

# JON CHANDLER: THE DAY TO DAY ASSESSMENT OF OUR CITIES

July 24, 2015 MOLA Archaeological Prospection, Buildings, Commercial Archaeology, Day of Archaeology, Digital Archaeology, Explore Posts, Industrial, Medieval, Prehistory, Roman, Romano-British, Survey Commercial archaeology, desk-based assessments, Geographical Information Services, GIS, historic environment, maps, Mola, Museum of London Archaeology, planning, survey

My name is [Jon Chandler](#). I am Lead Consultant Archaeologist with the [Heritage Consultancy team](#). I have various responsibilities, including quality assurance technical reviews of our archaeological desk-based assessments. Developers use these to support planning applications – anything from a residential development to major infrastructure projects. Recently this included the [Thames Tideway Tunnel](#), [Thames Water](#)'s new sewer for London. For over two years I managed a team of up to 15 consultants and specialists in archaeology and buildings assessment, foreshore archaeology and geoarchaeology.

A broad range of archaeological, documentary and cartographic sources and geological information is consulted for our reports. We try to establish the archaeological potential of the site, taking into account factors compromising survival (e.g. existing basements, foundations, services and landscaping). The likely significance of any archaeological remains is assessed, along with the impact of the proposed development. We provide recommendations which the local authority planners will use to decide what must be done as part of granting planning consent.

This morning I am looking at a development site on the Isle of Dogs. This area is now heavily built over but in the prehistoric, Roman and medieval periods was all open floodplain marsh prone to flooding. Prior to rising water levels, the underlying topography would have comprised gravel islands suitable for prehistoric settlement, and deeper channels, crossed by timber trackways in the Bronze Age. Such remains are buried beneath a sequence of deep alluvium floodplain above which is a thick deposit of 'made ground' (artificial ground) dumped here from the excavation of the adjacent docks in the mid-19th century."

We need to assess what depth the archaeology is likely to be at (possibly 3–4 metres down), and how the construction of the new building will affect any remains that might be present. We also need to know whether this is evidence of prehistoric activity or 19th century dockyard remains.

This afternoon I will start to review an early draft of our Portsmouth Harbour Hinterland Project, which is funded by [Historic England](#). The Royal Navy established Portsea Island as its main harbour and base in the 16<sup>th</sup>-century. As a consequence, the surrounding rural hinterland was developed with an extensive supporting infrastructure, protected by a significant group of sea and land defences. Much of this survives today, but their heritage significance in relation to the docks is not always fully recognised. The aim of the project is to enhance understanding and heighten awareness of how the Portsmouth hinterland has developed as a result of the naval base. This helps to assist local decision making, planning, development and management of the historic environment.

As part of the project a survey toolkit and user-friendly guided will be created. This will help the local community and volunteers identify the presence of buildings, landscape and other heritage assets associated with the development of the hinterland. It enables the local community to further understand and add detail to the narrative.

Yesterday, the [MOLA](#) project team met with Historic England to discuss progress on the two-year London Urban Archaeological Database project. We are digitising, in a Geographical Information System (GIS), the location and extent of all past archaeological investigations in the historic centre of London. Thousands of investigations have been carried out (see the map). The information will enhance the data held by the Greater London Historic Environment Record.