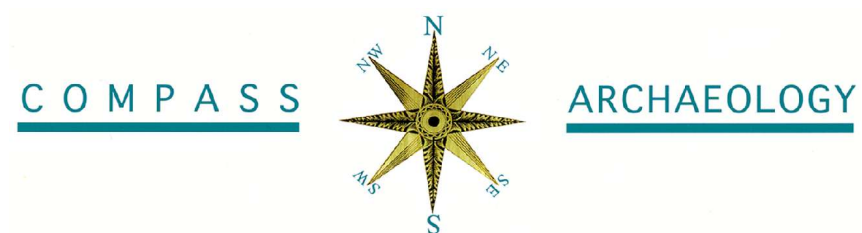


**CITY OF LONDON PLAYBUILDER, TOWER GARDENS  
TOWER HILL, LONDON EC3N**

**CITY OF LONDON & LONDON BOROUGH OF  
TOWER HAMLETS**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

February 2010





CITY OF LONDON PLAYBUILDER, TOWER GARDENS TOWER  
HILL, LONDON EC3N

CITY OF LONDON & LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER  
HAMLETS

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF

NGR: TQ 33635 80760

SITE CODE: TGL10

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February 2010

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### ***Abstract***

*An Archaeological Watching Brief was undertaken during groundworks for a new children's play area in Tower Gardens, close to the junction of Tower Hill and Minories. The Gardens are bordered to the west by a standing section of the City Wall, and lie partly in the City itself and partly within the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The monitoring work took place between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010 and involved observation and recording of five foundation pits – dug to a depth of 700 to 800mm – plus topsoil stripping for paths and timber decking.*

*The City Wall is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (LO 14), although this does not extend into the Gardens. Historic maps show that the site area largely overlies the line of the external ditch, which was infilled in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Thereafter the area was progressively developed, although a number of the buildings were damaged or destroyed by bombing during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. The site was later cleared and the present Gardens laid out.*

*The groundworks revealed a shallow layer of imported topsoil overlying made ground and building rubble, the latter probably derived from demolition of buildings formerly on the site. To the southwest four adjacent pits revealed a concrete surface of later 19<sup>th</sup> century or subsequent date, which construction and historic map evidence suggests was part of an external yard. However, no underlying or earlier deposits or features were exposed, and there were no significant archaeological finds.*

## **Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
1 Introduction	1
2 The Proposed Development	2
3 Site Location and Historical Background	3
4 Archaeological Research Questions	6
5 The Archaeological Programme	6
6 The Archaeological Watching Brief	
6.1 The cradle nest swing	8
6.2 The rotating disc	13
6.3 The slide and access steps	15
6.4 The bouncing flower	15
6.5 Paths & timber decking/ramp	16
7 Summary and Conclusions	17
8 References	18
Appendix I: OASIS Data Collection Form	19
Appendix II: London Archaeologist Summary	21

## List of Figures

	<b>page</b>
1 The site outline and Scheduled Ancient Monument that covers the City Wall and adjacent land in relation to the current Ordnance Survey map	1
2 Layout of the new play area, with principal areas of groundworks numbered 1-5	2
3 The site outline in relation to a 1597 engraving by Hayward & Gascoyne	4
4 The site outline in relation to Ogilby & Morgan's survey of the City, <i>c</i> 1676	4
5 The site outline in relation to W <sup>m</sup> Faden's revision of the Horwood map, 1813	5
6 The site in relation to the Ordnance Survey 1 <sup>st</sup> Edition 25-inch plan of 1873	5
7 The location of monitored groundworks (Nos. 1-5) in relation to the pre-development site survey	8
8 A general view taken during groundworks for the swing, looking south towards the Tower and with the City Wall on the right	9
9 Views of the swing foundation pits (No. 1, A & B), looking northeast	10
10 View of pit A (Area 1) after initial excavation to the level of the concrete slab	10
11 Drawing and photograph of the south-facing section of pit A (Area 1) after full excavation	11
12 Drawing and photograph of the south-facing section of pit B after excavation	12
13 View of pit C after initial excavation to the level of the concrete slab	13
14 Drawing and photograph of the west-facing section of the foundation pit for the rotating disc (No. 2)	14
15 Further views of the rotating disc foundation, looking east towards the Minories and southwest	15
16 The cutting for steps from the northern boundary up to the new slide (No. 3) and a view of the groundworks (5) for timber decking on the western side of the new play area	16
17 View of path groundworks (No. 5) on the eastern side of the new play area: the trench for the gravel path looking west, and the cut for timber decking running southeast from the northern boundary	17

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken in Tower Gardens, to the north of Tower Hill and just west of the junction with the Minories (Figure 1 below). The watching brief took place between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010, during groundworks for the construction of a new play area.
- 1.2 The archaeological work comprised monitoring and recording of a series of pits excavated for play equipment, plus shallower topsoil stripping for paths and timber decking.
- 1.3 The archaeological work was commissioned by The City of London Corporation, Open Spaces Department, in response to recommendations made by the Senior Planning and Archaeology Officer of the City and by English Heritage (Inspector of Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Advisory Service).

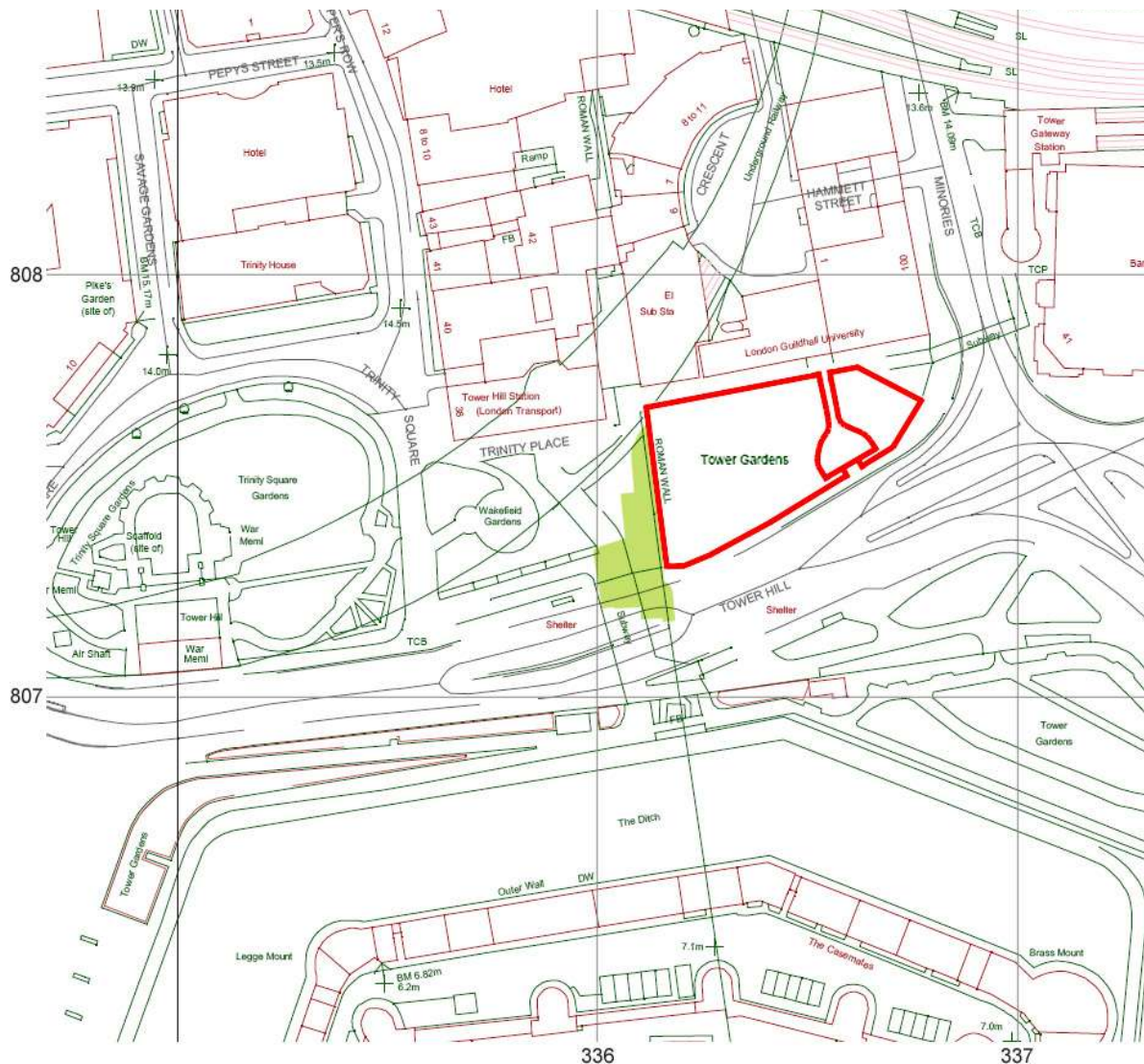


Figure 1 The site outline in relation to the current Ordnance Survey map. The Scheduled Ancient Monument (LO14) that covers the City Wall and adjacent land is shaded green

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## 2. The Proposed Development

- 2.1** The new play area covers an area some 25m by 33m in plan, within the existing Gardens. It includes four main items of play equipment, as numbered on Figure 2 below (1-4: respectively a cradle nest swing, a rotating disc, a slide with access steps and a bouncing flower). There are also three areas of path construction shown on Figure 2; No. 5 – two involving timber decking/ramp (shaded orange) and one resin-coated gravel path (shown light grey).
- 2.2** New planting will take place in a number of locations, but this was not considered to represent a significant impact unless the preceding groundworks revealed archaeological remains. Likewise the majority of the new surfacing will be formed by a safety matting ('Matta') which will be laid over the existing grass without further excavation.

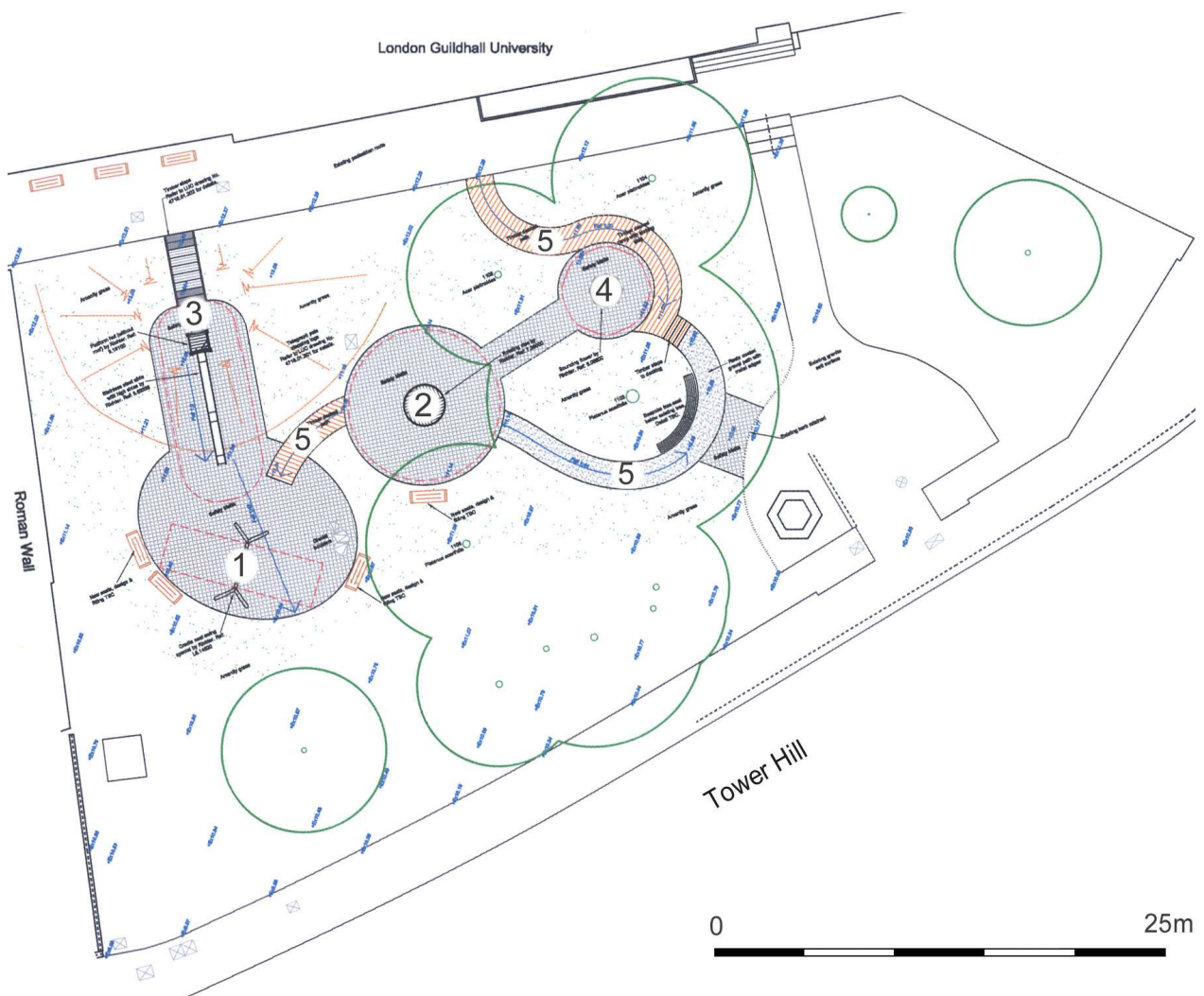


Figure 2 Layout of the new play area, with the principal areas of groundworks numbered 1-5 (see section 2 above). The majority of new surfacing (shaded darker grey) is a safety layer ('Matta') to be laid over the existing grass

*Adapted from the Tower Hill Landscape Masterplan by Land Use Consultants, Drawing No. 100/C*



### **3. Site Location and Historical Background**

- 3.1** The Gardens are located on the north side of Tower Hill, and immediately east of a standing section of the City Wall. Surface levels range from c 11.00m OD in the southwest corner to 13.50m in the northwest, and about 12.50m to the east. The majority of the Gardens are within the City of London, but the western part and adjacent Wall lie in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The new play area is approximately centred at NGR TQ 33635 80760.
- 3.2** The section of Roman and medieval City Wall that forms the western boundary of the Gardens is designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument (LO14). Although this area does not extend eastwards into the Gardens it does lie very close to the proposed works (*cf.* Figure 1 above). Moreover, the Tower Hamlets local plan defines all the surrounding land as an Area of Archaeological Importance or Potential.
- 3.3** It was anticipated that any archaeological potential in the new play area was likely to relate to post-medieval development. In part this was due to the relatively shallow impact that was proposed, but also can be inferred from a survey of historic plans (*cf.* Figures 3 to 6 overleaf & References).
- 3.4** Up to the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the area fell within the line of the ditch that ran outside the City Wall (Figure 3; also shown on the ‘Agas’ map). Deep backfill deposits are therefore likely, preceding the residential and garden development that appears on slightly later maps (*eg.*, Faithorne & Newcourt 1658; Leake 1667). The area was not affected by the Great Fire, and Leake’s survey also shows the tower and postern that once stood at the southern end of the wall (now under the adjacent road).
- 3.5** Ogilby & Morgan’s survey of 1676 (Figure 4) indicates that the present site area was mainly gardens, with buildings to the south and east. Further development is shown by Rocque (1746), and by the end of the century a distinctive ring of housing – *The Circus* – had appeared on the eastern side of the site (Figure 5): this feature is still marked in the layout of the present Gardens.

A similar pattern of building is shown by the Ordnance Survey plan of 1873 (Figure 6). This appears to have largely survived up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, although the subsequent LCC bomb damage map shows severe damage on the western side of the Circus and moderate impacts further to the west. It is believed that the site was finally cleared some years later – possibly in the 1960s, although the exact date is not known.

### **3.6 Recent investigations**

In mid 2009 archaeological monitoring took place during excavation of three trial pits on the southern perimeter of Tower Gardens, as part of the Thames Water mains replacement programme. No significant remains were found, although one pit just south of the present works exposed a brick floor of probable 19<sup>th</sup> century date at a depth of just over 1m. Overlying this was a layer of rubble and made ground, presumably relating to the final clearance and landscaping of the area, and above this a shallow (*c.* 200mm) layer of imported topsoil. Deposits in the other pits were disturbed by more recent services.

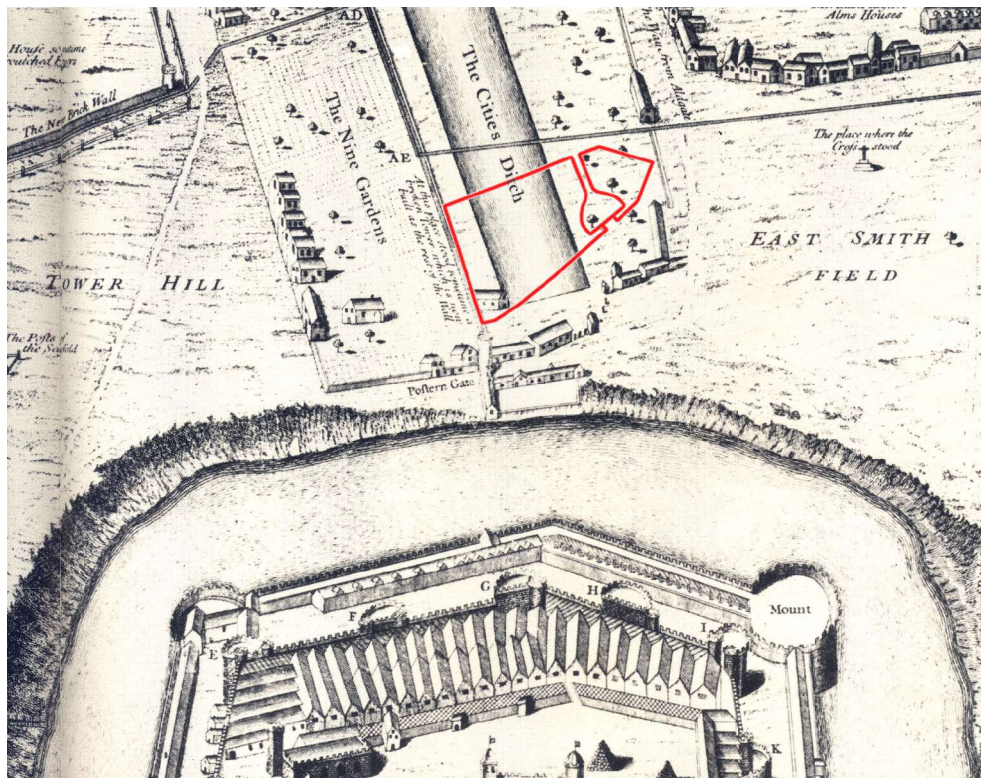
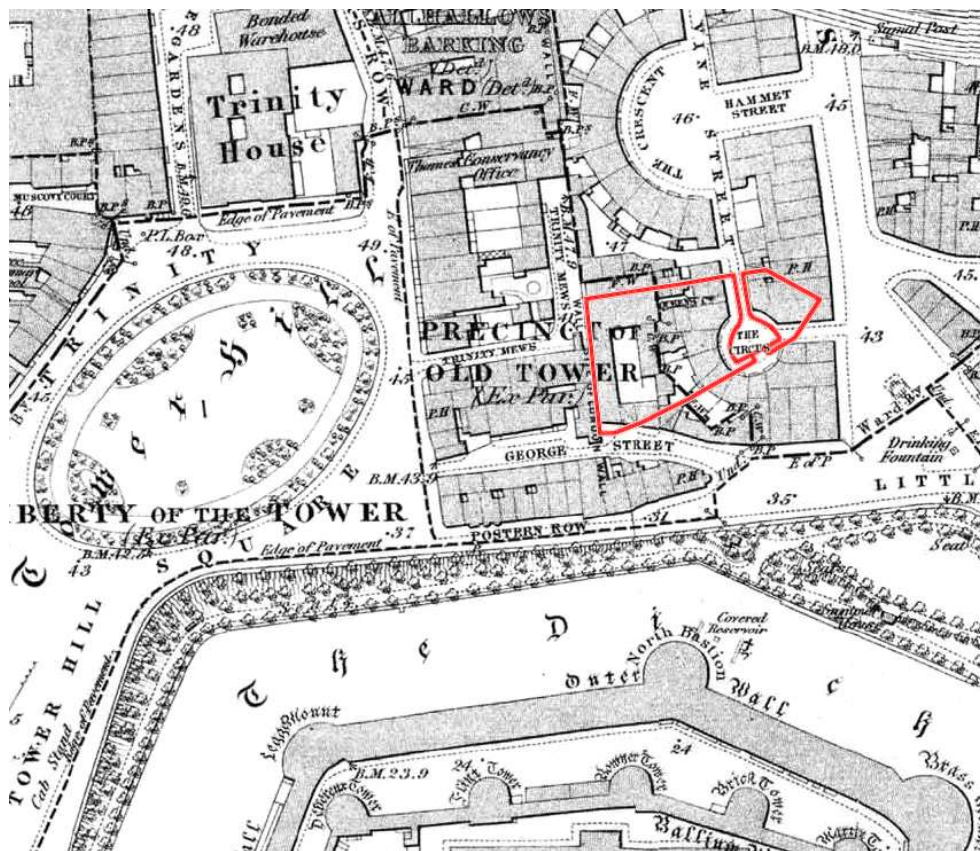
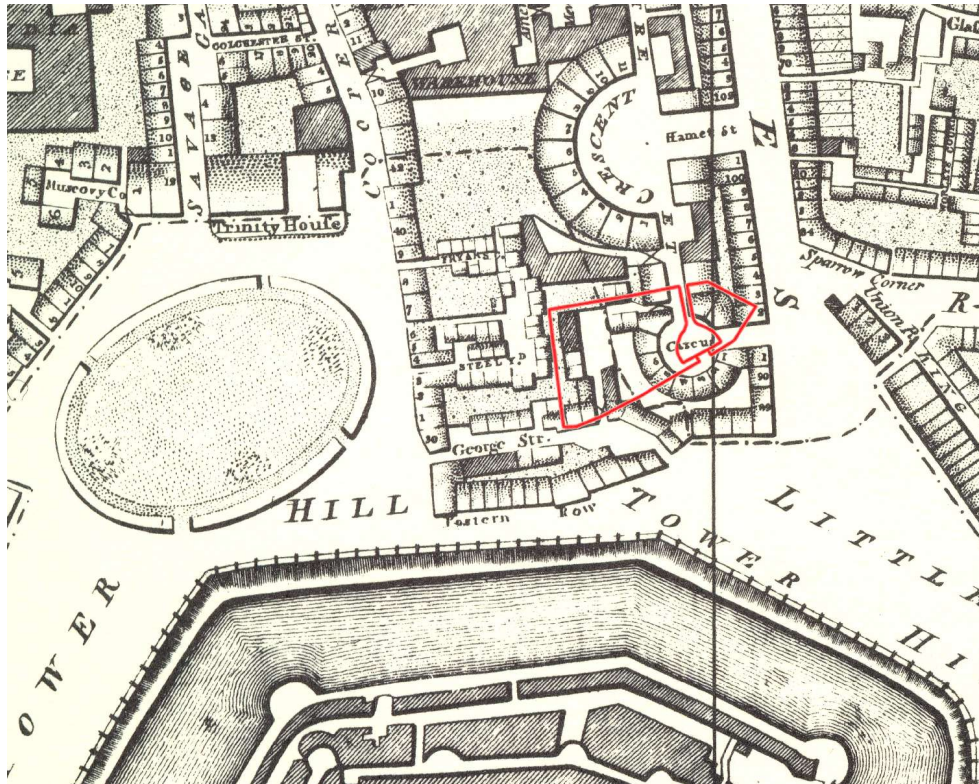


Figure 3 The site outline in relation to a 1597 engraving by Hayward & Gascoyne



Figure 4 The site in relation to Ogilby & Morgan's survey of the City, c 1676





#### **4. Archaeological Research Questions**

The watching brief presented an opportunity to address several research questions, as follows:

- Potential evidence for medieval and earlier activity, including demolition and residual material.
- Evidence for 17<sup>th</sup> century consolidation and development of the area.
- Evidence for subsequent development of the site, particularly that associated with *The Circus* in the later 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- Finally, the extent to which any remains can be related to historic mapping – particularly that provided by the 1873 and subsequent Ordnance Survey plans.

#### **5. The Archaeological Programme**

##### **5.1 Introduction**

The field and post-excavation work was carried out in accordance with English Heritage guidelines (in particular, *Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork, Guidance Paper 3*).

Works also conformed to the standards of the Institute of Archaeologists (Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs'). Overall management of the project was undertaken by a full Member of the Institute. The recording system followed the procedures set out in the Museum of London recording manual. By agreement the recording and drawing sheets used are directly compatible with those developed by the Museum.

##### **5.2 Fieldwork**

###### **5.2.1 Attendance**

The initial archaeological work took place during the excavation of five foundation pits for items of play equipment, and involved one archaeologist on site to monitor groundworks. This work was followed by topsoil stripping over several areas for proposed paths and timber decking, and a localised excavation for steps to the slide.

Further monitoring of new planting areas was not undertaken, in view of the absence of significant archaeological remains and the shallow impacts involved. This conclusion was reached in consultation with English Heritage and the Senior Planning and Archaeology Officer of the City.

###### **5.2.2 Methodology**

Exposed deposits and features were recorded in stratigraphic sequence, although there was no significant finds dating evidence. The various excavations were

described on *pro-forma* sheets by written and measured description, and where necessary recorded in plan and section. The groundworks were also related to a general site plan, and to the Ordnance Survey grid. Levels for the site were obtained from an OS benchmark located in the Minories, on the southeast base of the railway bridge immediately to the north of Tower Gateway Station (value 14.09m OD). The fieldwork record was supplemented as appropriate by digital photography.

### **5.3 Post-Excavation**

- 5.3.1** The fieldwork was followed by off-site assessment and compilation of this report, although no finds or samples were retained during the course of the watching brief.

Copies of the report will be supplied to the Client, to English Heritage and the Senior Planning and Archaeology Officer of the City, and to the appropriate local studies libraries and LAARC. A short summary of the project is appended using the OASIS Data Collection Form, and in paragraph form suitable for publication within the 'excavation round-up' of the *London Archaeologist*.

- 5.3.2** The records of the watching brief will be ordered in line with MoL *Guidelines for the Preparation of Archaeological Archives* and will be deposited in the Museum of London Archaeological Archive.

## 6. The Archaeological Watching Brief

The watching brief consisted of periodic monitoring, investigation and recording during the excavation of foundation pits and subsequent topsoil stripping for paths, *etc.*

The results are described below in relation to the main areas of works, as previously enumerated (1-5) in Section 2 – the four items of play equipment and (as No. 5) the separate areas of path/decking construction.

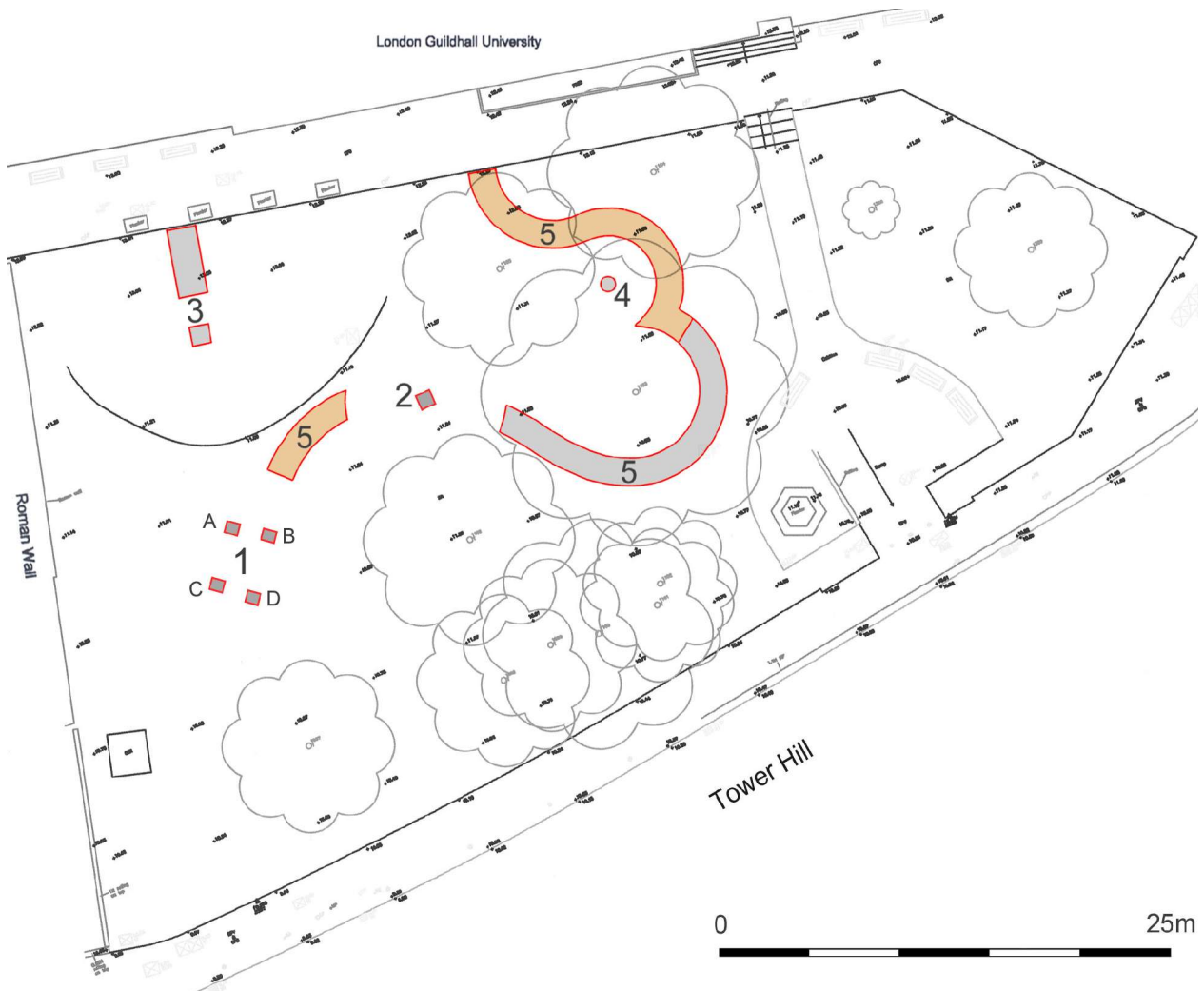


Figure 7 The location of monitored groundworks (Nos. 1-5) in relation to the pre-development site survey

*Based on the Existing Site Plan by Land Use Consultants, Drawing No. 050 (Nov. 2009)*

### 6.1 The cradle nest swing (No. 1 A-D on Figures 2 & 7)

**6.1.1** The swing was to be located in the southwestern corner of the site and comprised four foundation pits, each just over 600mm by 700mm in plan by



700mm deep. The overall footprint – to the outer corners of the respective pits – was c 2.8m by 4.1m.

- 6.1.2** Excavation revealed a fairly uniform picture in each pit, with some 150mm to 220mm of imported topsoil over a similar depth of mixed made ground with some rubble, and thence a solid slab (*cf.* Figures 10-13 below). The overlying deposits were thicker to the north, where the modern ground surface rose slightly. The main variation occurred in the northeastern pit (B; Figure 12), where the original slab had been overlaid by a secondary concrete base and surfacing.

Once this was removed there was a consistent sequence in all four pits, comprising a surface of fine hard dark grey to black material (apparently a bituminous concrete mix) some 30mm thick, over a sub-base of light greyish concrete (c 40-50mm). Both these layers dropped slightly to the east, overall by up to 80mm. Below this was a softer and coarser layer of mixed mortar with fine to coarse pebbles/flints and occasional brick fragments. This last was much thicker than the overlying layers – at least 250mm in pit A – although it was not bottomed in any of the pits and may therefore be considerably deeper.



Figure 8 A general view taken during groundworks for the swing (No.1 on Fig 7), looking south towards the Tower and with the City Wall on the right

- 6.1.3** Reference to the Ordnance Survey 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 25-inch plan of 1873 (Figure 6) indicates that this concrete slab formed part of an external yard surface surrounded by buildings – a conclusion also suggested by the presumably weatherproofing nature of the uppermost bituminous layer. The yard also appears in slightly different form on the 1813 Faden plan (Figure 5), but the recorded construction is clearly of later 19<sup>th</sup> century or subsequent date.



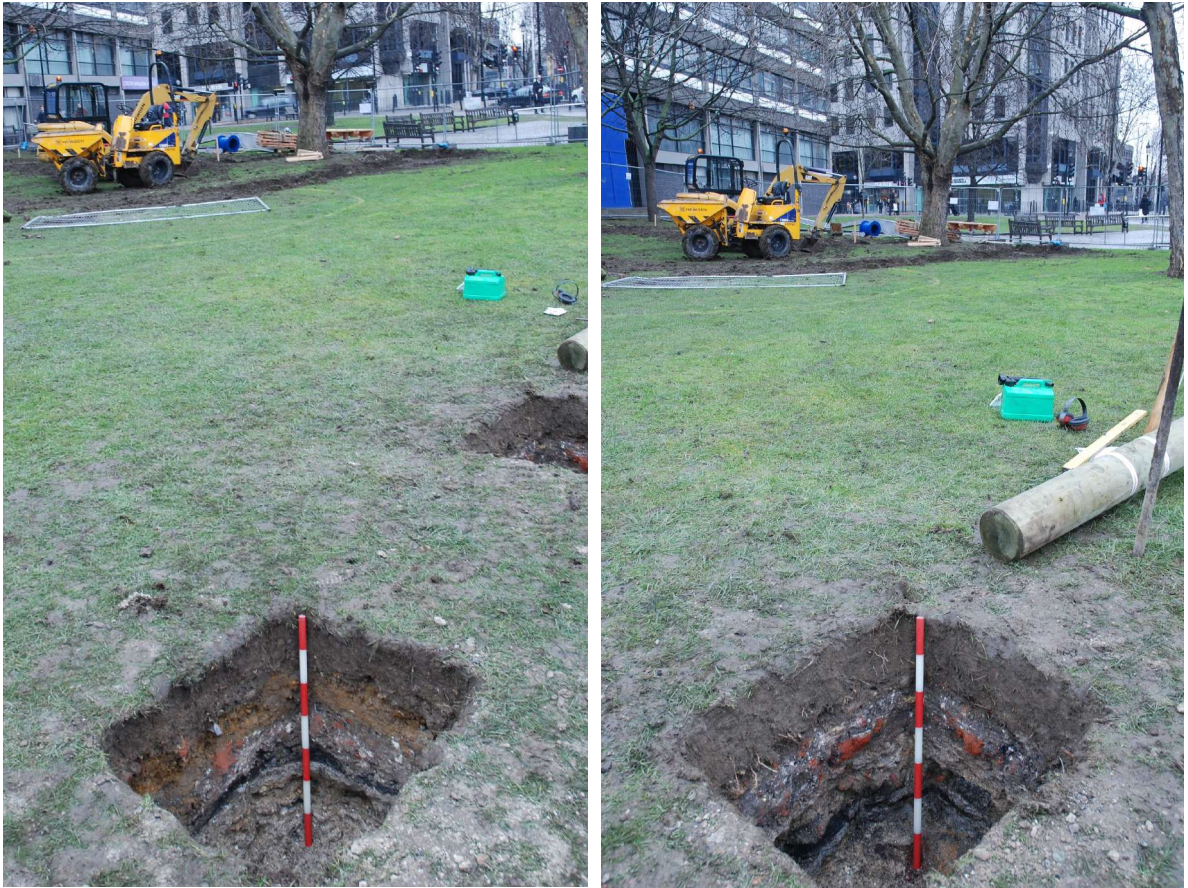


Figure 9 Views of the swing foundation pits (*cf.* Figure 7 No. 1, A & B), looking northeast (*0.7m scale*)



Figure 10 View of pit A (Area 1) after initial excavation to the level of the concrete slab (*0.4m scale*)



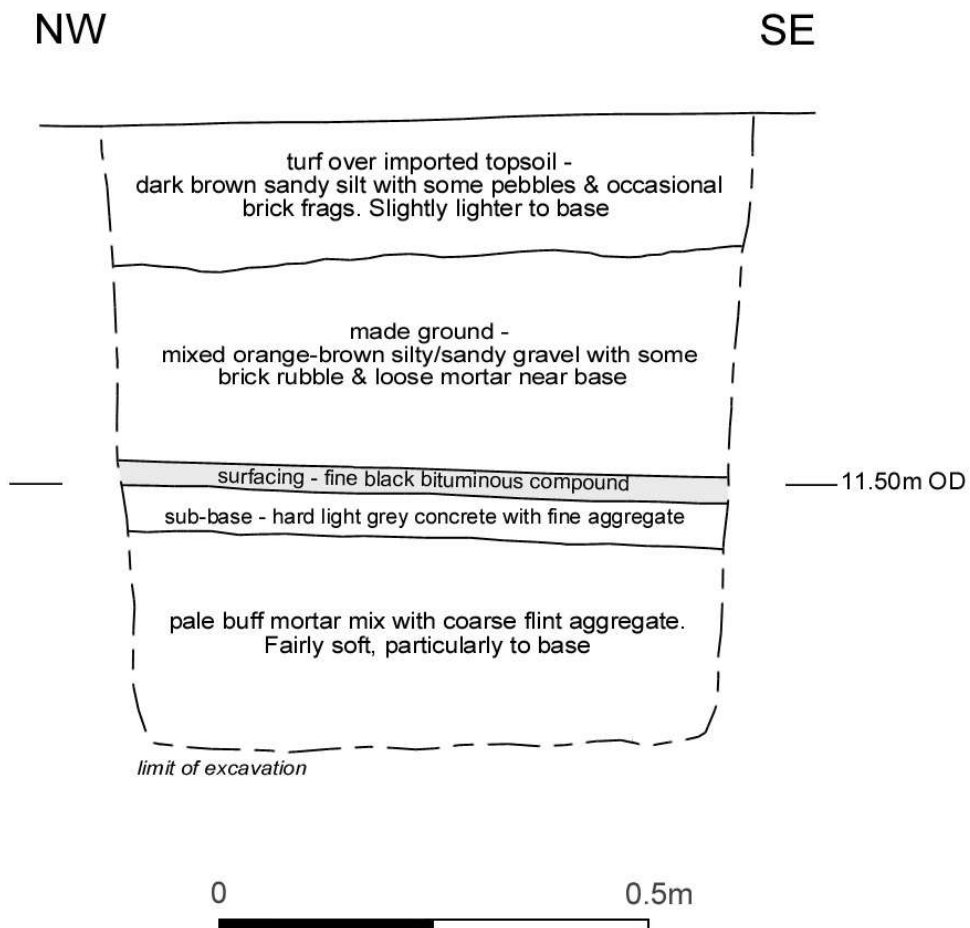


Figure 11 Drawing and photograph of the south-facing section of pit A (Area 1) after full excavation (0.7m scale)

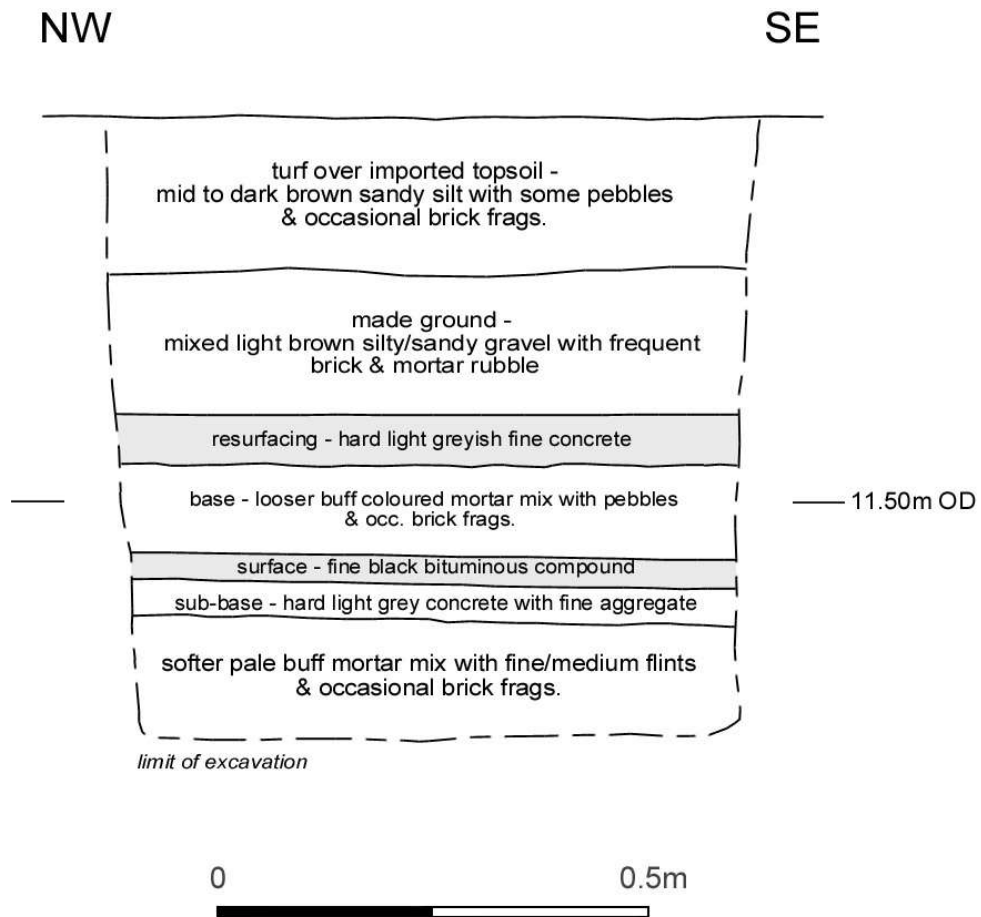


Figure 12 Drawing and photograph of the south-facing section of pit B after excavation (0.7m scale)





Figure 13 View of pit C (Figure 7 No. 1) after initial excavation to the level of the concrete slab (*0.3m scale*)

## 6.2 The rotating disc (*No. 2 on Figures 2 & 7*)

- 6.2.1 The disc foundation was located some 11m+ to the northeast of the swing footings (No. 1). It comprised a single pit, about 800mm square in plan and of similar depth.
- 6.2.2 The initial sequence was much the same as previously noted – imported topsoil over more mixed made ground, though the latter was shallower (*c* 80mm). The interface between these two deposits sandwiched a piece of plastic, which supports a fairly recent date for the construction of the Gardens (as suggested in section 3.5).

Below this level was a spread of compacted brick and mortar rubble up to 340mm thick (Figure 14). This overlay (and in the southwest corner was largely replaced by) more loosely compacted brick rubble, which was not bottomed in excavation. However, both layers presumably relate to the final clearance and landscaping of the area.

- 6.2.3 The base of the pit was at just above 11.25m OD, so about 200mm to 250mm below the level of the concrete surface recorded in all four pits for the swing (8.1 above). Thus it is possible that the rubble deposits mark a backfilled cellar, although this is not certain from the limited depth and extent of excavation.

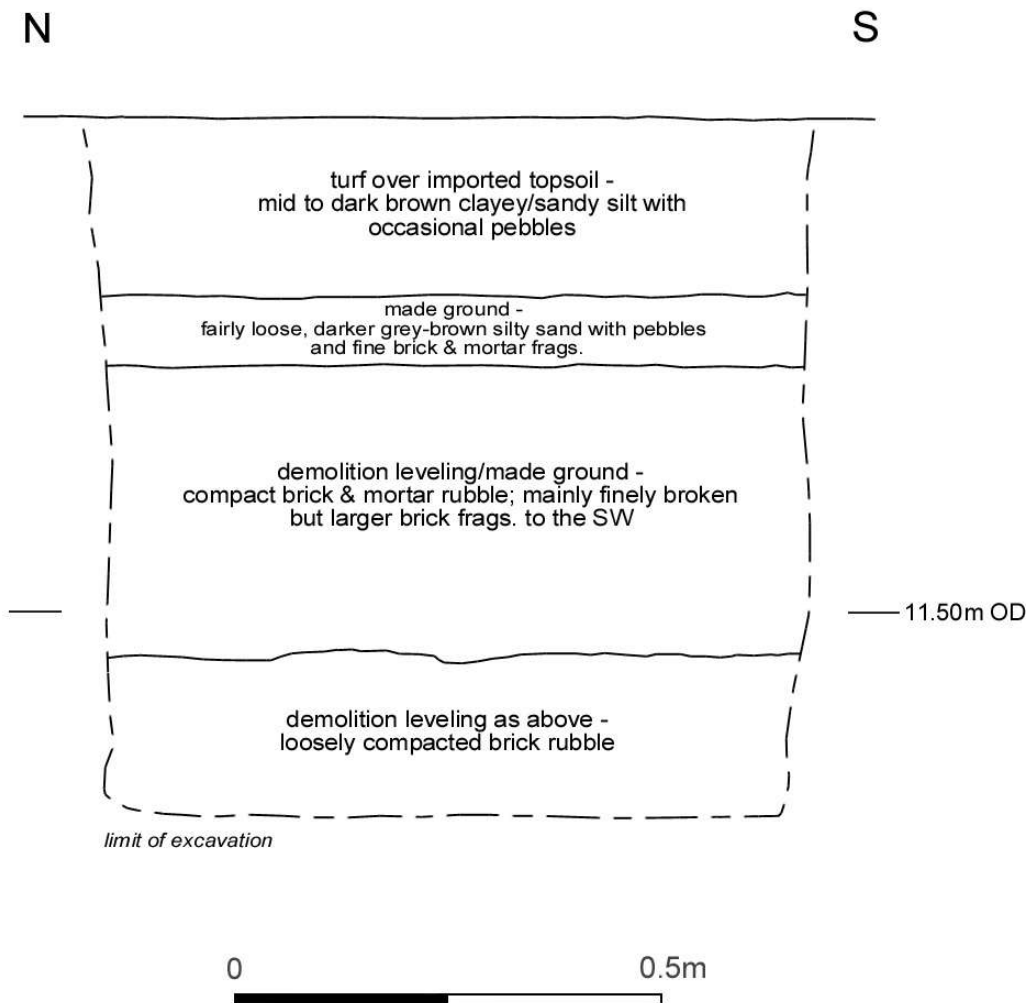


Figure 14 Drawing and photograph of the west-facing section of the foundation pit for the rotating disc, No. 2 on Figure 7 (0.8m scale)



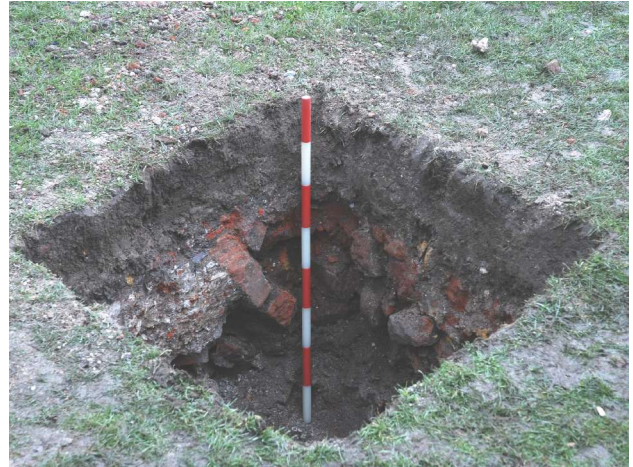


Figure 15 Further views of the rotating disc foundation (No. 2), looking east towards the Minorities and (*above*) to the southwest (0.8m scale)

### 6.3 The slide and access steps (*No. 3 on Figures 2 & 7*)

6.3.1 The slide was to be located in the northwestern part of the Gardens, taking advantage of an existing mound which rose up some 1m to 2m above the surrounding ground.

6.3.2 The area around the platform at the top of the slide was further built up by spoil removed from the other groundworks, and the only excavation took place to the north where timber steps were to be installed. Some 300mm to 380mm of material was removed, slightly more towards the northern end/base, and almost all consisting of imported topsoil (Figure 16 *left*). At the base of the cut some brick and mortar rubble was exposed, presumably the same levelling/landscaping deposit as noted elsewhere and dating from the development of the Gardens.

### 6.4 The bouncing flower (*No. 4 on Figure 2 & 7*)

This feature was located in the northeastern part of the site and had virtually no impact on the existing ground surface, which was further built up (as in the case of the slide platform) by spoil removed from elsewhere on site.

## 6.5 Paths & timber decking/ramp (No. 5 on Figures 2 & 7)

**6.5.1** The new play area included two separate areas of timber decking/ramp and a length of resin-coated gravel path (respectively shown orange & light grey on Figure 2).

**6.5.2** Shallow construction trenches were dug in all three areas, some 1.5m to 1.6m wide for the timber decking and slightly wider – *c* 1.7m to 1.8m – for the gravelled area (Figures 16 *right* & 17). The depth of excavation was also quite consistent, generally about 250mm and within an overall range of 180 to 300mm. This removed most or all of the imported topsoil that evidently covers the site, and in places superficially truncated the underlying made ground/demolition rubble. The thickness of the topsoil deposit (including turf) was recorded at between 160mm and 240mm.



Figure 16 (*above*) The cutting for steps from the northern boundary up to the new slide; No. 3 on Fig 7 (*1m scale*)

(*left*) A view of groundworks (No. 5) for timber decking on the western side of the new play area, looking towards the swing foundation pits with the City Wall beyond







Figure 17 View of path groundworks (No. 5) on the eastern side of the new play area, in both cases approximately 200-250mm deep (*1m scale*).

To the left the trench for the gravel path looking west towards the City Wall, and on the right the cut for timber decking/ramp running southeast from the northern boundary of the Gardens

## 7. Summary and Conclusions

No significant archaeological finds or features were recorded during the watching brief, although it is quite likely that these would found at greater depth.

The groundworks revealed a fairly consistent sequence, with a shallow layer of imported topsoil overlying made ground and building rubble – the latter probably derived from post-war demolition of buildings formerly on the site. Four adjacent pits revealed concrete surfaces, which from construction and historic map evidence appear to have been parts of an external yard of later 19<sup>th</sup> century or subsequent date.

No underlying or earlier deposits or features were exposed within the current excavations, which were to a maximum depth of 700mm-800mm.

## 8. References

Compass Archaeology. January 2010 *Method Statement for an Archaeological Watching Brief. City of London Playbuilder, Tower Gardens, Tower Hill, London EC3N*

### *Historic maps*

The 'Agas' Map, c 1562 *Civitas Londinum*

Hayward, W & Gascoyne, J 1597 *The Description of the Tower of London....*

Faithorne, W & Newcourt, R 1658 *An Exact Delination of the Cities of London...& Westminster...*

Leake, J 1667 *Exact Surveigh* (the post-Fire City)

Ogilby, J & Morgan, W 1676 *A Large & Accurate Map of the City of London*

Morgan, W 1682 *London &c. Actually Surveyed....*

Rocque, J 1746 *A Plan of the Cities of London and Westminster....*

Horwood, R 1799, revised by Faden, W 1813 *Plan of London*

Ordnance Survey 25-inch: mile map, 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 1880 *Sheet XXXVI, surveyed 1873*



## Appendix I: OASIS Data Collection Form

**OASIS ID: compassa1-73934**

### Project details

Project name	City of London Playbuilder, Tower Gardens EC3N
Short description of the project	Monitoring took place during construction of a children's play area in Tower Gardens, close to a standing section of the City Wall (SAM LO14). The site overlies the line of the external ditch, which was infilled in the 17th century and subsequently developed. Following wartime bomb damage the site was cleared and the present Gardens laid out. Groundworks included five foundation pits 700-800mm deep, plus surface stripping for paths. These revealed a shallow layer of imported topsoil, overlying made ground and building rubble that was probably derived from post-war demolition. Four pits exposed a concrete surface of late 19th century+ date, which construction and map evidence suggest to be parts of an external yard. There were no earlier deposits or features were exposed, and no significant archaeological finds.
Project dates	Start: 03-02-2010 End: 08-02-2010
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	TGL10 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Other 14 - Recreational usage
Monument type	FLOOR Modern
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Environmental (unspecified schedule)

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CITY OF LONDON CITY OF LONDON CoL Playbuilder, Tower Gardens, Tower Hill
Postcode	EC3N
Study area	825.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 33635 80760 51.5094461171 -0.07411143555710 51 30 34 N 000 04 26 W Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Compass Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body
Project design originator	Compass Archaeology
Project director/manager	Geoff Potter
Type of sponsor / funding body	City of London Corporation

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London archive
Digital Archive ID	TGL10
Digital Contents	'other'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London Archive
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic','other'
Paper Media available	'Miscellaneous Material','Plan','Report','Section'

### Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	CoL Playbuilder, Tower Gardens, Tower Hill, London EC3N.... An Archaeological Watching Brief
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Potter, G
Date	2101
Issuer or publisher	Compass Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	5-7 Southwark Street, London SE1 1RQ
Description	In-house spiral bound report, 21 pages

## **Appendix II: London Archaeologist Summary**

Site Address:	Tower Gardens, Tower Hill EC3N, City of London & London Borough of Tower Hamlets
Project type:	Watching brief.
Dates of Fieldwork:	3 <sup>rd</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> February 2010
Site Code:	TGL10
Supervisor:	Geoff Potter
NGR:	TQ 33635 80760
Funding Body:	City of London Corporation, Open Spaces Department

Monitoring took place during construction of a children's play area in Tower Gardens, close to a standing section of the City Wall (SAM LO14). The site overlies the line of the external ditch, which was infilled in the earlier 17<sup>th</sup> century and subsequently developed. Following wartime bomb damage the site was cleared and the present Gardens laid out.

Groundworks included five foundation pits 700-800mm deep, plus surface stripping for paths. These revealed a shallow layer of imported topsoil, overlying made ground and building rubble that was probably derived from post-war demolition. Four pits exposed a uniform concrete surface, which construction and map evidence suggest to be parts of an external yard.

No earlier deposits or features were exposed, and there were no significant archaeological finds.