

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION

AT THE

CUCKOOS NEST

PUBLIC HOUSE

HIGH STREET

SEVEN KINGS

ILFORD

IG-CN 95

TQ 4613 8731

Level III Report by:

C.D. Jarrett

and

A.Hodgins

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ABSTRACT

An archaeological evaluation in advance of the construction of a food store at the site of the former Cuckoos Nest public house uncovered 19th and 20th Century features probably associated with the public house.

SITE INTRODUCTION

Newham Museum Service was commissioned by John M Harris Design Partnership to undertake an archaeological evaluation at the site of the former public house, the Cuckoos Nest, located on the High Rd, Seven Kings. The area involved lies immediately south of the High Road, west of the former Seven Kings Bus Garage and North of the London to Southend railway line. The evaluation began on the 24th of April and finished on the 27th April 1995.

The site is within an Archaeological Priority Zone (APZ) as specified by the London Borough of Redbridge Unitary Development Plan. The planning application number for construction of the food store was NO. 1424/94. Mr Lawrence Pontin, English heritage planning Officer for North East London advised on and provided a brief for the archaeological work (Pontin L. 1995). Dr Frank Meddens, Newham Museum Service produced a project design (Meddens, F. 1995) to fulfill this brief and was approved by Lawrence Pontin.

The historical background to the site starts in the Romano-British period with the London to Colchester Roman Road (the present A 118) fronting the Cuckoos Nest. The course of the Roman road through Ilford, Seven Kings and Chadwell Heath is well preserved (Margary I. D. 1967, p 246). Cemeteries are often located along roads in the Romano-British period. Seven Kings is first named circa 1285 A.D. and Seven Kings Water (a stream) is mentioned in 1609 (Gunby, N. 1991, p 126). Cartographic evidence from Roches' 1777 map shows no buildings in the vicinity. The Ordnance Survey map of 1873 shows the site to be an agricultural field with a building called Seven Kings Cottage surrounded by orchards to its east (in the location of the Bus Garage). An O.S. map dated 1938, shows the building later to be known as the Cuckoo's Nest Public House but labelled as a hotel. Although the precise date that this building was erected could not be established it was not present on a map of 1897.

A search of the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record showed no occurrence of listings for the area within 200m of the site.

METHODOLOGY

Two trenches were excavated and were located within the area of the proposed new building. The dimensions of the trenches were 10.00m by 2.00m. The trenches were excavated by machine under archaeological supervision. The archaeological brief suggested that the trenches be excavated to old topsoil, however no such deposits were revealed and the machining stopped at the natural geology, Thames River Terrace gravel. The trenches were cleaned by hand and photographed, planned and recorded using single context record methods. The trenches were back-filled on the 27th April, 1995.

The archive of plans and context sheets are held by Newham Museum Service.

INTER-TRENCH PHASING

PHASE I

This phase contains groups 1.1 and 2.1.

This first phase of activity on the site concerns the natural geology of the area. Both Trenches 1 and 2 contained evidence of a large gravel deposit which is known as Undifferentiated River Terrace Gravel (Geological Survey of Great Britain, 1976,) and is Pleistocene in date.

PHASE II

Consists of Group 2.2

This phase is only represented in trench 2, and contains group 2.2. The group and phase represents a single cut (36) and fill (35) which contained no inclusions and produced no finds. The fill, being indistinct, is thought to have been created possibly by natural deposition. Cut (36) is also heavily truncated, both by cuts (31), (34) and the western trench edge. This made the interpretation of the function of the cut impossible. However, if the cut is archaeological it represents the earliest phase of activity on site.

PHASE III A

Consist of Group 2.3

This phase only present in trench 2 and is of a twentieth century date. Sub-phase III A consists of contexts (32), (33) and (34) which represent the fill, ceramic pipe and cut for an early twentieth century utility service drain and was probably contemporary with the building of the Public House.

PHASE III B

Consists of Groups

Sub-phase III B consists of contexts (15) and (17), the fill and cut for a pit of uncertain function and (16) which was originally thought to be an in situ bucket . However, this has since been interpreted as the remains of a bucket, probably disposed of as refuse and merely a constituent of fill (15). Pottery finds within this context date this phase to the twentieth century.

PHASE III C

Consists of Group 2.

Sub-phase III C consists of four cuts for possible post holes; (21), (23), (27) and (29). Also within this phase is context (31) a cut of uncertain size, shape and purpose. Although no finds can be allocated to this phase their stratigraphic position gave them a twentieth century date. Cuts (27) and (29) were found in the base of pit (25) and seem to have been truncated by it. The post holes therefore pre-date the pit and may have been related to its function, but this unfortunately remains unknown.

PHASE III D

Consists of Group 2.

Sub-phase III D consists of two cuts (19) and (25). Cut (19) is a rubbish pit containing a large amount of twentieth century domestic refuse while cut (25) contained no finds within its fill and therefore remains a pit of uncertain purpose.

PHASE IV

Consists of Groups 1.2, 2.7 and 2.8.

In Trench 1 the phase is represented by a pit of uncertain function but contained twentieth century material along with a residual sherd of Seventeenth Century pot. Phase IV, as seen in Trench 2 concerns two floor surfaces (42) and (41), related make-up layers (40) and (14), construction cut (43), and the fill and cut for a possible pit (38) and (39) all of which occurred in the late twentieth century.

Floor surfaces (41) and (42), although not level or constructed of the same material, do abutt and seem to share the same cut (43). Make-up layer (40) also appears in section as a levelling surface for both (41) and (42). Concrete surface (41), visible in the sections of the eastern end of Trench 2, may have been in use at the same time as stone paved surface (42). The differences between the two probably denotes alternative function and some sort of partition may have existed when in use. However, no evidence of partitioning remains.

Contexts (38) and (39) were removed by machine and only recorded in section, their N-S extent therefore remains unknown. No finds were retrieved from the fill so that shape, orientation, date and function remain uncertain. However, (39) does cut make-up layers (14) and (40) and is sealed by floor surface (42) and so may have some connection with the construction of (42).

PHASE V

Gonsists of Groups 1.3, 2.9 and 2.10.

In Trench 1 this late twentieth century phase was represented by four layers (1), (2), (3) and (4). Layer (4), although a humic soil, could have been interpreted as an agricultural soil dating to before the construction of the public house. However it was concluded that it had been redeposited as it contained modern pottery and other finds found at the base of the layer. Layers (2) and (3) are make-up layers for tarmac surface of carpark (1).

In Trench 2, this phase constitutes three dumped layers and a tarmac surface. Layer (12), the earliest of these layers is probably an additional make-up layer or has been dumped for the purpose of levelling off. Context (13) seems to have resulted from demolition after surface (42) went out of use. Finally (11) and (10) comprise a clinker and rubble make-up layer and tarmaced surface.

SUMMARY

The two archaeological assessment trenches were located within the area previously occupied by the Cuckoo's Nest Public House and on the proposed site of an Aldi Foodstore. Five phases of activity were recorded. The earliest phase concerned the geology which is Undifferentiated River Gravel and Pleistocene in date. (Geological Survey of Great Britain. Romford. 1976. Sheet 257. 1: 50 000) The next period of activity represented on site is a single cut in Trench 2, unfortunately heavy truncation and the absence of any material culture could not give a function or date to the feature. This cut may have occurred as an environmental action, however if it was archaeological it is the earliest feature and only feature that could pre-date the twentieth century. All other activities on site are modern and are probably exclusively associated with the Cuckoo's Nest Public House complex and any alterations made to it. The earliest of these twentieth century activities picked up by the evaluation was the laying of a ceramic service drain and a substantial pit of uncertain purpose. After the construction of the drain, four post holes and a larger cut with two post-holes in its base, may have been fencing or scaffolding in connection with the construction of the public house. A rubbish pit containing a large amount of twentieth century pottery occurred during this period. The next phase of activity is represented in Trench 1 by another pit of uncertain function containing twentieth century material and a single sherd of seventeenth century pottery. In Trench 2 this phase of activity is represented by two external floor surfaces and make-up layers associated with their construction. After the make-up layers were dumped and before the floor was laid a pit or channel was dug and recorded in section. Its function is uncertain but may have been concerned with the construction of the stone paved floor surface. Finally, the last phase of activity represented in both trenches is the levelling of surfaces, and deposition of hard-core for surface metalling around the exterior of the public house.

CONCLUSION

It was hoped that the evaluation trenches dug on the area of The Cuckoo's Nest Public House might have revealed evidence of Roman activity associated with the London to Colchester Roman road which locally is probably situated beneath the Seven Kings High Road, and runs E-W along the northern boundary of the site. As well as the absence of any Romano-British activity, there was no evidence of plough soils as post-medieval and Victorian cartographic evidence showed the land use of the site was agricultural. One sherd of 17th century pottery may relate to manuring practices of fields. In Trench 1 (Phase V) a humic deposit existed but this seems to have been redeposited as it seals a late twentieth century pit which contained the sherd of Seventeenth Century pottery.

Cartographic evidence shows the area to have been in agricultural or horticultural use until the early twentieth century.

Perhaps the reason for the absence of evidence for human activity dating to before the construction of the public house was that the area appears to have been graded down for the purpose of the previous buildings construction, which would have destroyed any archaeological evidence.

Due to the lack of archaeological activity recorded within these two trenches we recommend that no further archaeological investigations need be undertaken within the area proposed for development into the Aldi Foodstore.

, on a map dated 1938, the building later to be known as the Cuckoo's Nest Public House is present and labelled as a hotel. Although the precise date that this building was erected could not be established it was not present on a map of 1897. The area at this time was agricultural with cottages to the west and Seven Kings cottage, surrounded by orchards, to the east.

A single sherd of seventeenth century pottery was recovered from a pit in Trench 1 but this must also be interpreted as residual as the pit was datable to the twentieth century. Consequently no archaeological significance can be attached to this find.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

TRENCH 1

Trench 1 Group Matrix

Group 1.3

1
|
2
|
3
|
4
|
6
|
7
|
5
|
8

Group 1.2

Group 1.1

Group 1.1

|
5
|
8
|

Context

Height metres A.O.D
highest lowest
5 - Layer, light reddish brown sand 12.80 - 12.60
8 - Layer, red brown and yellow sand and gravel 12.79 - 12.37

Group 1.1 represented the natural geology on the site which is Undifferentiated River Gravel, which is Pleistocene in date. The graded different sizes in material showed evidence of water sorting by fluvial methods.

Photographs:
C/S: 1: 1 - 3
B/W: 1: 1 - 3

Group 1.2

|
6

|
7
|

Context

6 - Fill, brown silty sand	12.84 - 12.37
7 - Cut, sub-rectangular steep sided, rounded base 1.50m (NE-SW) x 1.24m (NW-SE) x 0.50m deep	12.87 - 12.37

Cut (7) was dated to the late 20th century by an aluminium can found in its fill (6) which also contained flowerpot and a sherd of 17th Century pottery. The function of the pit is uncertain.

Photographs:

C/S: 1: 1 - 6

B/W: 1: 1 - 6

Group 1.3

1
|
2
|
3
|
4
|

Context

1 - Layer, tarmac	13.25 - 13.05
2 - Layer, yellowish brown silty sand gravel	13.13 - 13.02
3 - Layer, red and yellow brick, grey concrete	13.14 - 12.88
4 - Layer, mid brown silty sand	12.95 - 12.74

This group represented the construction of a hard standing surface. Context (1) was a layer of tarmacadam which overlay (2) a sandy gravel and (3), a layer of broken brick and concrete. The latter two layers were make-up layers for the tarmacadam surface. Context (4) was a layer of humic soil which was probably redeposited before the construction of the hard standing surface. If layer (4) was indigenous to the site then it may have contained earlier soils present on the site. This Group dates to the late 20th century.

Photographs:

C/S: 1: 1 - 3

B/W: 1: 1 - 3

APPENDIX II - LEVEL III INDEX

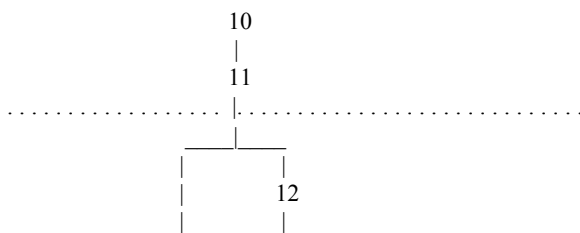
CONTEXT	PLAN	SECTION	GROUP	PHASE
1	-	1	1.3	

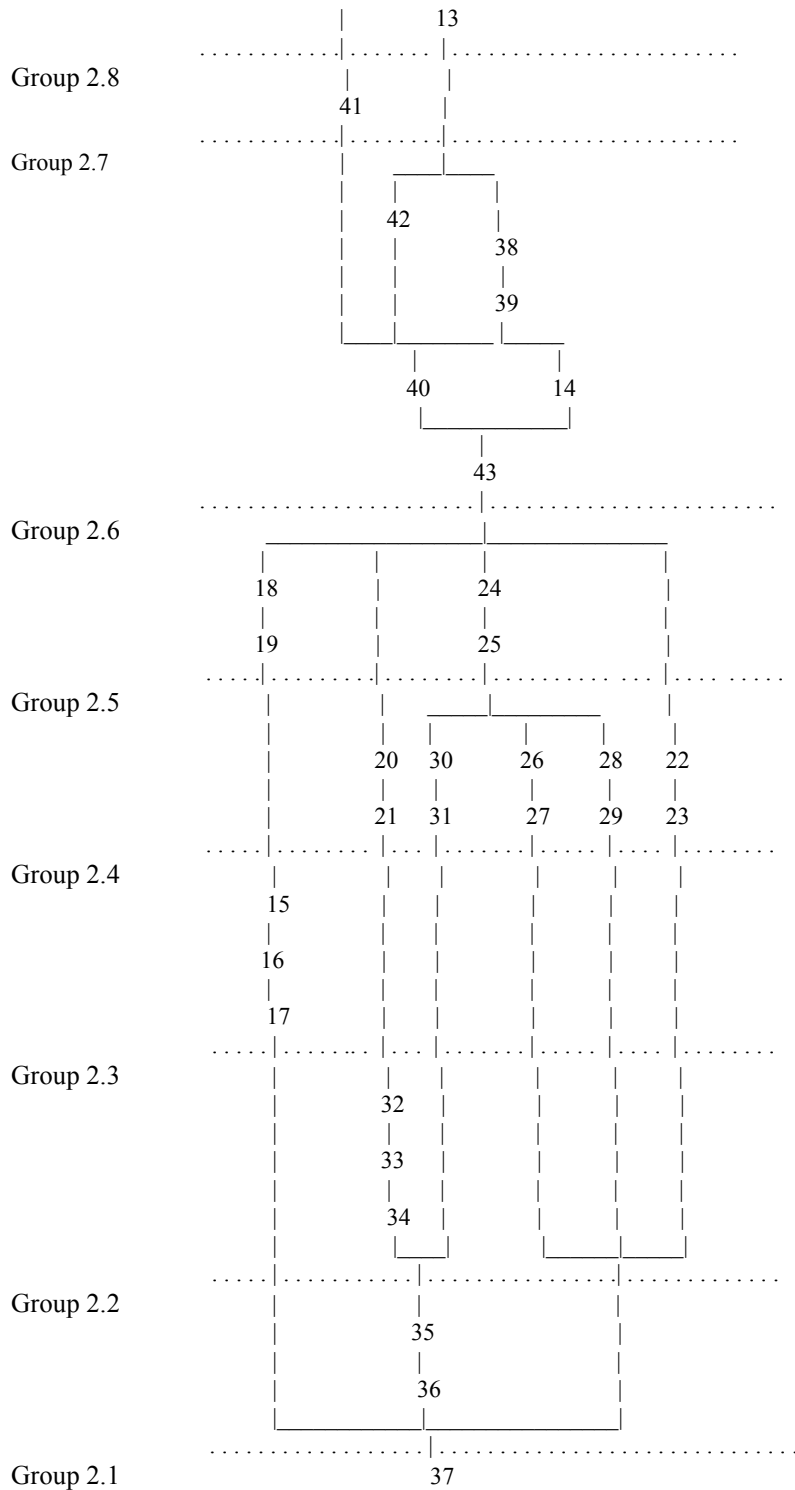
2	-	1	1.3
3	-	1	1.3
4	-	1	1.3
5	1	1	1.1
6	1	1	1.2
7	1	1	1.2
8	1	1	1.1
9	-	-	-
10	-	2	2.10
11	-	2	2.10
12	-	2	2.9
13	-	2	2.9
14	-	2	2.7
15	2	2	2.4
16	2	2	2.4
17	2	2	2.4
18	2	-	2.6
19	2	-	2.6
20	2	-	2.5
21	2	-	2.5
22	2	-	2.5
23	2	-	2.5
24	2	2	2.6
25	2	2	2.6
26	2	-	2.5
27	2	-	2.5
28	2	-	2.5
29	2	-	2.5
30	2	-	2.5
31	2	-	2.5
32	2	-	2.3
33	2	-	2.3
34	2	-	2.3
35	2	-	2.2
36	2	-	2.2
37	2	2	2.1
38	2	2	2.7
39	-	2	2.7
40	-	2	2.7
41	-	2	2.8
42	-	2	2.8
43	-	2	2.7

TRENCH 2

Group 2.10

Group 2.9





GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Group 2.1

37

37 - Layer, orange sand with gravelpatches

12.94 - 12.63

Layer (37) was the natural geology on the site, Thames River Terrace Gravel which is Pleistocene in date.

Photographs:
C/S: 1: 7 - 10
B/W: 1: 7 - 10

Group 2.2

|
35
|
36
|

Context

35 - Fill, orange brown silty sand	12.67 - 12.52
36 - Cut, steeply sloping sides, rounded base 0.72m (NE-SW) x 0.46m (NW-S) x 0.17m deep	12.67 - 12.52

Fill (35) of cut (36) contained no finds to date this feature. This deposit has been interpreted as possible natural, however if the cut and fill are anthropogenic in origin then it represents the earliest man made feature on site.

Photographs:
None taken

Group 2.3

|
32
|
33
|
34
|

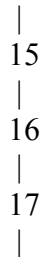
Context

32 - Fill, dark brown clayey sandy silt	12.75 - 12.47
33 - Fill, ceramic drain	12.62 - 12.53
34 - Cut, linear steep sides, base not excavated 6.43m (E-W) x 0.62m (N-S) x 0.28m deep	12.75 - 12.47

Group 2.3 represented a cut (34) for a utility service ceramic drain (33) and its related fill (32). The ceramic drain dates from the late 19th or 20th centuries.

Photographs:
 C/S: 1: 7 - 10
 B/W: 1: 7 - 10

Group 2.4



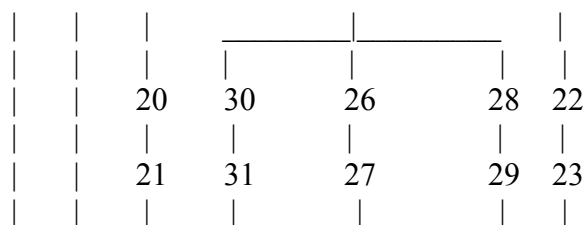
Context

15 - Fill, yellow brown sand silt, dark grey silt mottles	12.91 - 12.06
16 - Fill, wood and metal	- - -
17 - Cut, rectangular, abrupt edges flat base 0.75m (N-S) x 0.71m (E-W) x 0.86m depth	12.91 - 12.06

The function for cut (17) was uncertain. It was originally believed that the cut was excavated specifically for (16) which appeared to be an in situ wooden barrel, however (16) turned out to be a blue/green painted wooden and metal bucket which had been thrown into the pit and was therefore only a constituent of fill (15). The feature is 20th Century in date.

Photographs:
 C/S: 1: 11 - 18
 B/W: 1: 11 - 18

Group 2.5



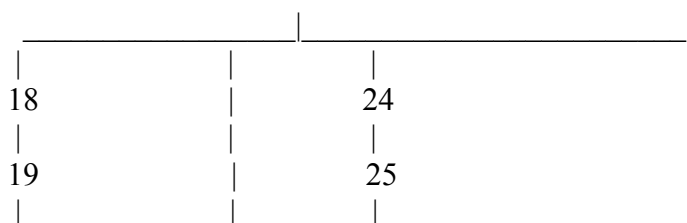
20 - Fill, dark brown grey sandy silt with frequent gravel	12.76 - 12.61
21 - Cut, sub-rounded with abrupt sides and	12.76 - 12.61

	rounded base	
	0.28m (E-W) x 0.23m (N-S) x 0.15m depth	
26 -	Fill, mid orange brown silty sand with occasional gravel and charcoal flecks	12.50 - 12.43
27 -	Cut, sub-circular with abrupt sides and rounded base	12.50 - 12.43
	0.18m (E-W) x 0.16m (N-S) x 0.13m depth	
28 -	Fill, pale brown silty sand with frequent gravel and occasional charcoal flecks	12.48 - 12.34
29 -	Cut, sub-circular with steep sides and rounded base	12.48 - 12.34
	0.18m (N-S) x 0.12m (E-W) x 0.14m depth	
22 -	Fill, dark grey brown sandy silt with moderate gravel	12.77 - 12.68
23 -	Cut, sub-square with sides abrupt in NE, SW and NW and too shallow for sides in SE and flatish base	12.77 - 12.68
	0.24m (NW-SE) and (NE-SW) x 0.05m depth	12.69 - 12.59
30 -	Fill, mid brown sandy silt with moderate gravel and occasional brick and coal fragments	
31 -	Cut, sub-rectangular with sides steeply sloping in North, more moderate in the East and the West truncated, rounded base	12.69 - 12.59
	0.30m (E-W) x 0.28m (N-S) x 0.15m depth	

This group represents four cuts (21), (23), (27), (29) and their related fills, interpreted as possible post holes. Additional to this group is context (31) a cut of uncertain size, shape and purpose due to truncation by the west section and pit (25). None of these fills contained any finds, which makes specific dating difficult but their position and stratigraphic relationships imply a 20th century date. Cuts (27) and (29) were located in the base of pit (25) and so pre-date it and the function of this pit remains uncertain.

Photographs:
None taken

Group 2.6



18 - Fill, mid brown sandy silt

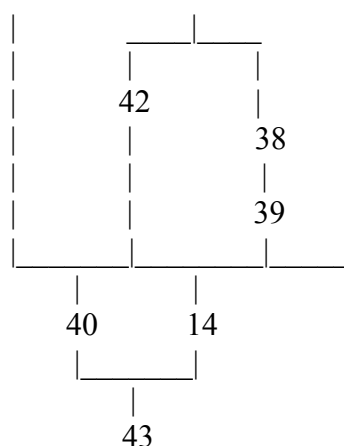
12.77 - 12.48

19 - Cut, sub-rectangular, steep sided, rounded base 0.83m (N-S) x 0.67m (E-W) x 0.25m deep	12.77 - 12.48
24 - Fill, mid brown silty sand with frequent gravel	12.61 - 12.48
25 - Cut, sub-rectangular with steep sides truncated by section in South, flat base 0.94m (E-W) x 0.62m (N-S) x 0.15m depth	12.61 - 12.48

From the large amount of domestic refuse, for example pottery, glass, metal and wood, contained within fill (18) of cut (19) it certain that the purpose of the cut was as a rubbish pit. Again with pit (25) the full extent of the pit was unseen due to it continuing outside the trench and the lack of finds made the dating and function of the pit uncertain.

Photographs:
None taken

Group 2.7



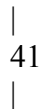
38 - Fill, mid grey brown silty sand	12.63 - 12.95
39 - Cut, rectangular 0.70m (E-W) X 0.20m depth	12.63 - 12.95
42 - Layer, stone paving slabs	13.06 - 12.97
14 - Layer, mid brown sandy silt with frequent yellow sandy mortar mottles and gravel	13.02 - 12.88
40 - Layer, dark brown silty sand	12.98 - 12.95
43 - Cut, uncertain shape and size 5.00m (E-W) x 0.27m depth	13.11 - 12.96

Cut (39) and its fill (38) were removed by machine and only recorded in section and so it was not possible to ascertain its full north-south dimensions. No finds were retrieved from fill (38). The shape, orientation, date and function of this possible pit therefore remain uncertain although it may be possible that since it cuts make-up

layers (14) and (40) that it has some connection with the construction of floor surface (42). Context (42) denotes an external stone paved floor surface, while (40) and (14) refer to make-up layers connected with this floor surface and (43) denotes the cut for surfaces (42) and (41).

Photographs:
None taken

Group 2.8



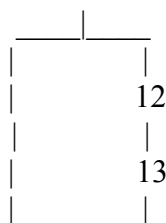
41 - Layer, solid concrete

3.11 - 12.96

Construction cut (43) is filled by concrete (41) which may have been an adjacent floor surface to (42) but constructed of a different material which may denote differing usage or function. The two surfaces may have been divided by a wall which has subsequently been demolished.

Photographs:
None taken

Group 2.9



12 - Layer, dark grey sandy silt with frequent gravel and building material

13.05 - 12.84

13 - Layer, mid brown silty sand with moderate gravel and building material

13.09 - 12.94

Layer (12) is probably an additional make-up layer or has been dumped for the purpose of levelling off. This group represents two post-demolition deposits which would have resulted after floor surface (42) went out of use.

Photographs:
None taken

Group 2.10

10 - Layer, indurated black tarmac	13.27 - 13.12
11 - Layer, mixed rubble and clinker	13.22 - 13.02

This group represents a tarmac surface (10) and its associated make-up layer (11).

Photographs:
None taken

THE FINDS

	Date
Context 6	
1 sherd of Post-Medieval Redware (PMR) (see Figure)	1600 - 1800
Context 15	
1 fragment of tile	19thC/20thC
Context 18	
6 sherds of white earthenware, with green glaze	19thC/20thC
3 sherds of English Stoneware (ENGs)	19thC/20thC

3 sherds of Post-Medieval Redware, Unglazed (PMRU) flowerpot	19thC/20thC
1 fragment of green glass tube	
1 Cu alloy object	19thC/20thC
1 ungulate rib	
1 cockle shell	

APPENDIX

GLSMR/RCHME NMR ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT FORM

1. TYPE OF RECORDING.

Evaluation ✓ Excavation — Watching brief

Other (please specify)

2. LOCATION.

Borough:

Site address:

Site name:

Site code:

Nat. Grid Refs: **Centre of site:**

Limits of site: a) b)

 c) d)

3. ORGANISATION.

Name of archaeological unit/ ~~company/ society~~: Newham Museum Service

Address: 31 Stock Street, Plaistow, London E13 OBX

Site ~~director~~/ supervisor: Chris Jarrett

Project manager: Frank Meddens

Funded by: Aldi GmbH & Co KG

4. DURATION. 4 days

Date fieldwork started: 24/6/95

Date finished: 26/4/95

Field work previously notified?

~~YES/ NO~~

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

Victorian/20thC ✓

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

Victorian/ 20th Century

The most recent activity on the site was the tarmac surfacing for a carpark of the public house. This sealed a number of Victorian or 20th century features which included service drains, rubbish pits and post-holes.

Unknown

Two features of an unknown date were truncated by Victorian/20th century features.

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

Type:

Height above Ordnance Datum:

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. :

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:

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).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Margary I.D. 1967, *Roman Roads in Britain*, John Baker, London, p.246.