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## ABSTRACT

The evaluation revealed evidence of early eighteenth century occupation of the site, in particular the presence of a substantial brick building and several smaller structures. Pre eighteenth century activity consisted of several possible ground surfaces.

## SITE INTRODUCTION AND METHOD

The Passmore Edwards Museum was commissioned to provide an archaeological evaluation of the site of the former Electric Wire Factory, Church Road, Leyton, in advance of its redevelopment by the East London Housing Association. The evaluation was required by the London Borough of Waltham Forest because the site lies within the Archaeological Priority Zone for the River Lea Valley (Unitary Development Plan), and was funded by the East London Housing Association.

The evaluation was based on a project design (Moore 1993) drawn up from the archaeological brief by Jim Hunter, Archaeological Planning Officer for North East London. The site was negotiated and directed by Peter Moore and supervised by the author.

The evaluation was carried out by a field team from the Passmore Edwards Museum between the 11th of November and the 24th of November 1993. Two evaluation trenches, one 12.5m x 4.5m and one 17.5m x 4.5m, were machine excavated down to the archaeological deposits, which were then hand excavated. The evaluation trenches were placed with reference to the assumed position of Leyton House, a large house built in the eighteenth century known from documentary evidence to have occupied the site until around 1910 (fig.1).

Trench 1 produced archaeological evidence of the presence of Leyton House and earlier structures. Trench 2 only produced evidence of twentieth century activity.

The site was contaminated with metal residues from the demolished London Electric Wire Works and although the contamination was comparatively light in the areas of the trenches, health and safety considerations meant that protective clothing had to be worn by the members of the evaluation team.

The earliest reference in the documentary sources to any activity on the site is to Godselves House, occupied about 1547 by Sir John Godsalf (VCHE vol. 6 pp178 ). Although the exact position of this house is uncertain it was probably a little further south on Church Road, although it seems to have owned a large stretch of land on Church Road, including the land where the evaluation took place.

The land had been subdivided into at least two properties by the beginning of the eighteenth century, as Leyton House was built around 1706 by David Gansell on the site of the redevelopment (VCHE vol.6 pp179). It is shown on the Rocque map of the area in 1745 as having elaborate grounds laid out in a rectangular pattern of formal gardens. The gardens extended west of Dagenham Brook and an attempt was made to take peat samples from a pond in this part of the garden in 1992. Unfortunately the massive build up of World War II rubble, approximately 4 metres of material, prevented original site levels being reached (Seymour Road, Leyton, LE-SR92).

The house itself was a three story red brick building with a

front of seven bays and a scrolled pediment to the central doorway. The front faced a walled forecourt with entrance gates on the east and two flanking stable blocks (VCHE vol.6 pp179).

David Gansell conveyed the house to John Phillips Esq. who bequeathed it to Mr. John Jackson in 1756. (Kennedy pp39). The Leyton Parish records of 1783 record Leyton House as being occupied by John Story (Kennedy pp271). From the early nineteenth century until 1840 Mr Isaac Solly lived in the house, and he was followed by Mr. Alderman Sidney and his wife and daughter, who occupied the house until 1854. Alderman Sidney was a Member of Parliament in 1847 and Lord Mayor of London in 1853. When he left Leyton House it was taken by a widow called Mrs. Norris and her children (Kennedy pp331 - 332). Finally in about 1874 it became St. Agnes Roman Catholic Poor School and in 1882 it was a combined orphanage and mixed school, and it was known as St. Agnes' Orphanage (VCHE vol.6 pp236).

The building was finally demolished in about 1910 and the site was occupied by the London Electric Wire Works (VCHE vol.6 pp179) which was demolished prior to the current development of the site.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The site consists of eight phases of activity which can be summarised as follows.

Phase 1 represents the natural deposits of sandy gravels. This phase was followed by phase 2, the earliest activity on the site and dated to pre eighteenth century. This phase largely consists of several buried soil horizons and some cuts, which have no obvious function, indicating that prior to the eighteenth century activity on the site was probably agricultural in nature.

Phase 3 consists of the earliest structure on the site, a brick building and drain dated to the early eighteenth century. This building may have been an outbuilding of some sort, or a hitherto unknown phase of Leyton House. One of the walls of this building was partially rebuilt in phase 4. The whole structure was demolished and levelled in phase 5, with the walls being completely removed to a low level to make way for the construction of Leyton House in phase 6. Leyton House was built in the eighteenth century and phase 6 represents the most substantial brick building found on the site. A small rebuild of one of the walls from phase 6 took place in phase 7.

The final phase of activity on the site occurs in phase 8 and consists of the demolition of Leyton House and the levelling of the site. From documentary evidence we know this occurred around 1910 (VCHE vol.6 pp179).

The main features of the site are two phases of Leyton House. The similar alignments of the two building phases (see fig.2) indicate that both had a similar function. The fact that almost no domestic rubbish was associated with either phase and the location of the site over the northern wing of Leyton House indicate that these buildings were outbuildings, possibly stables. As there is no mention of a rebuilding of the main structure of Leyton House during the eighteenth century it must be assumed that only the northern wing, or part of it, was rebuilt less than 100 years after its original construction. No evidence was found of any significant activity on the site prior to the eighteenth century.

The evaluation took place within the building lines of the proposed development giving an adequate sample of the archaeological record, and no substantial occupation deposits were found associated with the buildings. It is therefore recommended that there is no requirement for further archaeological involvement on the site.

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## GLOSSARY

- A.O.D        Above Ordnance Datum
- B/W         Black and White Photograph
- C/S         Colour Slide

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