

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT**

**ABBEY RETAIL PARK, UNIT 7,**

**BARKING,**

**ESSEX**

**BA-AH 95**

**Acc No LDVAL 3956**

**TQ 4386 8380**

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## INTRODUCTION

Newham Museum Service carried out an Archaeological Watching Brief on borehole works undertaken on the site of the proposed retail warehouse development at Unit 7 of the Abbey Retail Park, Barking Essex.

The site is located within the Barking Abbey Archaeological Priority Zone at grid reference TQ 4386/8380, and lies close to the east bank of the River Roding and to the west of Abbey Road, opposite the remains of the Scheduled Ancient Monument of the Medieval Abbey, (see Fig.1) in Barking, Essex.

An archaeological evaluation was undertaken on the site between the 5th and 21st of June 1995, in order to ascertain the extent, importance and preservation of any archaeological remains. The work was carried out by Newham Museum Service in response to a clause on planning application number TP 36/95 and consisted of 4 trenches measuring 5 x 10 metres (see Fig.2) fulfilling the archaeological brief provided by Mr Lawrence Pontin of English Heritage.

The evaluation produced evidence of significant archaeological remains dating from the 9th to the 13th centuries, with the depth of the deposits increasing markedly from the gravel terrace on the east, down to the west of the site adjoining the natural harbour of the Town Quay. This far western edge of the site produced evidence of deep alluvial deposits presumably laid down by an earlier course of the River Roding. A fuller discussion of this project is given in Truckle 1995a.

In order to obtain further information on the underlying geology of the area, 3 percussion boreholes, with a maximum diameter of 200mm, were required to be recorded by Southern Testing Laboratories Ltd. The boreholes were positioned to give coverage across the site from east to west (see Fig. 2) and were driven to a depth of up to 25 metres. These works were undertaken between 9th and 16th of November, 1995.

An archaeologist was intended to be present to supervise the work and to record and photograph any deposits of archaeological interest (Truckle 1995b). Due to the constraints of funding and the length of time needed to complete each bore, it was necessary to form an arrangement whereby the archaeologist could be informed (in advance) when archaeological material was due to be disturbed and thereby be present only as required. Inevitably this arrangement was unsatisfactory and a fourth borehole was found to have been excavated when the author paid a random visit on the site toward the end of the project.

## RESULTS

The numbering used for the boreholes follows that used on site by Southern Testing Laboratories.

### **Borehole 1**

This was unique among the boreholes in its depth of archaeological deposits. The uppermost 0.3m consisted of a concrete slab and an underlying concrete hard-core layer, beneath this to a depth of 1.5m was a layer of reddish brick hard-core; all of which may be assumed to be of recent origin. Of more interest archaeologically, were a series of clays which became cleaner and sandier with depth, starting below the brick layer and continuing down to natural gravel at about 4.7m depth. The gravel was 0.5m in thickness and overlay London clay at 5.2m down. The sequence is given in the chart below; further definition than this was not possible due to the nature of the works undertaken, all depths given were measured from the surface.

Depth	Material
0m .....	concrete slab
0.15m .....	concrete hard-core
0.3m .....	brick hard-core
1.5m .....	grey clay with red CBM fragments
2m .....	grey clay with fine flint pebbles
2.6m .....	increasing sandy brown mottles
3.4m .....	greyish-brown sandy clay gravel
3.5m .....	greenish-brown sandy clay
4m .....	clean brownish-grey clay
4.7m .....	natural gravel
5.2m .....	London clay

### **Boreholes 2,3,4**

All these three boreholes showed an identical sequence of deposits and are therefore described as one. The top 0.6m consisted of two layers of concrete slab which overlay about 1m further of probably dumped ashy material, coming down onto natural gravel at 1.7m depth overall. Borehole 3 produced a single potsherd, provisionally identified as a salt-glazed London stoneware, probably dating from the eighteenth century. The deposits are summarised below.

Depth	Material
0m .....	concrete
0.6m .....	loose grey ashy silt with small flint pebbles
1.0m	as above with greyish brown silty clay lenses
1.3m	increasing firmness and numbers of flint pebbles
1.5m .....	grey silty gravel
1.7m .....	natural gravel

The potsherd was found at a depth of about 1.3m.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The deposits recorded show exactly what has already been recognised on this site, both in the archaeological evaluation trenches (Truckle 1995a) and the earlier boreholes by WS Atkins Consultants Ltd (1994). Gravel is high in the East and low in the West, showing a drop consistent with an older course of the River Roding gradually pushed back by a succession of dumped layers and finally modern levelling of the site. The shallowness of the gravel in borehole 1 is of interest in that it may demonstrate the expected erosion of the terrace by the River Roding rather than an incline of the geological deposits.

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