

DOCUMENT VERIFICATION

**F C PURSER, OLD KENT ROAD
WATCHING BRIEF (PHASE 1)**

Quality Control

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An Archaeological Watching Brief (Phase 1) at F C Purser, Old Kent Road, SE1, London Borough of Southwark

Site Code: ODT 05

Central National Grid Reference: TQ 3400/7802

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1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report details the background and findings from the archaeological monitoring of the excavation of foundation trenches at the site of F C Purser, 434/452 Old Kent Road, London Borough of Southwark.
- 1.2 The site lies adjacent to the Old Kent Road, which follows the route of a major Roman road. The groundwork was monitored to record evidence of any surviving archaeological strata, and will be followed by additional archaeological monitoring during the main scheme works.
- 1.3 A limited number of archaeological features and deposits were encountered during the watching brief. A large Roman ditch running perpendicular to the Old Kent Road was the most substantial. There were three other, less substantial ditches, none of which ran parallel to the road, which is thought to have Roman origins. A small pit, also of Roman date, was recorded truncating one of the ditches and a residual worked flint was recovered from the brickearth horizon. Natural gravelly clays were sealed by yellow brickearth and subsequent probable medieval/post-medieval plough soil was in turn covered by modern dumped deposits. This sequence was observed across the watching brief area. A 19th/early 20th century well was observed in the north/eastern side of the foundation trenches along with a 19th century basement further to the north. A 20th century underground tank was also partially exposed in the northern area of the site.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Pre-Construct Archaeology Limited between the 19th October and 2nd December 2005, on the excavation of foundation trenches for a valet & car wash at the F C Purser site, 434/452 Old Kent Road, Southwark, London Borough of Southwark. The National Grid Reference is TQ 3400/ 7802.
- 2.2 This followed the methodology set out in: Archaeological Guidance Paper 3 Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork in London: Archaeological Guidance Paper 4: Archaeological Reports Archaeological Guidance Paper 5 Watching briefs. The watching brief was carried out to Institute of Field Archaeologist standards.
- 2.3 A Method Statement for the Archaeological Watching Brief was written by Tim Bradley of PCA (January 2005). The work was commissioned by F C Purser. The watching brief was undertaken by the author, and was project managed by Tim Bradley.
- 2.4 The fieldwork formed the first phase of an archaeological watching brief on the groundworks associated with the redevelopment of the site, and aimed to determine, as far as is reasonably possible, the location extent, date, character, condition, significance and quality of any surviving archaeological remains liable to be threatened by the new building foundations.
- 2.5 The site code is ODT 05.



Figure 1
Site Location
1:10,000



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Figure 2
 Watching brief location
 1:80

3 PLANNING BACKGROUND & RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 The archaeological watching brief was a requirement placed on the site to fulfil an archaeological condition placed on the planning permission by Southwark Council following the advice of Sarah Gibson, Senior Archaeology Officer for the London Borough of Southwark.

3.2 The Archaeological Method Statement contained the following research questions:

- What are the full extent, date and nature of archaeological deposits and features encountered on the site?
- Can any of these deposits or features be associated with the Roman road, the course of which is mirrored by the Old Kent Road?

4 GEOLOGICAL AND TOPOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

4.1 GEOLOGY

- 4.2 The site is shown on maps published by the British Geological Survey to be underlain by 'solid' strata of the Thanet Sand of Palaeocene Age, which is in turn underlain by the Upper Chalk. The Thanet Sand is dense fine sand. Drift deposits comprising the Kempton Park Gravel, a Thames River Terrace Deposit, are shown to overlie the Thanet Sand.

4.3 TOPOGRAPHY

- 4.3.1 The site lies on relatively even ground, with ground level in the range of 2.53m OD to 2.63m OD.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 5.1 A reasonable amount of prehistoric activity has been recorded in the site vicinity. This includes lithic material dating from the Mesolithic through to the Bronze Age period. Occupation evidence represented by cut features, pottery and scattered flintwork dating to the late Neolithic or early Bronze Age has also been found. No Iron Age activity has been recorded.
- 5.2 The Old Kent Road in this part of Southwark is believed to run along the approximate line of the Roman Watling Street from London to Dover. Roman features and finds are common from the area, and it is apparent that during this period it was part of a highly developed agricultural landscape. Dating evidence recovered from the field systems indicates a 2nd to 3rd century date. Limited evidence of structures in the form of post holes have also been found.
- 5.3 During the Saxon and Medieval periods the site is believed to have lain in marshy, marginal land. There is an almost complete absence of material relating to these periods.
- 5.4 At the time of the first Ordnance Survey in 1875, the site was already developed for housing. There was terraced housing fronting Old Kent Road, with small front gardens and larger gardens to the rear. This basic housing layout stayed the same until after the Second World War. A rectangular 'club' structure was built in one of the rear gardens. By 1978 all the original houses fronting the Old Kent Road had been removed and the entire area used as a garage with forecourts etc.

6 METHODOLOGY

- 6.1 The investigation area was to the rear of the F C Purser showroom.
- 6.2 The foundation trenches, service trenches and three test pits were excavated by mechanical excavator, using a toothed bucket, under archaeological observation.
- 6.3 Trenches could be entered as their sides were deemed safe and their maximum depth was approx. 1.60m. Records were made at surface level with deposits examined as they were extracted. Representative sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10 with context descriptions entered on pro forma sheets.
- 6.4 A Temporary Bench Mark with a value of 4.00m OD, was established on a line of bricks on the southern (e/w running) & eastern (n/s running) surviving walls of the demolished building.
- 6.5 The written archive will be deposited at the London Archaeological Archive and Resource Centre (LAARC).

7 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SEQUENCE

Phase 1 - Natural

- 7.1 A natural, light brownish yellow, sandy clay was observed in some trenches and Test Pit's 5 & 7. There was also yellowish sandy gravel in some and patchy brickearth in others. This was encountered at a level of between 0.85m OD and 0.95m OD within the foundation trench and located at c. 1.65m OD in Test Pit's 5 & 7.

Phase 2 - Roman

- 7.2 A ditch of probable Roman date [71] was recorded in Trench 2A and two other potentially Roman ditches [10] in Trench 4A, (depth 0.30m>) & [42] in Trench 2C, (depth 0.27m>) and a pit [47] in Trench 2C truncated the natural. They were recorded at approximately 1.25m OD. They were filled by [72], [9] and [41] respectively and were c. 0.30m deep. The fills were light grey/green silty sand with a few rounded flint inclusions. Only fill [72] contained pottery. They ran approximately north/south. Ditch [71] was not fully excavated but appeared to have steep, almost vertical sides, and had a length (north/south) of 1.80m> and a width (east/west) of 1.40m. The other ditches had similar dimensions but were shallower. Trenches to uncover existing services were excavated directly to the north of the foundation trenches. Neither ditches [10] or [71] continued as they were truncated by the modern services encountered.

- 7.3 A light to mid brownish yellow silty sandy layer overlay the ditches and was probably formed by alluvial action. A worked flint was retrieved from this horizon. It was observed at levels between 1.45m OD and 1.68m OD.

- 7.4 A probable Roman pit or ditch [45] in Trench 2C, and an undated pit or ditch [21] in Trench 4B truncated the yellow subsoil horizon at 1.45m OD. Both had a depth of c. 0.30m. Both features were revealed in section and had moderately sloping sides and flat bases. They were filled with light grey/green silty sand, neither producing finds. As they were only partially revealed in section, [21] and [45] could either represent the northern side of east/west running ditches or the sides of a pit.

Phase 3 – Post-Medieval

- 7.5 A later probable medieval/post-medieval, mid orange brown silty sand assigned various contexts was observed covering the yellow subsoil horizon at levels between 1.80m OD to 2.15m OD being c.0.32m thick.
- 7.6 A construction cut [59] in Trench 1A, for what appeared to be a 19th/20th century well [58] and its associated 19th/20th century backfill [60] were observed at a top height of

1.78m OD to the north/east of foundation trenches, cutting through brown subsoil [64].

- 7.7 A dark brown, almost black layer of silty sandy topsoil containing modern 19th/20th century debris was observed at levels of 2.21m OD and 2.42m OD.
- 7.8 A 19th/20th century pit [25] was recorded in Trench 3C containing a wooden barrel at a depth of 0.90m and a width (east/west) of c. 1.20m, and filled with loose fire bricks. A cess pit [18] was also recorded at 2.21m OD with a depth of c. 0.60m – this truncated the topsoil. A cess pit [18] in Trench 4C and two other late intrusions, [33] in Trench 1C and [49] in Trench 2B were also contemporary.
- 7.9 Test Pit 5 encountered a 19th century pipe trench [86], running east-west through the trench which was sealed by a brick floor surface, [84]. To the north of this floor surface was a 19th century brickwork basement, [82]. The basement was at a level of 2.27m OD and was 1.70m deep to its floor. This basement continued east past the Test Pit's limit of excavation.
- 7.10 In Test Pit 7 two layers of later post-medieval made ground were encountered, [91] and [90]. These were encountered at a level of c. 2.40m OD and had a combined thickness of 0.75m OD. A modern pipe trench truncated these deposits, and the natural sand, in the western extreme of the pit.
- 7.11 A later post-medieval layer of possible ploughsoil, [79], was recorded within the trenches excavated for services. This was truncated by a 19th century rubbish pit, [78], containing frequent 19th century pottery fragments, it was encountered at a level of 1.76m OD and was excavated to a depth of 1.60m. Sealing this was a late 19th century layer of made ground [75].

Phase 4 - Modern

- 7.12 A deposit of modern made ground was observed c. 2.50m OD, overlying the 19th/20th century cut features.
- 7.13 In Test Pit 6 modern concrete sealed an underground tank that was encountered at c. 1.73m OD, and was only partially exposed, associated with the previous usage of the garage.
- 7.14 A modern concrete car-parking surface covered the entire site at c. 2.63m OD.

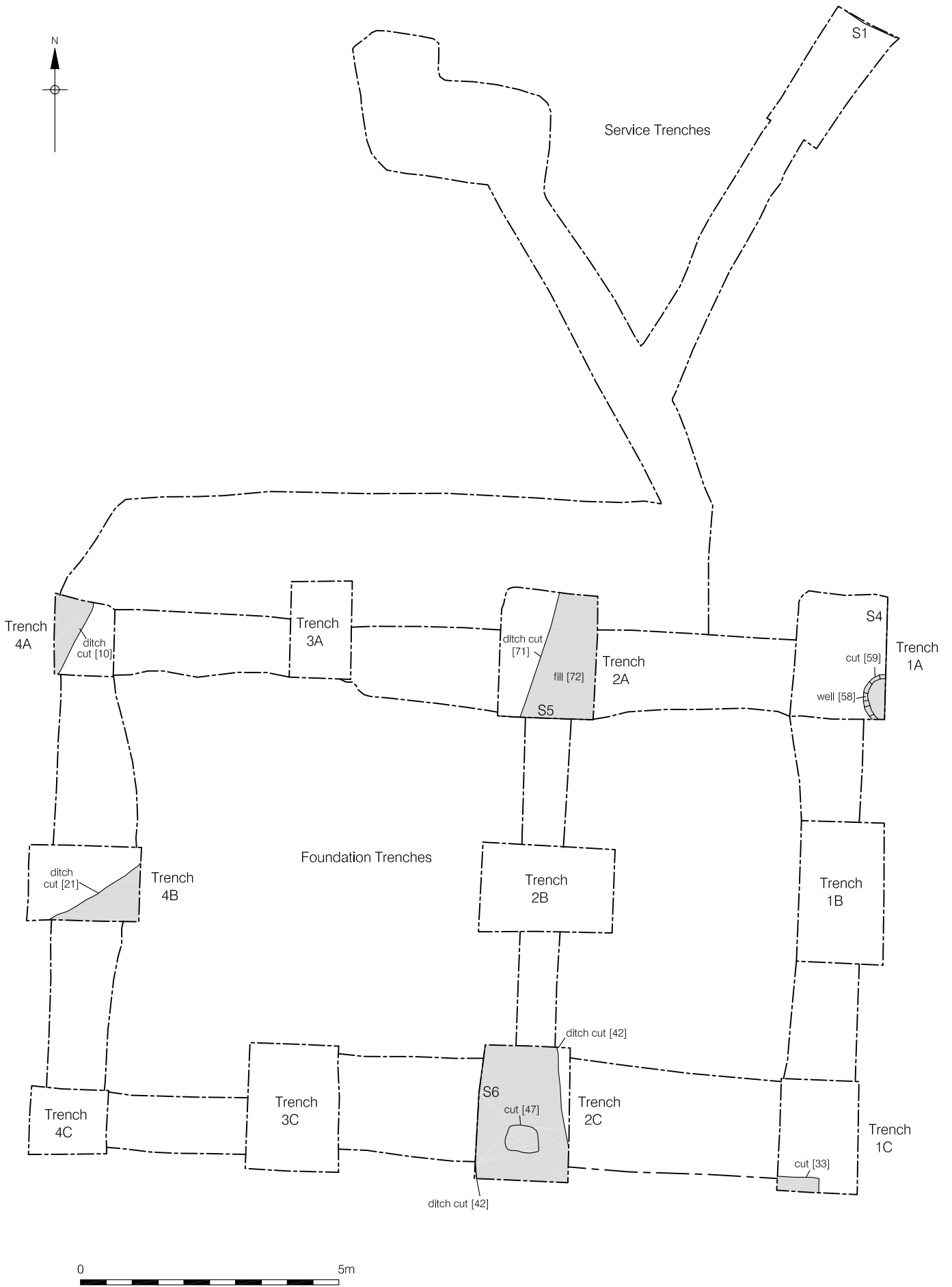
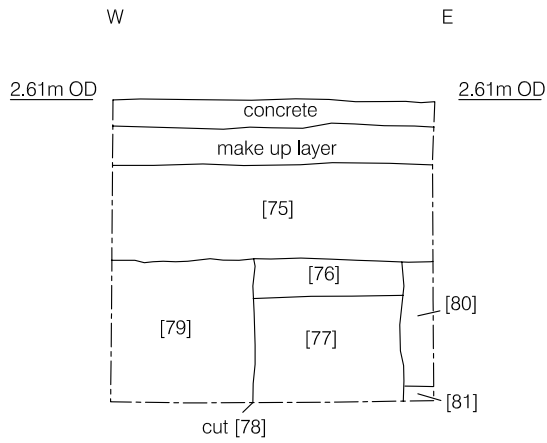
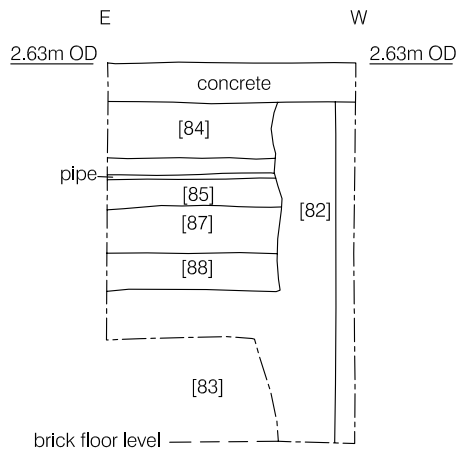


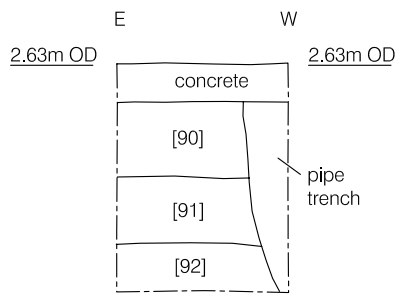
Figure 3
 Plan of Foundation Trenches and Service Trenches
 1:100



Section 1
Service Trench, south facing



Section 2
TP5, north facing



Section 3
TP7, north facing



Figure 4
Sections 1-3
1:40

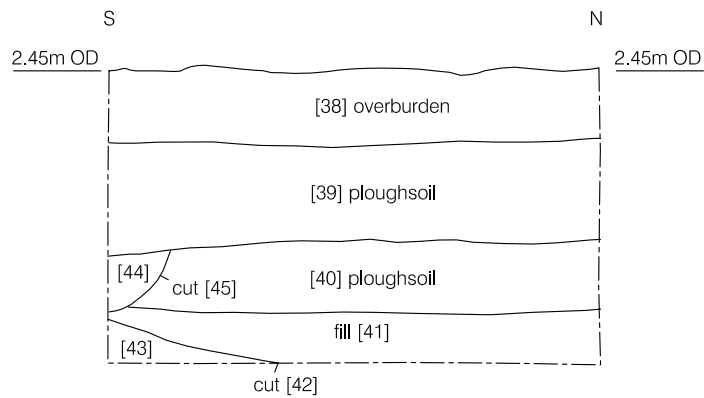
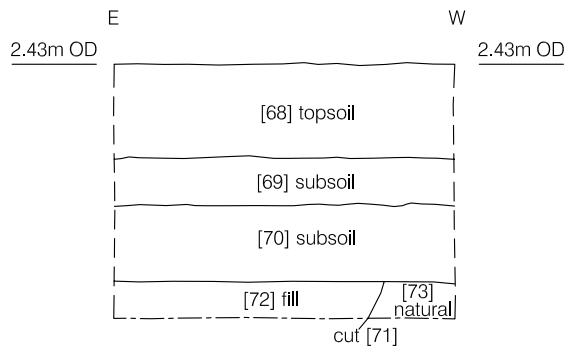
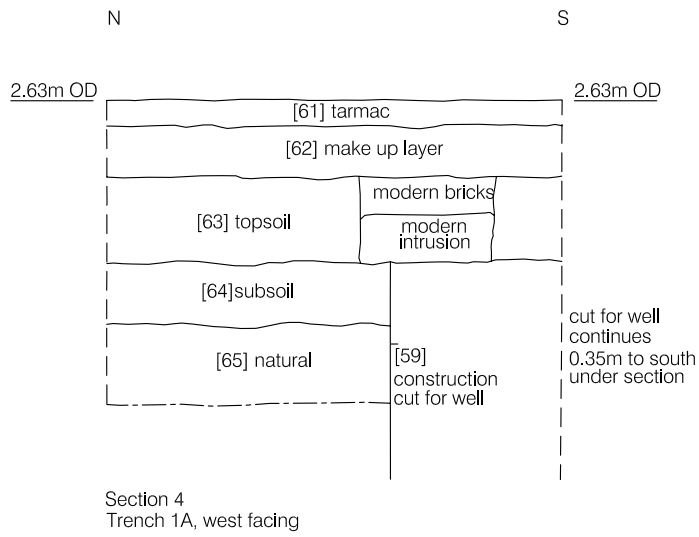


Figure 5
Sections 4-6
1:40

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 The principle objective of the watching brief (Phase 1) was to determine the presence or otherwise of archaeological deposits and finds, especially those associated with the Roman Old Kent Road.
- 8.2 Three ditches were encountered below the subsoil horizon on the site. Pottery was recovered from [71] in Trench 2A, which suggested a Roman date. Ditch [71] did not continue much further south as it was not picked up in Trench 2B. Ditch [42] in Trench 2C was on a slightly different alignment and had different characteristics to [71] being narrower and shallower. This indicates that [71] must either have terminated about a meter to the south, or turned and continued west or east. Its route was not picked up in any of the other trenches. Although only limited trial excavation was carried out on ditch [71] it was clearly more substantial than [10] & [42] and appeared to have steep sides. This suggests the ditch was a property boundary, rather than a drainage ditch.
- 8.3 Ditches [10] & [42] were shallower and may have had drainage purposes but were revealed only in section.
- 8.4 It was interesting to note that none of these features ran parallel to the Old Kent Road but were perpendicular, running approximately north/south. These features probably relate to activity in the Roman hinterland south of the river Thames. The presence of these ditches and the fact that only one of them contained a small amount pottery suggests the presence of Roman agriculture and occupation in the vicinity.
- 8.5 The Roman ditches were sealed by a thick yellow subsoil horizon. It had very similar characteristics to natural brickearth but this material is likely either to have formed by alluvial action or constitutes redeposited natural. This subsoil indicates there was a long hiatus in occupation or activity. Two pit or ditch terminus [21] & [45], truncating the subsoil were revealed in the east facing sections of Trench 2C & 4B respectively, but again were devoid of finds. A worked flint, clearly residual, but indicating prehistoric activity in the area was found in the yellow subsoil.
- 8.6 Another much darker, browner subsoil horizon with a very diffuse boundary sealed the yellow subsoil beneath. This represents a ploughsoil containing post-medieval (18th/19th century) material. There were a number of features truncating this layer including the well [58] in Trench 1A, probably relating to the Victorian tenements on Old Kent Road. The well was backfilled in the late 19th/early 20th century and the area was covered with accumulated dark, black topsoil full of post medieval and

modern domestic and industrial debris. There were some 20th century features truncating this layer. A Victorian cess pit [18] in Trench 4C and two other late intrusions [33] and [49] and the 19th century basement and floor surface, [82] & [84], in Test Pit 5 also relate to this phase of activity.

- 8.7 A 20th century underground tank was encountered within Test Pit 5 in the northern area of the site approximately 0.90m below the surface level. This may be one of a series of underground tanks that encompass this portion of the site, therefore truncating any archaeological remains within this area.

9 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- 9.1 Pre-Construct Archaeology would like to thank F C Purser for commissioning PCA to monitor the works, ITC Concepts for carrying out the groundworks, and Sarah Gibson, Senior Archaeology Officer, for monitoring the work for the London Borough of Southwark. The author would like to thank Tim Bradley for project management, Adrian Nash and Josephine Brown for the illustrations, Berni Sudds for the pottery index and those who worked on the site, Fiona Keith-Lucas, Jon Crisp and Roddy Mattison.

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APPENDIX 1 CONTEXT INDEX

CONTEXT	TYPE	DESCRIPTION
1	Layer	Modern topsoil
2	Layer	Brown ploughsoil
3	Layer	Dark sand
4	Layer	Yellow subsoil
5	Layer	Natural
6	Layer	Modern made ground
7	Layer	Brown ploughsoil
8	Layer	Yellow subsoil
9	Fill	Ditch fill
10	Cut	Ditch cut
11	Layer	Natural
12	Layer	Modern topsoil
13	Layer	Brown/grey ploughsoil
14	Layer	Yellow/brown subsoil
15	Layer	Yellow subsoil
16	Layer	Natural
17	Layer	Modern concrete
18	Layer	Modern topsoil
19	Layer	Brown ploughsoil
20	Fill	Ditch fill
21	Cut	Ditch cut
22	Layer	Yellow subsoil
23	Layer	Natural
24	Fill	Barrel pit fill
25	Cut	Barrel pit cut
26	Layer	Modern overburden
27	Layer	Modern topsoil
28	Layer	Brown ploughsoil
29	Layer	Grey subsoil
30	Layer	Yellow subsoil
31	Layer	Natural
32	Fill	Modern fill
33	Cut	Modern cut
34	Layer	Modern topsoil
35	Layer	Brown ploughsoil
36	Layer	Yellow subsoil
37	Layer	Natural
38	Layer	Modern overburden
39	Layer	Modern topsoil
40	Layer	Brown ploughsoil
41	Fill	Ditch? fill
42	Cut	Ditch? Cut
43	Layer	Natural
44	Fill	Pit? fill
45	Cut	Pit? cut
46	Fill	Pit fill
47	Cut	Pit cut
48	Fill	Modern cut fill
49	Cut	Modern cut
50	Layer	Modern overburden
51	Layer	Modern topsoil
52	Layer	Brown ploughsoil
53	Fill	Ditch? Fill

54	Cut	Ditch? Cut
55	Layer	Natural
56	Fill	Fill of modern cut
57	Cut	Modern cut
58	Structure	Brick well
59	Cut	Construction cut
60	Fill	Well backfill
61	Layer	Surfacing
62	Layer	Modern make-up
63	Layer	Modern topsoil
64	Layer	Brown ploughsoil
65	Layer	Yellow subsoil
66	Layer	Surfacing
67	Layer	Modern make-up
68	Layer	Modern topsoil
69	Layer	Brown ploughsoil
70	Layer	Yellow subsoil
71	Cut	Roman ditch
72	Fill	Roman ditch fill
73	Layer	Natural
74	Layer	Natural
75	Layer	19 th Dump Layer
76	Fill	Fill of 19 th century Pit
77	Fill	Fill of 19 th Century Pit
78	Cut	19 th Century Pit
79	Layer	Sandy Layer
80	Layer	Sandy Layer
81	Layer	Sandy Layer
82	Masonry	19 th Century Brick Basement
83	Fill	Backfill of Basement
84	Masonry	19 th Century Floor
85	Fill	Backfill of Pipe Trench
86	Cut	19 th Pipe Trench
87	Layer	Subsoil
88	Natural	Natural Sand
89	Fill	19 th century backfill
90	Layer	19 th century made ground
91	Layer	Ploughsoil ?
92	Natural	Natural Sand

APPENDIX 2 POTTERY INDEX

ODT 05 (BERNI SUDDS)

Context	Fabric	Form	No.	Date	Spot date
40	Post-medieval redware Midlands purple ware		1 1	1580 – 1900 1480 – 1750	1580 - 1750
41	Roman. Abraded.		1		Roman
46	Post-medieval redware	Flowerpot	1	1800 – 1900	1800 - 1900
56	Red border ware	Paint pot	1	1800 – 1900	1800 - 1900
60	English stoneware English stoneware	Ink bottle Ink bottle	1 1	1833 – 1861 1800 – 1900	1833 - 1861
72	Roman oxidised and reduced wares. Abraded.		3		Roman

APPENDIX 3 OASIS FORM

2.6 OASIS ID: preconst1-11817

Project details

Project name	An Archaeological Watching Brief at F.C. Pursers, 434/452 Old Kent Road, London Borough of Southwark
Short description of the project	<p>A limited number of archaeological features and deposits were encountered during the watching brief. A large Roman ditch running perpendicular to the Old Kent Road was the most substantial. There were three other, less substantial ditches, none of which ran parallel to the road, which is thought to have Roman origins. A small pit, also of Roman date, was recorded truncating one of the ditches and a residual worked flint was recovered from the brickearth horizon. Natural gravelly clays were sealed by yellow brickearth and subsequent probable medieval/post-medieval plough soil was in turn covered by modern dumped deposits. This sequence was observed across the watching brief area. A 19th/early 20th century well was observed in the north/eastern side of the foundation trenches along with a 19th century basement further to the north. A 20th century underground tank was also partially exposed in the northern area of the site.</p>
Project dates	Start: 20-10-2005 End: 01-12-2005
Previous/future work	No / Yes
Any associated project reference codes	ODT 05 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 3 - Retailing
Monument type	DITCH Roman
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG15

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON SOUTHWARK BERMONDSEY ROTHERHITHE AND SOUTHWARK F.C. Pursers, 434/452 Old Kent Road
Postcode	SE15

Study area	150.00 Square metres
National grid reference	TQ 3400 7802 Point
Height OD	Min: 0.85m Max: 1.65m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project brief originator	Pre-Construct Archaeology
Project design originator	Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd
Project director/manager	Tim Bradley
Project supervisor	Neil Hawkins/Jon Crisp
Sponsor or funding body	F. C. Purser

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Contents	'Ceramics','Worked stone/lithics'
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	'Ceramics','Worked stone/lithics'
Digital Media available	'Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	'Ceramics','Worked stone/lithics'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Diary','Matrices','Plan','Report','Section','Survey','Unpublished Text'

Project

bibliography 1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title An Archaeological Watching Brief at 434/452 Old Kent Road,
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3 OASIS:

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