

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF AT
AVENUE ESTATE,
LEYTON,
LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST**

SITE CODE: LE-AE 96

GRID REF.: TQ 3905 8570

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1 ABSTRACT

An archaeological watching brief took place on the site of Avenue Estate, Leyton, between the 6th and the 9th of December, 1996, by Newham Museum Service. The excavation of seventeen geotechnical test pits was watched and recorded, revealing Victorian demolition layers overlying the natural clay and gravel.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 An archaeological watching brief was undertaken on the the excavation of geotechnical test pits at Avenue Estate, Leyton, by Newham Museum Service between the 6th and 9th of December, 1996 (Figure 1). This was in advance of the demolition of the existing tower blocks to make way for a new housing development.

2.2 The work was commissioned by Baily Garner Ltd. (acting as East Thames Housing Group) to fulfil a planning condition imposed upon Planning Application No. 96/0735 by the London Borough of Waltham Forest. This planning condition was imposed on the advice of the English Heritage Planning Officer for north-east London.

2.3 The principal aim of the watching brief was to assess the survival of archaeological deposits on the site, which lies within an archaeological priority zone, as defined in the London Borough of Waltham Forest Unitary Development Plan.

2.4 The watching brief was undertaken in conjunction with a team from AERC (Applied Environmental Research Centre Ltd.), who were compiling a contamination report from soil samples from the test pits and also from five boreholes and nine probeholes in the vicinity of the estate.

2.5 Newham Museum Service would like to thank Bailey Garner Ltd. for funding the excavation, with especial thanks to Angela Mallion. Thanks are also due to Peter Rawlings and Adrain Koe from AERC for all their assistance and information. The author would like to thank Mark Turner for negotiating the site and Graham Reed for the illustrations.

3 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 The site lies within an Archaeological Priority area, as defined by the London Borough of Waltham Forest Unitary Development Plan (L.B.W.F. 1992) and is on the Taplow Gravel terrace of the River Thames (British Geological Survey, 1993). The terrace extends from Stratford to Walthamstow, in an alignment between Epping Forest and the River Lea Valley, effectively producing an area rich in both marsh and woodland resources (Hanson, 1996). The area has frequently produced archaeological evidence, both of activity from the prehistoric period as well as occupation from the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods.

3.2 Leytonstone High Road is thought to be Roman in origin (Weinreb and Hibbert, 1983). A contemporary cemetery was discovered to the west of Avenue Estate, substantiating the likelihood of a settlement in the area.

3.3 The Leytonstone area was principally a rural one in the medieval period and was represented largely by three manors, Ruckholts, Chobham and Cann Hall. Development continued into the post-medieval period, particularly with regard to the High Road, which became a main trade route, encouraging the urban growth of the borough.

3.4 Previous excavations in the area, such as investigations at Thorne Close (Thrale and Moore, 1995) and Cathall Road (Truckle, 1996) in 1993, revealed archaeological evidence relating to occupation dating from the 10th to the 19th centuries. This included Saxon remains, which are of particular significance due their relative paucity in the area.

4 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

4.1 The methodology was based on the archaeological brief and conformed to the standards set out in Guidance Paper No.3 (Standard Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork), No.5 (Archaeological Assessment and Evaluation Reports) and all relevant Health and Safety Regulations.

4.2 A watching brief was deemed necessary as no previous excavations had taken place on the site, which lies within an archaeological priority zone.

4.3 A total of twenty two test pits were designated to be excavated around the housing estate, as part of a geotechnical investigation carried out by AERC on behalf of Bailey Garner Ltd. (acting as East Thames Housing Group). Only seventeen (Figure 2), however, proved accessible to the mechanical excavator (JCB). A further six were abandoned during excavation due to impediments such as concrete and tarmac surfaces. The remaining test pits were recorded by the author for archaeological and geological deposits, in conjunction with a team from AERC, which took soil samples for contamination analysis.

4.5 The test pits were excavated by JCB under archaeological supervision until a metre in depth was reached. The sections were then cleaned by hand, photographed, and any features examined for datable material and to determine their nature. This information was recorded on to pro-forma Museum sheets, using the single context recording system. Each test pit was then excavated to a total of three metres in depth in accordance with the contamination investigation.

4.6 The site was negotiated by Mark Turner on behalf of Newham Museum Service and the work on site undertaken by the author.

5 DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

5.1 The watching brief revealed deposits dating to the post-medieval period. They consisted primarily of Victorian demolition and horticultural deposits (Figure 3), which overlay the natural clay (see context 7) and gravel (context 5). It is known that the area previously accommodated rows of tenement housing, which was built in the 19th century. Although these structures were not recorded in real terms, apart from the demolition material, the remains of a brick built Victorian sump (context 10) was recorded in Test Pit 13 (Figure 3) and a fragment of clay pipe bulb found in Test Pit 10.

5.2 Seventeen test pits, out of the proposed twenty two, were excavated. The remaining six were abandoned due to lack of access for the JCB. Fifty contexts were identified and recorded.

5.3 The naturally deposited sandy gravel was recorded at an approximate optimum depth of 9.69 A.O.D. in Test Pit 17 and the natural clay at 9.99 A.O.D. in Test Pit 20.

6 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The extent of the truncation resulting from the 19th century construction was highlighted by the shallow stratigraphy overlying the natural clay and gravel. It is likely that earlier deposits would have been largely truncated in the Victorian period. Underlying the demolition material and horticultural layers, however, were deposits which appeared to be redeposited natural. These may have obscured any earlier features cut into the gravel, especially with regard to the limitations imposed by the size and spacing of the test pits.

6.2 Due to the site's position on the gravel terrace and its proximity to previous excavations which recorded archaeological occupation and activity from the prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods, it is the recommendation of this report that further archaeological assessment be applied, as contained in the 'Specification for an Archaeological Evaluation at the Development at Avenue Estate, Leyton' (Turner, 1996).

7 APPENDED INFORMATION

7.1 APPENDIX I

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- British Geological Survey 1993, North London, England and Wales, Sheet 256. Solid and Drift, Geology. 1:50 000
- English Heritage 1991, Management of Archaeological Projects II. London.
- English Heritage (London Division) 1992, Archaeological Guidance Papers 2, 3, 5 and 6. London.
- Hanson, I. 1996, Avenue Estate, Leyton, An Archaeological Desktop Study, Unpublished report, Newham Museum Service
- LBWF 1992, London Borough of Waltham Forest Unitary Development Plan
- Thrale, P. and Moore, P 1995, Report on the Archaeological Excavations at Thorne Close, Avenue Estate, Leyton, London E4. Unpublished archive report, Newham Museum Service
- Truckle, N. 1996, Watching Brief at the Cathall Road Shortfall Site, Langthorne Hospital, Leytonstone, E11. Unpublished archive report, Newham Museum Service
- Turner, M. 1996, Specification for An Archaeological Evaluation at the Proposed Development at Avenue Estate, Leyton
- Weinreb, B. and Hibbert, C. (Ed's) 1983, The London Encyclopaedia. London.

The site records and archive are currently held at the Archaeology and Local History Centre, 31, Stock Street, Plaistow, London, E13 OBX.

4. DURATION

Date fieldwork started: 6/12/96

Date finished: 9/12/96

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 4

Iron Age

Unknown

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

POST-MEDIEVAL

An archaeological watching brief took place on the site of Avenue Estate, Leyton, between the 6th and the 9th of December, 1996, by Newham Museum Service. Seventeen trenches were excavated, revealing Victorian demolition layers overlying the natural clay and gravel.

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

Type: Natural clay and gravel

Approximate Height above Ordnance Datum:

Clay: 9.99 A.O.D

Gravel: 9.69 A.O.D.

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: 1997

d) Location of any copies: AS ABOVE

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: 1997

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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| English Heritage | 1991, Management of Archaeological Projects II. London. |
| English Heritage (London Division) | 1992, Archaeological Guidance Papers 2, 3, 5 and 6. London. |
| Hanson, I. | 1996, Avenue Estate, Leyton, An Archaeological Desktop Study, Unpublished report, Newham Museum Service |

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- Truckle, N. 1996, Watching Brief at the Cathall Road Shortfall Site, Langthorne Hospital, Leytonstone, E11. Unpublished archive report, Newham Museum Service
- Turner, M. 1996, Specification for An Archaeological Evaluation at the Proposed Development at Avenue Estate, Leyton
- Weinreb, B and Hibbert, C (Ed's) 1983, The London Encyclopaedia. London.

SIGNED:

DATE: 15th January 1997

NAME (Block capitals): ALISON A. TELFER

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).