

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION
AT
STRATFORD BUS STATION
LONDON BOROUGH OF NEWHAM

HW BS 93

LDPEM AC HW 226

TQ 3866/8436

LEVEL III REPORT

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1. ABSTRACT

The excavation showed a large build up of agricultural soil from the medieval period or earlier up until the 19th Century. Between the earlier ploughsoil and the more modern layers is a ditch, probably of a Post Medieval date. In the 19th Century land use changed to urban development with the construction of housing.

2. SITE INTRODUCTION

An archaeological evaluation took place at the former Stratford Bus Station, London Borough of Newham, between the 18th and 24th of November, 1993 in advance of the redevelopment of the site by London Regional Transport. The Passmore Edwards Museum was commissioned by Mills and Whipp Partnership on behalf of London Regional Transport to undertake an archaeological evaluation based on a project design (Moore, 1993) drawn up according a brief by Jim Hunter, Archaeological Planning Officer for Northeast London.

The site lies within the Archaeological Priority Zone for the River Lea alluvial deposits where many archaeological sites are known. Until recently, knowledge of these sites was based on stray finds found during gravel extractions and excavations for reservoirs and consisted of prehistoric stone tools and possibly "votive" offerings such as cauldrons and swords.

Recent archaeological excavations by the Passmore Edwards Museum along the eastern gravel terrace of the River Lea have found both Bronze Age (Oliver Close Estate, Leyton) and Iron Age (George Mitchell Playing Fields, Leyton) settlements, while the Oxford Archaeological Unit found Iron Age and Roman activity in Stratford (Stratford Market), showing that there is considerable prehistoric activity along the valley.

It is also of particular interest that the site is located in the projected path of a Roman road found during excavations at 30, Romford Road, Stratford (Redknap, 1987) and during earlier excavations also at Romford Road (Marshall, 1964).

3. METHOD

The trench ran north-south and was located on the grass verge to the southeast of site because extensive services made excavation in certain areas hazardous . Due to space restrictions the trench had to be limited to 12m x 3m (stepping in to 10m x1m at a depth of 1m). It was excavated by machine to the top of the ploughsoil, 1.35m down, and then investigated for archaeological features. None were found and the age of the ploughsoil was seen to be fairly modern. Machining continued to a total depth of 2.0m where the natural gravels lay.

The trench was cleaned, archaeological deposits investigated and recorded, the long section drawn, photographs taken and the trench planned and located.

The excavation archive and a copy of the report are deposited at the Passmore Edwards Museum.

4. PHASE DISCUSSION

PHASE 1

This phase represents the natural geology of the site.

Group 1.01		Height above ordinance datum in meters	
		maximum	minimum
Context	72		
72	Layer: dark orange brown gravel	3.08	---

Natural gravel.

Photographs;
C/S 1: 5 - 16
B/W 1: 5 - 16

Group 1.02

	71		
71	Layer: brownly orange silty clay sand	3.25	3.02

Natural alluvial subsoil.

Photographs;
C/S 1: 13 - 16
B/W 1: 13 - 16

Discussion: The site is on the flood plains to the east of the River Lea. The resulting geology consists of natural gravel covered by flood deposits between 0.05m and 0.20m thick.

PHASE 2

This phase represents a build up of ploughsoil and a ditch probably from the Post-Medieval period or possibly earlier.

Group 1.03

|
70
|

70 Layer: light brown sandy silt with occasional charcoal and CBM flecks 3.43 3.13

Ploughsoil.

Photographs;
C/S 1: 13 - 16
B/W 1: 13 - 16

Group 1.04

|
54
|
50
|

51
|

- | | | | |
|----|---|------|------|
| 50 | Fill: mid grey sandy silt with pebbles and charcoal flecks | 3.11 | 2.87 |
| 51 | Cut: linear, NE-SW, moderately sloping sides with a rounded base | 3.36 | 2.87 |
| 54 | Fill: mid grey brown sandy silt with charcoal fragments and gravel lenses | 3.36 | 3.10 |

This group represents a northeast - southwest running ditch and the material filling it.

Photographs;
C/S 1: 5 - 16
B/W 1: 5 - 16

Discussion: Period of agricultural activity; the ploughsoil (70) contains flecks of CBM suggesting a Post Medieval date although there is considerable root disturbance from the plough soil (55) above. There is only one find from the ploughsoil (70), a flint waste flake although this is probably residual from ploughed out Prehistoric features or agricultural activity on site. The ditch (51) is probably contemporary with the ploughsoil (70) and would have been dug for drainage or to denote a boundary. The lower fill (50) appeared to be a natural silting, in which a residual

retouched flint blade was retrieved, again suggesting previous Prehistoric activity in the area. A large floor tile fragment, a brick fragment and a shard of clay pipe stem were found in the upper fill (54), its slightly mixed nature suggests Post Medieval back filling. The top is truncated by later ploughing associated with ploughsoil (55).

PHASE 3

This phase represents a period of at least 18th to 19th Century agriculture.

Group 1.05

|
55
|

- | | | | |
|----|--|------|------|
| 55 | Layer: dark brownny grey, sandy clayey silt with pebbles, coal, charcoal and CBM fragments | 3.83 | 3.33 |
|----|--|------|------|

An accumulation of agricultural or horticultural soil.

Photographs;

C/S 1: 13 - 16
B/W 1: 13 - 16

Discussion: Another period of agricultural or horticultural activity after the abandonment of a field system or drainage system. The depth of this soil (55) is 0.50m and suggests quite a long period of use. Many sherds of 18th and 19th Century pottery were found in this soil but were less frequent deeper down in the layer. This implies that although the most recent ploughing was 19th Century, this phase of land usage could have continued for many years.

PHASE 4

Representing ground make up of 19th Century dumps and house construction when land use changed from agriculture to urban development.

Group 1.06

|
65
|
66
|
67
|
68
|
53
|
69
|

65	Layer: loose, black burnt material and silt	4.53	4.18
66	Layer: firm, grey silty clay with lenses of sandy silt containing pebbles, brick,	4.39	4.06

- | | | | |
|----|--|------|------|
| | mortar and charcoal fragments | | |
| 67 | Layer: light brown silty sandy clay with gravel and building rubble | 4.08 | 3.87 |
| 68 | Layer: loose, purpley black ash and cinders with frequent mortar and occasional CBM and charcoal fragments | 3.97 | 3.81 |
| 53 | Layer: greeny grey silty sand | 4.00 | 3.84 |
| 69 | Layer: light grey brown silty clay with frequent pebbles, shell fragments and moderate CBM and charcoal flecks | 3.94 | 3.78 |

Group of dumped layers for ground make up.

Photographs;

C/S ---

B/W ---

Group 1.07		
	63	
	52	
	64	

- | | | | |
|----|--|------|-----|
| 63 | Fill: rubble, a mixture of crushed bricks, burnt material and silty sand | 4.53 | --- |
| 52 | Wall: N-S brick wall footings | 4.53 | --- |
| 64 | Cut: linear, N-S, vertical sides, construction cut for wall footings | 4.53 | --- |

North-south running wall footings, construction trench and backfill for a Victorian house.

Photographs;

C/S 1: 17 - 20

B/W 1: 17 - 20

Discussion: Period of urban expansion into wetter marginal land. The ground had to be made up with rubble to provide a suitable base to build upon. The brick wall feature (52) is typical of the footings for Victorian housing. A survey map of West Ham from 1844 shows no buildings on the site whereas the ordinance survey map of 1869 shows Victorian development with new roads, Martin Street and Station Street running north-south to the east and west of the site.

PHASE 5

This phase represents a concrete construction, probably a World War II air raid shelter.

Group 1.08

|
61
|
62
|

- | | | | |
|----|--|------|------|
| 61 | Structure: rectangular concrete surface with vertical reinforced concrete " walls", orientation is N-S, dimensions exceed 5m x1m | 4.61 | 3.84 |
| 62 | Cut: rectangular, vertical sides with a flat base | 4.21 | 3.84 |

This group represents a concrete structure and its construction trench.

Photographs;

C/S ---

B/W ---

Group 1.09

|
60
|

- | | | | |
|----|---|------|------|
| 60 | Fill: mixture of yellow brown and dark brown sand with large corrugated iron sheets at the bottom | 4.63 | 4.20 |
|----|---|------|------|

Backfill of concrete structure after disuse, corrugated iron could be the remains of a roof from this structure.

Photographs;

C/S ---

B/W ---

Discussion: Concrete structure probably directly associated with wall (52), Group 1.07, as it shares the same orientation. Probably a World War II air raid

shelter, the corrugated iron in the backfill could be the collapsed roof, similar to that of the common and basic Anderson shelter.

PHASE 6

This phase represents the demolition of structures (52) Group 1.07 and (61) Group 1.08, ground make up, and the construction of the former bus station.

Group 1.10

|
59
|

59 Layer: browny black rubble and clayey sand 5.10 4.63
with frequent gravel

Made ground / demolition rubble.

Photographs;

C/S ---

B/W ---

Group 1.11

|
58
|

58 structure: concrete platform 5.10 4.63

Concrete foundation raft of the former bus station.

Photographs;

C/S ---

B/W ---

Group 1.12

56

- 56 Layer: light brown sandy silty clay with frequent small pebbles 5.17 4.70
57 Layer: dark brown silty sand with frequent rubble fragments 4.85 4.56

Final ground make up for grass verge to the east of the former bus station.

Photographs;

C/S ---

B/W ---

Discussion: Demolition of brick structure (52) and concrete structure (61) and dumped ground make up as part of the redevelopment of the site for the construction of Stratford Bus Station in the 1970's.

5. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The site consists of a 0.15m build up of agricultural ploughsoil probably from the medieval or post-medieval period. Cut from this level is an east-west ditch (51) which was excavated, and found to contain 2 fills. The upper fill (54) produced a fragment of floor tile, a fragment of brick and a shard of clay pipe stem, whereas the lower fill (50) contained 2 very small sherds of soft pottery which disintegrated and a flint blade. There was no apparent recutting of the ditch.

The floor tile was dated from late medieval to post-medieval, the brick dates from the 18th Century and the clay pipe stem dates from the late 16th Century at the earliest. In contrast, the flint blade which has been retouched

on one edge is Prehistoric, although these finds seem to suggest conflicting ages we must assume the flint blade is residual as it is unlikely that such a large fragments of brick or tile could contaminate the top fill through animal or root action. The ditch was probably for drainage or to denote a boundary and is late to post medieval in date, being back filled in the early 18th Century.

There was no other archaeological features in the lowerpart of the trench although the flint blade in ditch fill (50) and waste flake in plough soil (70) suggest some nearby prehistoric activity.

All other deposits and features were recorded only in the trench section. This showed continued agricultural use with a build up of 0.50m of ploughsoil (55) until the urban expansion of the mid 19th Century when the ground was made up and housing built. A stamped clay pipe bowl was found in one of these ground make up dumps (53), it was manufactured by William Balme of Mile End between 1856 and 1861.

Post World War II redevelopment saw the demolition of the victorian housing and the construction of the bus station, the total depth of urban deposits is 1.35m.

Paucity of archaeological features and artefacts suggest that there is little prehistoric to medieval activity within the vicinity of the trench, but some within the general location. It is therefore recommended that there is no requirement for further archaeological involvement on the site.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Marshall, Kenneth, "Ancient Roads at Stratford, E15", The Essex Naturalist, Vol. 31, Pt. 3, 1964
- Peter, Moore, "Project Design for Archaeological Evaluation of Stratford Bus Station", 1993
- Davenport, James, "A Survey of the Parish of West Ham in the County of Essex", 1844

7. GLOSSARY

CBM - ceramic building material

C/S - colour slide

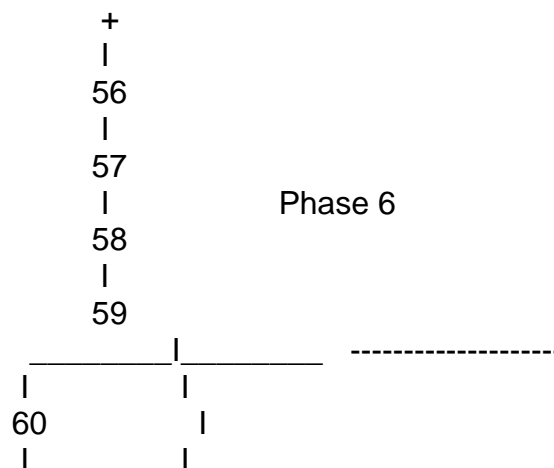
B/W - black and white

8. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Thanks also to Jim Hunter for his negotiation work, Graham Reed for the illustrations, Chris Jarret and Ken Sabel for dating the finds, Peter Moore for the project management and Sarah Harding for her excellent work on site.

SITE MATRIX



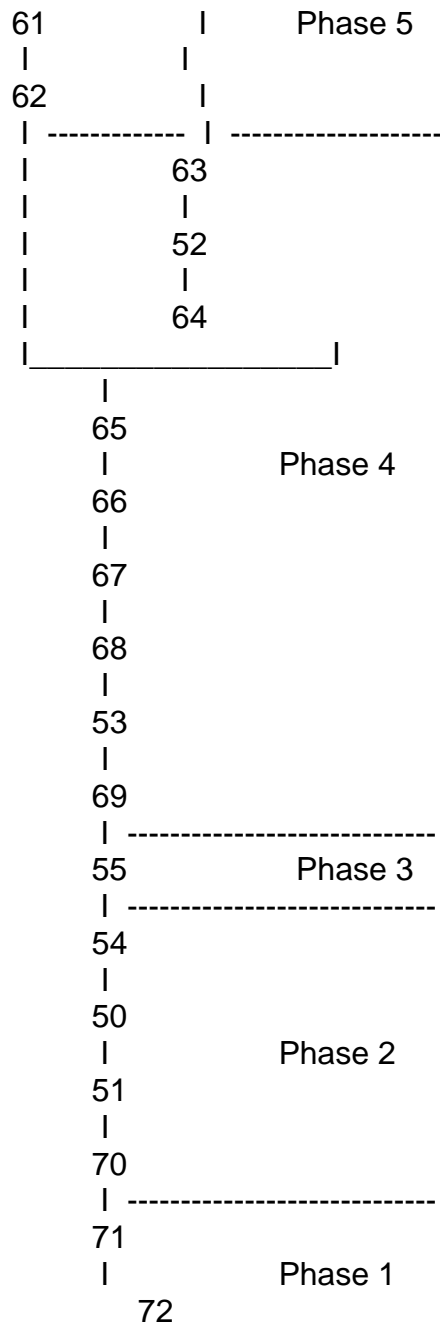


Figure 4

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LEVEL III INDEX

CONTEXT	TRENCH NO.	PLAN	SECTION	GROUP	PHASE
50	1	-- 1	1.04	2	
51	1	51 1	1.04	2	
52	1	Trench Plan	1 1.07	4	
53	1	-- 1	1.06	4	

54	1	--	1	1.04	2			
55	1	--	1	1.05	3			
56	1	--	1	1.12	6			
57	1	--	1	1.12	6			
58	1	--	1	1.11	6			
59	1	--	1	1.10	6			
60	1	--	1	1.09	5			
61	1	--	1	1.08	5			
62	1	--	1	1.08	5			
63	1	--	1	1.07	4			
64	1	--	1	1.07	4			
65	1	--	1	1.06	4			
66	1	--	1	1.06	4			
67	1	--	1	1.06	4			
68	1	--	1	1.06	4			
69	1	--	1	1.06	4			
70	1	--	1	1.03	2 71	1	--	1
1.02	1							
72	1	--	1	1.01	1			

FINDS INDEX

Context	Quantity	Type	Code	Fabric	Date
50	1	retouched flint blade 47mm x 16mm x 5mm			Prehistoric

53	1	stamped clay pipe bowl, William Balme, Mile End		1856-1861
54	1	clay pipe stem		1600-....
	1	floor tile		Late-Post Med
	1	brick	3032	1700-....
55	5	Chinese porcelain	CHIN	1650-1900
	2	Creamware	CREA	1760-1900
	2	Staffordshire salt glazed stoneware	SWSG	1720-1773
	1	Late Med courseware	LMCG	Late Med
	1	Borderware	BORD	1550-1750
	1	Transfer printed ware	TPW	1780-1900
	1	Local tin glazed earthenware blue	TGEB	1600-1800
	2	clay pipe stem		1600-....
	2	roof tile		
70	1	flintwasteflake		Prehistoric