Evaluation at The Temple, Wanstead Park.

London Borough of Redbridge.

WT - TP 92.

LDPEM/ACWT/177.

Level III Report.

M. Beasley.

Passmore Edwards Museum 1992.

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Introduction.

An archaeological evaluation was conducted by members of the Passmore Edwards Museum on an enclosed area adjoining the building known as the Temple in Wanstead Park, on the 23rd. and 24th. of July 1992. The area of the site investigated is known to have contained a pond, and remembered as such until shortly after the 1939-1945 war. Although the presence of a pond is known, the exact location and size of it is not. A large depression exists in the middle of the enclosed area, and a resistivity survey was planned to determine the extent of the pond, a trial trench to check the results of survey and to determine the nature of any surviving pond feature and possible lining.

The evaluation was funded by the Corporation of London, directed by Frank Meddens for the Passmore Edwards Museum, and supervised by the author.

Abstract.

The Resistivity survey showed extensive modern disturbance of the site in the form of service trenches, and indicated that the middle of the pond was back-filled with rubble. The trial trench revealed the edge of the pond cut into the natural gravel, with no indication of any form of lining. This appears to have been back-filled during the 19th. century, and again in the 20th. century.

Resistivity Survey.

The resistivity survey was conducted by the field team from the Passmore Edwards Museum, using the Museums Geoscan RM15 resistivity equipment with 0.5m. mobile probe separation, and processed using Geoplot software.

The survey totalled four 20m. x 20m. squares using a sample and traverse interval of 1m., and a Zig-Zag traverse. The machine was set for a gain of x 10, and a current of 1mA.

The final square was surveyed again as a control, using a gain of x 1.

After processing the survey revealed a large roughly circular area of low resistance, thought to indicate the edges of the pond. In the centre of the area of low resistance, an area of higher resistance is thought to indicate the infilling of of the pond, probably with rubble: building material having a higher electrical resistance than the surrounding deposits. An area of high resistance to the east of the survey area is though to be the natural gravel underlying the site. (Fig. 1)

To the east, and on a north-south alignment, a strong band of low resistance readings is thought to be a 20th. century pipe cut leading to the keepers lodge. This was also visible on the ground.

Excavation Summary.

A 3m. x 1m. excavation trench was excavated by hand midway along the eastern edge of the depression to test the results of the resistivity survey, and to evaluate the construction of the pond. It had been thought that the pond was used for watering horses from the stable block that used to exist on the site, and consequently would have had some manner of surfacing or clay lining.

After removing the topsoil (layer (1), a layer of grey brown sandy silt, layer (2) was revealed. This has been interpreted as a sub-soil layer of 20th. century date.

Beneath this a layer of greyish orange sandy silt with gravel was revealed, layer (3). This contained quantities of 19th. century pottery, and is thought to be Victorian infilling of the pond. This overlay a layer of grey black sandy gravel context (4). This in turn overlay context (5), a layer of orange brown sandy silt.

These contexts filed a steeply sloping cut (6), that is thought to represent the original edge of the pond. This was cut through natural gravel, layer (7). The excavation was halted at the gravel.

In addition to this trench, a small area at the bottom of the depression was stripped of topsoil to test the hypothesis that the centre of the pond was filled with rubble, as suggested by the resistivity survey. This proved to be the case, but given the exigencies of time was taken no further than this, and was not further recorded.

Matrix.

Group Discussion.

Group a.

1	layer;dark grey sandy silt	14.160m.-14.090m.
2	layer;grey brown sandy silt	14.090m.-13.830m.

1 layer
I
2 layer

Topsoil and sub-soil. 20th. century.

Plan: -- Section: 1
C/S: 2-9
B/W: --
Phase: 3

Group b.

3	layer;grey orange silt with sandy gravel	13.830m.-13.120m.

3 layer

Probable in-fill layer. 19th. century.

Plan: -- Section: 1
C/S: 2-9
B/W: --
Phase: 2

Group c.

4	fill;grey black sandy gravel	13.120m.-12.720m.
5	fill;orange brown sandy silt	12.720m.-12.510m.
6	cut;sub-circular, steep sides,	13.590m.-12.510m.
7	layer;brown orange sandy gravel	13.62m.----------

4 fill
I
5 fill
I
6 cut
I
7 layer

Pond cut with two possible fills, cutting natural gravel. Undated.

Plan: --
C/S: 2-9
B/W: --
Phase: 1

Section: 1

Phasing Discussion.

Phase 1; consists of Group c.

This phase is the earliest of the site, and comprises the cut for the pond and two possible associated fills, cutting natural gravel. The phase is undated.

Phase 2; consists of Group b.

Phase two consists of a layer of dumped material, overlying the deposits of Phase 1. The phase is thought to date to the 19th. century.

Phase 3; consists of Group a.

This is the final phase of the site, and consists of topsoil and sub-soil. It overlies the deposits of Phase 2, and dates to the 20th. century.

Interpretation and Conclusions.

In Phase 1 the cut edge of the pond was cut into the natural gravel. The two deposits provisionally interpreted as filling this cut, a sandy silt and a dark sandy gravel, may be original pond deposits. It is a possibility that the gravel deposit was formed by the dumping of the gravel in Phase 2 onto a wet surface.

The nature of the deposits in Phase 2 indicates a deliberate dumping of material into the pond, the material being of a consistency to suggest this. The finds recovered from the deposit suggest a rapid back-filling of the pond some time during the 19th. century, rather than domestic back-filling over a prolonged period, the only domestic pottery being small abraded sherds.

These dump deposits are covered by the 20th. century topsoil and sub-soil. It is interesting to note that the building materials recovered from the topsoil layer broadly date to between the 16th. and 19th. centuries. The date ranges, while being of a fairly wide spread, are compatible with the dating of the last Wanstead House. This was built between 1715 and 1722, and demolished in 1823, when the building materials themselves were auctioned off. Their presence in the topsoil, particularly in close association with a 20th. century pipe trench, may indicate demolition spreads of 18th. or 19th. century date.

Comparison of results of the excavation with the resistivity survey indicates that the pond is larger than the remaining depression on the site. The apparent back-filling of the site during the 19th. century appears to have filled in most of the area. As a result of either settling of the fill material or an insufficient quantity of this material being deposited, a depression was left in the middle of the pond; a depression that obviously collected ground water. This was back-filled again in the 20th. century with building rubble, to eliminate what is remembered clearly as a small pond. This rubble did not appear in the excavation trench, but was apparent in the small topsoil-stripped area to the west.

There is no indication in the excavations of a lining to the pond, appearing as it does to be cut into the natural gravel with no evidence for either clay puddling or flagging to retain the water. There are several possible explanations for this. Firstly, the area excavated was small in comparison with the total area of the site, and it is possible that the trial trench could have missed any such lining. Secondly it is possible that a flagged lining was removed at some point, probably before the 19th. century back-filling, although no evidence was revealed to support this. Again it is possible that the limited area of excavation missed any such evidence. Thirdly it is possible that the pond was unlined and relied on ground water to fill it, or

that the well that still exists by the Temple building was used to feed the pond, with no attention paid to subsequent leakage. In support of the ground water theory is the fact that no feeder pipes or drains from the pond are in evidence. Given the clarity of the resistivity results it is likely that these would have been picked up had they existed.

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Cas, Graham Reed for the illustrations, Frank Meddens, and the residents of the Keepers Lodge for liquid support.

Level II Index.

context	plan	section	C/S	B/W
1	--	1	1.2-9	--
2	--	1	1.2-9	--
3	--	1	1.2-9	--
4	--	1	1.2-9	--
5	--	1	1.2-9	--
6	--	1	1.2-9	--

7	--	1	1.2-9	--

Finds List.

context (1).

1	x	peg tile fragment	post 1850
1	x	peg tile fragment	1500-1900
3	x	peg tile fragments	uncertain
17	x	pan tile fragments	1630-1800
1	x	brick fragment 3034	c.1700-1800
1	x	brick fragment 3032	mid C18th.-present
1	x	London Stock brick 3035	late C17th.- c.1800
1	x	brick fragment 3032	post 1700
1	x	brick fragment 3039	c.1480-1800

context (3)

1	x	peg tile fragment	1500-1900
1	x	uncertain tile fragment	uncertain

1	x	Post-medieval red ware	C19th.
1	x	English stoneware	C19th.
1	x	flowerpot base	C19th.
9	x	London stoneware; inscribed "H J(?) Num:105"	C19th.
2	x	cream ware	1760-1900
1	x	green bottle glass	C19th.
2	x	Fe objects	C19th.

Finds Report.

Context (1).

The finds retained from this context comprise demolition rubble from the 16th. to the 19th. centuries. The finds retained, however, do not bear any relation to the dating of the context. The building materials came from 20th. century topsoil, and were mixed in with the usual detritus of metal, glass, and plastic. These finds were not kept.

Context 3.

These finds are stratified, and come from the back-fill deposits of Phase 2. The pottery finds are common domestic types and all date to the 19th. century. The quantities recovered means, however, that domestic infilling of the pond is unlikely; the condition and size of the fragments indicating that they were re-deposited with the back-fill. The exception to this appears to the London Stoneware bottle, a large part of which was recovered, which appears to have been deposited newly with the deposit.