclusions

The evidence for prehistoric occupation of the Thames shoreline and islands preserved under alluvium has only comparatively recently started to be uncovered, and this site makes an important contribution to the study of that buried landscape. The evidence seems to suggest that this eyot was a major focus of Neolithic/early Bronze Age occupation, though this may have been periodic or seasonal in nature, possibly occurring during the drier summer months. There are indications of early farming, possibly supplementing a diet largely provided by hunting and fishing, and associated ritual preparations. The data from Hopton Street are significant within the wider parameters of prehistoric Southwark and the environment of the lower Thames floodplain in general.

Acknowledgements

Pre-Construct Archaeology and the authors would like to thank Angus Boag and the Manhattan Loft Corporation Limited for generously funding this project, and the site contractors SISK for their co-operation during the fieldwork.

Many thanks are also due to Gary Brown and Frank Meddens for the management of this project and editing of this text. We would also like to thank the many specialists whose contributions have helped to prepare this report, Sally Jones, Josephine Brown and Jon Lowe for the CAD work. Last, but by no means least, many thanks to all those who worked on site, too numerous to mention by name, their help under frequently trying conditions is very much appreciated.

Group. Processing of material from Fulham Palace. Tuesdays, 7.45 p.m.-10 p.m. at Fulham Palace, Bishop's Avenue, Fulham Palace Road, SW6. Contact Keith Whitehouse, 86 Clancarty Road, SW6 (020-7731 4498).

Kingston, by Kingston upon Thames Archaeological Society (KUTAS). Processing and cataloguing of excavated and museum collections every Thursday (10 a.m.) at the North Kingston Centre, Richmond Road, Kingston upon Thames KT2 5PE. Enquiries 020-8546 5386.

Surrey, by Surrey County Archaeological Unit. Enquiries to Rob Poulton, Archaeological Unit Manager, Old Library Headquarters, 25 West Street, Dorking, RH4 1DE (01306-886 466).

Individual membership of the Council for British Archaeology includes 10 issues a year of British Archaeology, as well as the supplement CBA Briefing, which gives details of conferences, extra-mural courses, summer schools, training excavations and sites where volunteers are needed. The individual subscription rate of £20 p.a. includes postage; payment should be sent to C.B.A., Bowes Morrell House, 111 Walmgate, York, YO1 2UA (01904 671417).