

AN EVALUATION
AT
THE GALA CLUB SITE,
WEST HAM LANE, E15

SITE CODE: HW-GC 96

ACCESSION CODE: LDPEM/ACHW/339

GRID REFERENCE: TQ 3929 8386

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Project Manager - Mark Turner

6/3/97

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1. ABSTRACT

The evaluation revealed natural gravels cut by a feature of uncertain date, and sealed by two layers of soil. These were overlain by nineteenth-/twentieth-century building foundations and walls, the demolished remains being covered by a layer of rubble.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 An archaeological evaluation was carried out on the site of the former Gala Club, West Ham Lane, E15, by Newham Museum Service between 19.2.97 and 21.2.97.

2.2 The work was commissioned by Hall and Tawse Partnership Limited on behalf of the Family Housing Association to fulfill a condition imposed on Planning Application No. P0650.94.

2.3 The site is bounded by West Ham Lane to the west, and Densham Road to the north. The site contained a cinema (later a bingo club), an engineering works and a printing works.

2.4 The principal aims of the evaluation were to assess the nature and extent of archaeological deposits on the site, and to determine the effect of the development on any surviving evidence.

2.5 The site was supervised by the author, Jo Udall, and site work was undertaken by Jo Udall and Paul Thrall. Mark Turner directed for the Museum Service. The author would like to thank John Tilley and Roger Synnuck of Hall and Tawse for their co-operation on site, Alice Hodgins for post-excavation advice, Chris Jarrett for examining the pottery, and Graham Reed for the illustrations.

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The site lies close to All Saints Church, and the centre of the medieval village of West Ham. It is within an Archaeological Priority Zone as defined by the London Borough of Newham's Unitary Development Plan.

4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

4.1 The methodology was based on the archaeological specification prepared by Nick Truckle (5.7.96), and designed to conform to standards set out in English Heritage Guidance Paper No. 3 (Standard Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork), and all relevant Health and Safety requirements.

4.2 An evaluation was deemed necessary because the site was considered unsuitable for a watching brief, being largely basemented out, damaged by foundations and covered in rubble from previous demolitions.

4.3 The position of the trench was agreed between the developer and the Museum's Project Manager, and based on proximity to West Ham Lane (an ancient thoroughfare), and the trial pit report by Contest Melbourne Weeks, which indicated that potentially archaeological levels might be relatively near the surface (1.50m down) in Trial Pit F [see Appendix 2].

4.4 A trench was excavated by mechanical excavator (JCB) under archaeological supervision. In order to achieve a trench 2m x 10m with safety, it proved necessary to clear a surface area 6m x 10m and create two steps, breaking through a concrete floor and removing walls. A further metre of rubble had been used to level the site since the trial pits were dug, and the instability of the upper levels meant that a trench of 1.20m in width was achieved. The concrete floor was left in at the north end of the trench to provide access.

4.5 The trench was then cleaned by hand, photographed, and planned. A section was drawn to scale of the soil horizons in lowest part of the excavation (Fig. 3). A sketch section was drawn of the upper two steps of the trench where the modern building remains were counted as one phase.

5. DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS [See Fig. 3]

5.1 The natural gravel was encountered at 3.84m OD (15). A pit or ditch (14) of unknown purpose cut the gravel and contained a mixed soil (13). This was overlaid by two layers of dark soil, (12) and (11), to a height of 4.38m OD. A construction trench (9) for a large brick-built pile (7) containing two iron reinforcing rods cut soil layer (11). This was followed by a sequence of brick walls, a floor and make-up layers, and the site was sealed by a layer of rubble to a height of 6.19m OD.

5.2 Finds from the site consisted of three sherds of pottery and two pieces of tile from three contexts.

5.3 No features were found suitable for environmental sampling.

6. INTERPRETATION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The finds are insufficient to be used for positive dating, or for understanding the nature of activity on the site. One medieval sherd was found in the fill of the cut feature (14), and one in the layer sealing it (12). This indicates that these contexts do not predate the medieval period. Such sherds may, of course, be residual, and the deposits much later in date.

6.2 The unfrosted red bricks used in the construction of the pile (7) could be eighteenth or nineteenth century, but the reinforcing rods suggest the late nineteenth century. If the pile is earlier, they may have been inserted during rebuilding when the top of the bricks was exposed. The later brick structures are nineteenth- or early twentieth-century.

6.3 Owing to the limited nature of the evaluation it is impossible to determine the degree of archaeological survival in all parts of the site, but the results suggest that the survival of significant medieval, or earlier, archaeological remains is unlikely, and that the building development will have negligible archaeological impact.

7. BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Contest Melbourne Weeks 'Ground Investigation at Densham Road, West Ham E15 for Deltamar Construction Ltd' (Ref: S. 9891A), January, 1996
- English Heritage Archaeological Guidance Paper, No 3, 'Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork'
- London Borough of Newham Supplementary Planning Guideline No. 21, 'Archaeological Code of Practice'.
- London Borough of Newham Unitary Development Plan, 1993
- Truckle, Nick Specification for an archaeological field evaluation at the former Gala Club, West Ham Lane, E15 (5.7.96)

5. PERIODS REPRESENTED.

Palaeolithic	Roman
Mesolithic	Saxon (pre-AD 1066)
Neolithic	Medieval (AD 1066 -1485)
Bronze Age	Post-Medieval 4
Iron Age	Unknown 4

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

An evaluation revealed natural gravels cut by a feature of uncertain date, and sealed by two layers of soil. These were overlain by nineteenth-/twentieth-century buildings.

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

Type: gravel

Height above Ordnance Datum: 3.84m A.O.D.

8. LOCATION OF ARCHIVES.

a) Please indicate those categories still in your possession:

Notes 4 Plans 4 Photos 4 Negatives4

Slides 4 Correspondence4 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:

d) Location of any copies:

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:

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

SIGNED:

DATE:

NAME (Block capitals):

Please return completed form to The Greater London Sites and Monuments Record,
English Heritage London Region, 30 Warwick St., London W1R 5RD. Tel. 0171 973
3731/ 3779 (direct dial).

APPENDIX 2

Trial pit report (2-page extract)