

A Watching Brief at 2A, Sutton Lane, Hornchurch.
London Borough of Havering.

HO - HM 96
LDPEM/ACHO/

M. Beasley.
29.05.1996.

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Abstract.

The watching brief revealed evidence of a buried 19th. century marsh environment, and 20th. century make-up.

Introduction.

A watching brief was conducted by the Newham Museum Service Archaeology Section on contamination trial pits in advance of a proposed Nursing Home development by Care Haven Ltd, on land at 2A, Sutton Lane, Hornchurch

(Figs. 1,2). The site is bordered to the east and north by Sutton Lane and Latimer Drive, on the third by housing, and to the south by a petrol station.

The work was undertaken in an attempt to identify undisturbed soil horizons which may seal archaeological deposits. The work was not carried out in lieu of an archaeological evaluation.

Methodology and Summary.

Eight trial pits measuring 2m. x 1m. and of varying depths were machine excavated. An archaeological presence was maintained on the site during the excavations. Measured sketches were made and the sections were photographed.

Trial Pit 1.

TP1 was to the east of the site (*Fig. 3*), and was only opened through the brick and rubble make-up. The pit showed 20th. century brick rubble make-up to a depth of 0.5m., overlying grey clay (*Fig. 4*).

Trial Pit 2.

TP2 lay to the north-east of TP1, on the eastern site boundary. After removal of 0.5m. of topsoil, a layer of orange brown sandy clay, 0.3m. deep, was revealed. This overlay orange brown sand and gravel to a depth of 2.8m. from present ground surface. A lens of grey sand and gravel was encountered at 1.9m.

Trial Pit 3.

TP3 was sited north of TP2, in the north-east corner of the site. After removing dumped sharp sand and topsoil to a depth of 0.3m., a layer of grey clay dump deposit was revealed at 0.7m. This overlay a layer of grey black sandy clay with frequent brick fragments to a depth of 1.2m. Beneath this lay a layer of mixed grey brown sandy silt clay containing abundant bricks, brick rubble and concrete, to a depth of 2.2m. This in turn overlay a layer of mid orange brown sandy clay to a depth of 2.7m., with a layer of grey black sandy clay beneath this to the full excavated depth of 3.8m.

Trial Pit 4.

TP4 was to the west of the site. After removing screed and concrete hardstanding to a depth of 0.5m. a layer of compressed vegetation comprising small roundwood twigs and grass, 0.05m. deep, was revealed. This was removed onto a layer of olive grey sandy silt that continued until 2.4m. depth. This overlay orange brown sandy clay to 2.7m. deep.

Trial Pit 5.

TP5 was to the south of TP4, and was only excavated to the depth of the 20th. century make-up. This continued to a depth of 0.8m., where it overlay mid brown sandy clay.

Trial Pit 6.

TP6 was to the south of TP5. beneath 0.5m. of screed and concrete, a layer of black sandy clay extended to a depth of 1.0m. This contained abundant brick, brick rubble asbestos and plastic. This overlay a layer 0.05m. deep of compressed vegetation, which in turn overlay orange brown sandy clay to a depth of 1.4m. This overlay grey gravel and sand to a depth of 3.2m.

Trial Pit 7.

TP7 was to the south of TP6. 0.5m. of screed and concrete was removed onto black sandy clay, containing abundant brick, asbestos and iron, and heavily contaminated with oil, to a depth of 0.5m. This overlay a layer of grey black sandy clay with moderate brick fragments to a depth of 1.1m. This overlay orange brown sandy clay to a depth of 1.5m., and grey sand and gravel to 2.3m. Water was encountered at 1.1m.

Trial Pit 8.

TP8 was sited in the extreme south of the site. 0.2m. of screed and concrete was removed onto grey brown sandy silt clay with abundant CBM fragments, glass, concrete and asbestos to a depth of 0.9m. This overlay a layer of compressed vegetation, 0.05m. thick. This overlay orange brown sandy clay to a depth of 2.3m. This was partially obscured as water was encountered at 1.2m.

Interpretation and Conclusions.

The main sequence of deposits on the site appears to be a series of sterile water-lain clays with a layer of compressed vegetation on the interface with 20th. century deposits. This appears to be a buried land surface, but this is probably 19th. century in date. A thin layer of compressed grasses, reeds, and small roundwood on the interface implies a marsh topography, but the depth of the deposit suggests that this was relatively short lived. The brickearth and gravels to the east of the site in TP2

may suggest either that an eyot exists in surrounding marshland, or that an extinct river course runs to the west of the site. No features of archaeological interest were observed in any of the test pits.

Heavy truncation from 20th. century deposits exists to the north of the site in TP3, but in general the 20th. century deposits appear to overlie the earlier water-lain deposits. Although no levels are available for the site, it appears that the clay deposits are at a similar level across the site. There is a fairly large drop in ground level between the east and west sides of the site, and to the east the 20th. century deposits are far thicker than to the west. This would suggest that with the construction of the current buildings the ground to the west was graded, possibly to eliminate a natural slope from east to west. This would fit the theory advanced above that a gravel eyot exists east of the site.

Alternatively, this may represent the edge of the brickearth pit, naturally filled with water lain deposits before construction in the 20th. century, although it is likely that an open pit of this size would contain quantities of dumped rubbish. There is no sign of any such dumping. The only evidence of dumping at all is of 20th. century date.

There is moderate oil contamination of the higher deposits in the south-west of the site. There is verbal evidence that a fuel store for the nearby Hornchurch airfield was sited in the area during the 1940's, and this may explain the localised contamination. The oil contamination is limited to the upper deposits, and it appears that the clay deposits underlying the 20th. century make-up have stopped deeper contamination.

Acknowledgements.

The author and the Museum would like to thank Care Haven Ltd for funding the site, the engineer, Nick Wood, and Graham Reed for the illustrations.

Fieldwork will continue?

~~YES/NO/~~ NOT KNOWN

5. PERIODS REPRESENTED.

Palaeolithic	Roman
Mesolithic	Saxon (pre-AD 1066)
Neolithic	Medieval (AD 1066 -1485)
Bronze Age	Post-Medieval ✓
Iron Age	Unknown

6. PERIOD SUMMARIES. Use headings for each period (Roman; Medieval; etc.), and continue on additional sheets as necessary.

Post-Medieval.

20th. century make-up over probable 19th. century marsh topography.

7. NATURAL. (state if not observed; please DO NOT LEAVE BLANK)

Type: SAND AND GRAVEL

Height above Ordnance Datum: NO LEVELS TAKEN

8. LOCATION OF ARCHIVES.

a) Please indicate those categories still in your possession:

Notes _____ Plans _____ Photos _____ Negatives _____

Slides _____ Correspondence _____ Manuscripts (unpub. reports etc.) _____

b) All/ some records have been/ will be deposited in the following museum/ records office etc. :

NEWHAM MUSEUM SERVICE,
31, STOCK STREET,
PLAISTOW,
LONDON E13 OBX.

c) Approximate year of transfer: 1996

d) Location of any copies:

NEWHAM MUSEUM SERVICE,
31, STOCK STREET,
PLAISTOW,
LONDON E13 OBX.

e) Has a security copy of the archive been made? ~~YES~~/ NO

If not, do you wish RCHME to consider microfilming? ~~YES~~/ NO

9. LOCATION OF FINDS.

a) In your possession? ~~ALL~~/~~SOME~~/ NONE

b) All/ some finds have been/ will be deposited with the following museum/ other body:

NEWHAM MUSEUM SERVICE,
31, STOCK STREET,
PLAISTOW,
LONDON.
E13 OBX.

c) Approximate year of transfer: 1996

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

N/A

SIGNED: *Beasley*

DATE: 30.05.1996

NAME (Block capitals) M. BEASLEY

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