

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF MEDIEVAL HOMERTON: EXCAVATIONS AT LINK STREET, HACKNEY

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## SUMMARY

Excavation took place at a site in Link Street, Hackney in 1997. The earliest features on the site included plough soils and furrows dated to between the late 11th and late 13th/early 14th centuries and evidence for construction in the form of a fragmentary chalk foundation, Structure 1, dated to the same period. The medieval chalk foundation constitutes the earliest recorded evidence for the built environment in Homerton, documented from the third quarter of the 14th century. Cultivation ceased before 1500 and Building 1 was constructed, probably during the mid 15th century when the Homerton ward was established as a sub-division of the parish of St John at Hackney. Building 1 was timber framed and included two phases of internal ovens. To the south of Building 1 was a series of drains, one of which incorporated a timber sluice. By 1540 the site was within the estate of Ralph Sadleir, resident at the recently built Sutton House. By the late 16th century the drains were replaced by a brick lined reservoir, Structure 2. The reservoir was built to respect the alignments of Building 1, which remained standing. Building 1 was demolished and the reservoir backfilled by 1746. At this date an external brickearth and metallated surface extended across the plot of Building 1. The surface was to the west of a building situated beyond the eastern limit of the site depicted on a plan dated 1792. This later building was pulled down to make way for Link Street, laid out by 1800.

## INTRODUCTION

The Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) undertook an archaeological excavation

of the site at 12–14 Homerton High Street and 2–16 Link Street, London E9 (Fig 1) in the London Borough of Hackney (TQ 3534 8504). The site (LIK95) was bounded to the north by Homerton High Street and to the east by Link Street (Fig 2). The excavation was carried out between 7 April and 8 May 1997.

The work was commissioned by the New Islington and Hackney Housing Association subsequent to a field evaluation conducted by MoLAS between 20 February and 2 March 1995. During the evaluation two test trenches were excavated to assess the nature, date, extent and

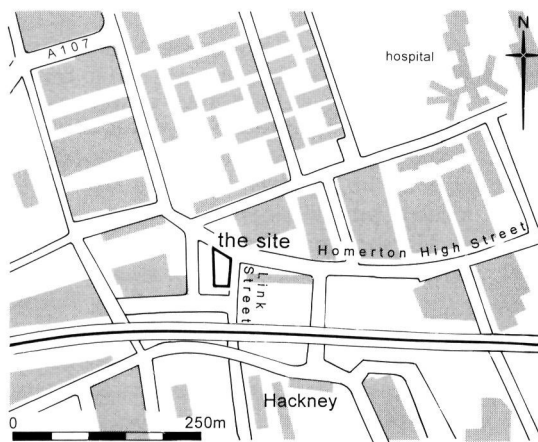


Fig 1. Site location

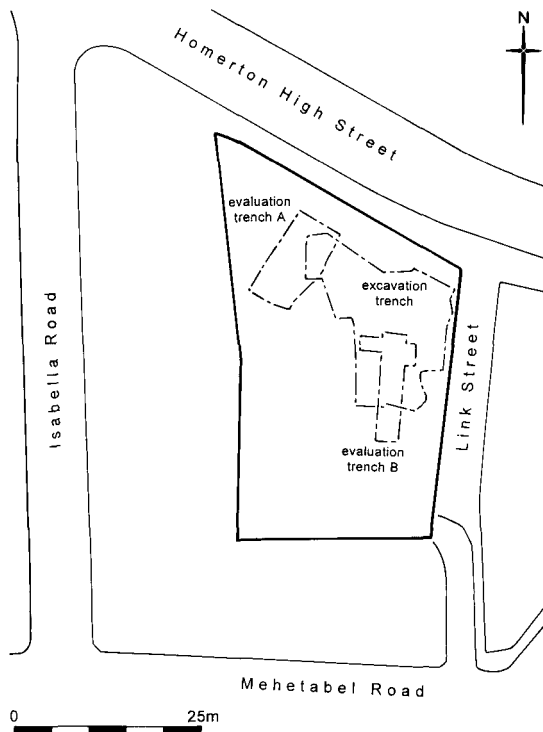


Fig 2. Location of excavation trenches

condition of any archaeological remains (Fig 2). It was demonstrated that archaeological features and stratified material were present at the site, and English Heritage recommended archaeological excavation as these materials were threatened with disturbance or destruction by the proposed redevelopment.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF HOMERTON

### Background

The underlying geological deposit in the site area is the Taplow Gravel and it is not considered usual for it to be overlain by brickearth.<sup>1</sup> The site is located on the slope down east towards Hackney Marshes and the River Lea. Ground level also drops to the south, across the site, towards the line of the former Hackney Brook, 40m beyond the southern limit of the site.

The proximity of Hackney Brook will have affected the environment of the site in antiquity. The source of the river was on the slopes of Crouch Hill from where it flowed south-east across Seven Sisters Road, then east along the

line of Gillespie Road and Riversdale Road across Clissold Park to Brook Road (Trench & Hillman 1984, 52–3). The river then turned south to follow the west side of Hackney Downs, then flowed north-west/south-east along Amhurst Road and Morning Lane (immediately to the south of the site) and then east along Wick Road to meet the River Lea. Hackney Brook is represented on the Rocque map of 1746 between the site and Morning (Money) Lane (see Fig 4).

There is little evidence for prehistoric activity along Hackney Brook, although Hackney is the source of two of the largest assemblages of Palaeolithic material recovered in Britain (in Stoke Newington and Lower Clapton: Collins 1976, 6). Four Palaeolithic assemblages are known from areas around the site. Six hand axes and one unretouched flint flake were found in the area of Wick Road, some 500m to the south-east of the site, during the Victorian period.<sup>2</sup> A further handaxe was found during this period at Paragon Road, c.500m to the south-west of the site.<sup>3</sup> At the former site of Clapton Priory near Gelnarm Road, about 700m to the north-east of the site, another handaxe has been recorded.<sup>4</sup> In 1868 J Anscombe found a further handaxe at the east side of Dunlace Road, 750m to the north-east of the site.<sup>5</sup>

Evidence for Roman activity in the site area is sparse. Roman Ermine Street, which led north to Lincoln – and ultimately to York – was aligned north-south along the line of what is now Kingsland Road (1800m west of the site) and Kingsland High Street (Margary 1955, 169–70). It has been suggested that a Roman Road extended east from Ermine Street along the route of Homerton High Street towards a possible crossing of the River Lea near Temple Mills.<sup>6</sup>

The evidence for the Roman precursor to Homerton High Street has been examined for the present study and it is concluded that the presence of a such a Roman Road is somewhat unlikely. The Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) entry for this road is based on four sources. The first, a lecture to The Leyton and District Antiquarian Society, includes no references to the Roman period (Marks 1938). The second makes no reference to Homerton High Street (Margary 1955). The basis for the third entry in the bibliography is an unreferenced late 18th-century find of the remains of a Roman road and a number of Roman coins along Homerton High Street (Black, nd, 8). As this find is not mentioned in any of the standard

sources regarding the history of Hackney it must be discounted (*eg* Clarke 1986; Robinson 1824). The fourth bibliographic entry, the Inner London Archaeology Unit card index, no longer survives to be checked.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, the SMR entry indicates that the supposed Roman origin of Homerton High Street extended west along the line of Ridley Road, which is of Victorian origin and set out after the 1831 parish map.

Despite the fact that there is no evidence for a Roman precursor to Homerton High Street there are scattered Roman finds suggesting a presence in the general area of the site. In 1867 a white marble sarcophagus containing a male skeleton was found in natural gravels behind the London Orphan Asylum,<sup>8</sup> at what is now 134 Rushmore Road, about 700m to the north of the site. Associated with the sarcophagus was a brass coin from the reign of emperor Gallienus (253–68 AD).<sup>9</sup> About 100m to the east of this find a Neronian (AD 54–68) coin was found c.1843 during the digging of a wall at the rear of the London Orphan Asylum.<sup>10</sup> Clarke has suggested that a Roman road, just to the south of the London Orphan Asylum and projecting east from Ermine Street, may have been aligned along the current Powerscroft and Blurton Roads leading down to Hackney Marshes, some 600m to the north of the site (Clarke 1986, 125–6, 247). This is conjecture, and may remain so.

The Saxon period brings some evidence for settlement in Hackney with possible Saxon origins for place names incorporated into the modern Borough of Hackney. The name, Hackney, is often suggested as deriving from the Anglo-Saxon 'Haccan' (to kill with a sword or axe) and 'ey' (river). This is incorrect as 'Haccan' means 'to hack'.<sup>11</sup> Another derivation may be 'Haca's well, watered land or marsh' (EPNS 1942, 105). Homerton, as one of the constituent hamlets within Hackney, may derive its name from Hunburh's Farm and have Saxon origins (EPNS 1942, 106).

By the medieval period there is firmer evidence for settlement in Hackney, with a rural economy known from the late 13th century. The Domesday Book of 1086 does not refer to Hackney but mentions Stepney, (Stoke) Newington and Haggerston. At this date Hackney was subsumed within the manor of Stepney. The earliest documented mention of Hackney is in 1198 as Hakeneia (EPNS 1942, 105). In 1294 Hackney was described as a part of the Manor of Stebunheath (Stepney) held 'from time immem-

orial' by the Bishops of London. The Lord of Stebunheath resided at Bishops Hall, Bethnal Green, south of the present centre of Hackney. Hackney was accounted for separately within the manor from the 14th century (VCH 1995, 75).

Medieval Hackney had developed along the route from Mile End to Stamford Hill with the village centre, still the core of Hackney, at Church Street (later Mare Street, now Narrow Way). The nucleus of medieval Hackney was the church of St Augustine, founded by the Knights Templar, known to have owned land in Hackney from at least 1232–3 (McDonnell 1978, 156), and possibly from the second half of the 12th century (VCH 1995, 77). The church tower still stands c.300m west of the site. After the suppression of the Templars the church and the land passed to the Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem in 1311 (McDonnell 1978, 156). The church was then re-dedicated to St John.

Sheep were kept in Hackney from the late 13th century into the 14th century and cheese from Hackney was being sold in London in the late 14th century. This may have been made from ewes' milk as there is little evidence to suggest a significant presence of cattle in the area (McDonnell 1978, 59–60). During the 14th century there were meadows, pasture and two mills in Hackney (McDonnell 1978, 23). It is known that wheat, oats, barley and beans were being cultivated between the second half of the 14th century and the early 15th century (McDonnell 1978, 58). It has been estimated that the population of Stepney as a whole was c.2,500 in 1377, a 278% increase from 900 in 1086 (McDonnell 1978, 119–20).

The documentary evidence for medieval Hackney is supported by a sparse archaeological record in the general area of the site. Excavations undertaken by MoLAS in 1992 at 64–76 Wilton Way, 650m to the south-west of the site, revealed a domestic refuse pit with a backfill dated to the 12th–13th centuries (Pitt 1992). In 1978 excavations conducted by the Inner London Archaeological Unit at 18 Shore Road (1050m south of the site) uncovered walls dated to the early 14th century. These were probably remnants of the early 14th-century Grovehouse, owned by the Shoreditch family and demolished during the early 17th century (Blackmore & Schwab 1989).

The earliest reference to Hackney in the modern spelling dates from 1535 (EPNS, 105).

The manor of Hackney remained in episcopal hands until the dissolution of the monasteries. During this period, from 1539–40, it became known as the Kingshold Manor (VCH 1995, 77). Bishop Nicholas Ridley surrendered the manor to King Edward VI in 1549–50 and it was then granted to Thomas, first Lord Wentworth on 16 April 1550 (McDonnell 1978, 20). Parts of the Kingshold were subsequently divided into separate holdings: Grumbolds (by the mid 17th century) and Lordshold (from the early 18th century) (VCH 1995, 76, 79). In 1632 the manor of Hackney was mortgaged by the Wentworth family and subsequently passed through various hands until transferring to the Tyssen family from 1697 (VCH 1995, 75).

### **The origins and development of Homerton**

Homerton was one of a number of scattered hamlets which made up medieval Hackney. Redeposited Saxon artefacts have been recovered from Homerton. During November 1993 MoLAS undertook fieldwork at the site of proposed EMI Nursing Home at Hackney Hospital, on the south side of Homerton High Street, some 550m east of the Link Street site (Barber 1993, 12–13). Residual Saxon and medieval pottery was recovered from the post-medieval plough soil recorded on this site. Barber has suggested that these finds may have either been mixed with manure dumped on the fields during the Saxon or medieval periods or brought up by deep ploughing undertaken in the post-medieval period.

Homerton is known from 1343 and was established as a hamlet by 1363 (VCH 1995, 51). Homerton may have developed along the route between the church of St Augustine and a watermill at Temple Mills, to the east, owned by The Knights Templar in 1307–8 (VCH 1995 51, 77). In the late 15th century the fraternity of the 'Blessed Mary of Humberton' ward, established by 1451 (Mander 1993, 9), maintained a ward-light at the church of St John at Hackney (McDonnell 1978, 146).

At the west end of Homerton High Street is the earliest surviving building in the area, now known as Sutton House, seen at the extreme right of Fig 3, and on maps. It was built on a ploughed field for the courtier and diplomat Sir Ralph Sadleir, to an H-shaped plan, shortly after 1535. The plough soil included artefacts dating from the 12th to 16th centuries, indicating

agricultural activity pre-dating the construction of the house (Phillpotts 1998, 207). The building was first known as 'Bryk Place', a name implying that construction from brick was notable (Blackburn & Gray 1992, 7). The road onto which the Bryk Place fronted was known as Humberton Street by 1551,<sup>12</sup> and is mentioned in 1563, 1567 and 1652.<sup>13</sup>

In 1550 Bryk Place was bought by John Machell, a wool merchant who later became the Sheriff of London. Machell died in 1558 and the house remained in the hands of his family until 1605 (Blackburn & Gray 1992, 13). At this date the adjacent building to the west, the Tan House, was bought by Thomas Sutton, the founder of the school at Charterhouse. It has been, incorrectly, suggested that Sutton had owned the Bryk Place, hence the later name Sutton House given to the old Bryk Place from 1953 (Blackburn & Gray 1992, 13, 15, 30). As Sutton House is the current designation of the building this name is used in this paper. By 1634 Captain John Milward, a City businessman, owned the Bryk Place.

By the mid 16th century the site area was within Sadleir's estate around Sutton House. It has been suggested that the estate was bounded to the north by Homerton High Street and extended east as far as the present Ponsford Street (Gray in prep). In 1540 the estate was described with just four buildings: Bryk Place, a house on the south side of Homerton High Street leased to Sadleir's father, another house behind that and a further house on the north side of the street (Blackburn & Gray 1992, 8). A description of the estate made at the time of its sale in 1550 to John Machell listed tenements, meadows, pastures, barns, stables, a dovehouse and gardens extending to Hackney Brook on the south (Blackburn & Gray 1992, 8). This implies that between 1540 and 1550 the estate was developed with tenements built between Homerton High Street and Hackney Brook (Gray in prep).

There is evidence for further Tudor development along Homerton High Street to the east of Sutton House. A range of timber framed buildings stood along the north side of the street between Furrow (formerly Plough) Lane and Bannister (formerly John) Street, opposite Ponsford (formerly Bridge) Street. These buildings are now demolished, with the west end of the range replaced by the Plough Inn, constructed in 1893 (DoE 1989, 57). This group of buildings appears on the Rocque map of 1746 (Fig 4) and





Fig 3. The excavations looking south-west

the buildings are depicted in a series of illustrations: watercolours of *c.*1830 (Mander 1996, 62), and *c.*1840 (Watson 1990, 13), and photographs of *c.*1870 (Mander 1996, 61), *c.*1886 (HWEA nd, 49), and *c.*1890 (HWEA nd, 4).

A date range for the construction of these buildings can be suggested as a result of examining their features. They had three storeys, although the number of storeys is no indicator of date (Schofield 1995, 146). The dormer windows are also of little use in ascertaining date of construction. The buildings are depicted with no side jetties, indicating a construction date after the mid 16th century (Schofield 1995, 147). The timber frame was filled, on the frontage, with plaster (over lath), not brick, a technique employed up to the early 17th century (Schofield 1995, 149). The Homerton buildings are very similar in construction to a house on the south side of Aldgate High Street (albeit with one less storey), constructed before the early 17th century (Schofield 1995, fig 180). Therefore this range of buildings was probably constructed after Sutton House, between the mid 16th century and the early 17th century.

It has been suggested that London saw a building boom during the period 1570–80 following on from the Dissolution, with a slump in the 1590s due to bad harvests, followed by another boom in the period 1620–40 (Schofield 1995, 26). It is probable that the Homerton buildings were built during the period 1570–80.

By the late 16th century Homerton had become one of the more prosperous of the Hackney villages. In 1594 the Parish of Hackney was assessed for equipping three soldiers, and a total of £6 11s 2d was contributed, with Homerton paying a 27.25% share of this; £1 18s (Heward 1948, 10). In 1605 there were 49 contributors to parish church rates in Homerton;<sup>14</sup> these are listed by Heward as giving sums from 13s 4d to 3d (Heward 1948, 13–14). This contrasts with 33 rate payers in Dalston, another of the constituent hamlets of Hackney, located to the west of Narrow Way (Tyler 1996). Clearly, Homerton was both more affluent and populous than Dalston in the early years of the 17th century.

By 1655 expansion resulted in Homerton being divided into Upper Homerton – around the

modern Urswick Road – and Lower Homerton – along the High Street towards Hackney Wick (VCH 1995, 53). The name Upper Homerton is retained on the 1870 Ordnance Survey map. In 1672 a hearth tax was levied on 55 chargeable houses in Great (Upper) Homerton and 58 in Little (Lower) Homerton (VCH 1995, 53).

During the 18th century Homerton remained affluent. Daniel Defoe included Homerton in the section on Hackney in his *'A Tour Through London About the Year 1725'*: 'Hackney is of great extent containing no less than twelve hamlets of separate villages...(including)...Hummerton. All these, though some of them are very large villages, make up but one Parish of Hackney. The town is remarkable for the retreat of wealthy citizens, that there is at this time near a Hundred Coaches kept in...' (Defoe 1929 (Batsford ed), 81). By 1720 104 residents of Homerton had paid poor rates (VCH 1995, 54). During the early 18th century Homerton was still ahead of Dalston, where by 1733 there were only two inns (Tyler 1996), with eight known in Homerton in 1725 (VCH 1995, 54). From the early 18th century Homerton, which had been in the Kingshold manor, had become part of the Lordshold.

The 18th century also saw the compilation of the first map of Homerton (Fig 4). The Rocque map of 1746 shows continuous buildings on either side of Homerton High Street, with the development ceasing at the turn south into the current Kenworthy Road. Beyond the east end of Homerton High Street was the west edge of Hackney Marsh. The map shows the site area as open, cultivated ground to the rear of two buildings which fronted onto the High Street.

Remnants of 18th-century Homerton have survived, in the form of both standing buildings and archaeological remains. Two pairs of mid to late 18th-century buildings survive along Homerton High Street; numbers 140 and 142, and numbers 168 and 170 (DoE, 59–60). Excluding Sutton House, these are the earliest standing buildings along the High Street. During January and February 1993 MoLAS conducted a watching brief on the site of the Free and Parochial School, 70m to the west of the Link Street site. The earliest deposits recorded were rubbish pits dated to the late 17th to early 18th centuries (Sparey-Green 1993, 18).

There is also archaeological evidence for 17th/18th-century agricultural activity in Homerton. In December 1992 MoLAS undertook an archaeological evaluation at the site of 4–11

Fenn Street, some 170m to the north-east of the site. This site revealed evidence of 18th-century agricultural work (Pitt 1993, 10). Similar evidence was found at the site of the former St John's wing of Homerton Hospital, 500m to the north-east of the Link Street site, where MoLAS carried out an archaeological evaluation between March and June 1993. Further post-medieval plough soil was recorded at Hackney Hospital (Barber 1993, 12–13).

The late 18th century saw increasing development in the area. A lease between John Ball of Coleshill, Amersham (Bucks) and John Musgrove of Homerton of 31 January 1792 includes a plan which indicates the form and layout of some of the buildings on the south side of Homerton High Street (Fig 5).<sup>15</sup> Demolition of these standing buildings (within and to the east of the site area) was undertaken in, or shortly after, 1792. An overlying of matching property boundaries and street alignments on both the 1831 parish of St John at Hackney map (Fig 6) and the 1792 lease plan indicates that the south-west corner of the westernmost two messuages 'A/A', highlighted on figure 5, was within the site limits. Also within the site area were sheds and yards. An amendment of 15 August 1792 attached to the lease allowed Musgrove to pull down these two houses and construct three or more houses on their plot. Presumably these are the houses depicted on the site on the 1831 map.

Thomas Milne's land use map of London and environs of 1800 shows buildings along the whole of the north frontage of the site and the area to their south described as market garden ground. This map is the first depiction of the newly constructed Link Street, later named 'New Cut' on both Greenwood's 1826 map and the 1831 parish map (Fig 6). By 1870 'New Cut' was 'Balls Buildings', and renamed Link Street in 1894. The range of houses which made up Balls Buildings were demolished in 1939–40.<sup>16</sup>

It is known that during the mid 19th century there were a series of cress beds along Hackney Brook in the area between the site and the old church of St John at Hackney. The brook also fed fish ponds and a brewery in Bridge (now Ponsford) Street and was probably exploited for similar purposes during earlier periods (Clarke 1986, 50).

In 1849 land to the south of the site was granted to the East and West India Docks and Birmingham Junction Railway, renamed the North London Railway in 1853 (Watson 1990,

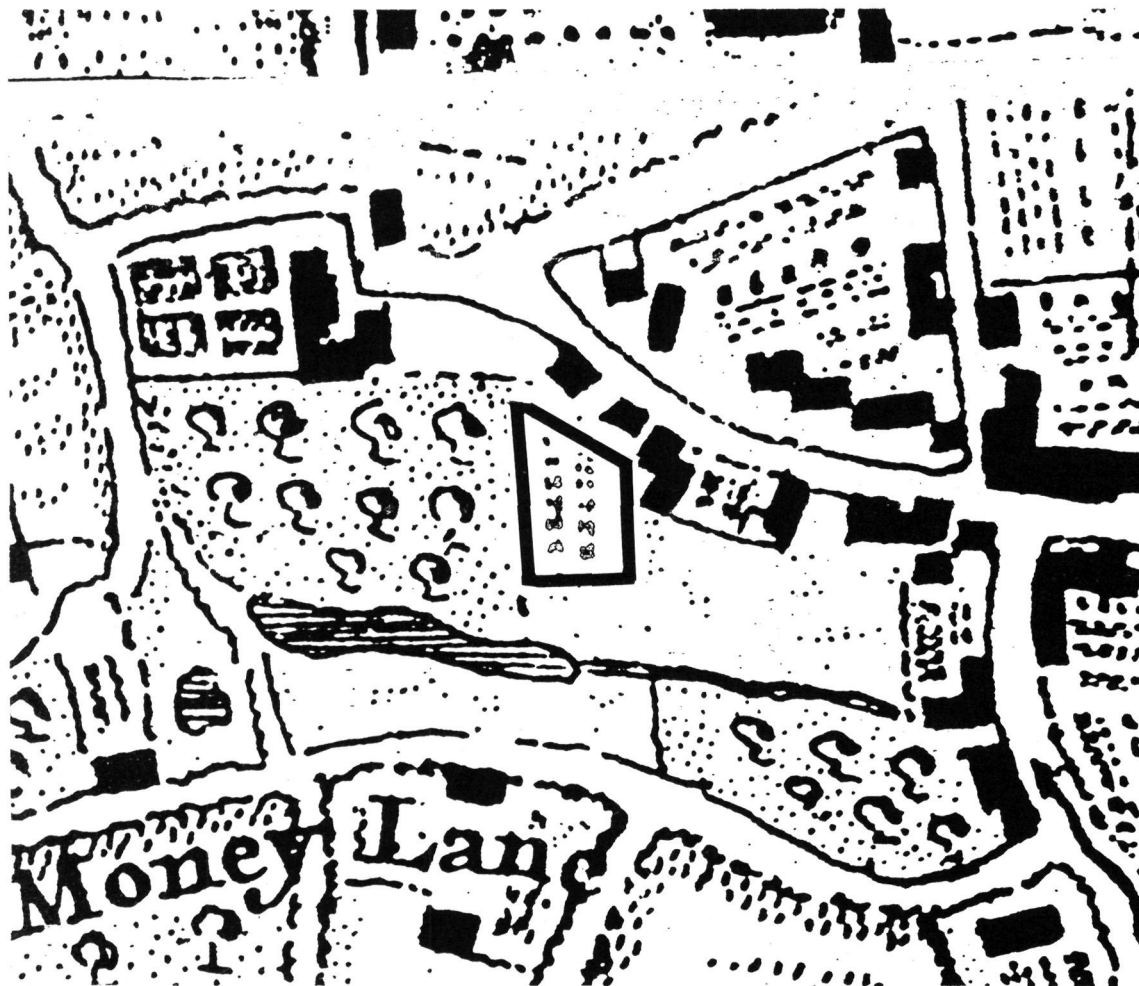


Fig 4. John Rocque's map of 1746

91). The railway was subsequently constructed on a viaduct across this land. Homerton station opened in 1868 (VCH 1995, 10). The arrival of the railway would hasten development, culminating with Homerton being fully subsumed into the surrounding urban environment. This development can be seen by comparing Figs 6 and 7, dating from 1831 and 1870 respectively.

Hackney Brook was culverted during the Victorian period and is represented in this area by the alignment of the Northern High Level Sewer, constructed between 1859 and 1865 (Trench & Hillman 1984, 71–2). The sewer diverges from the line of Hackney Brook to the east of the site around the junction of Morning Lane and Wick Street. This sewer was part of

the scheme proposed by the chief engineer of the Metropolitan Board of Works Joseph Bazalgette in response to what has been called 'the Great Stink' of 1858 (Barton 1962, 48).

The 1870 Ordnance Survey map (Fig 7) shows a similar layout of buildings as that on the parish map of 1831 (Fig 6), but by this stage Isabella Road and Mehetabel Road had been added with terraced housing along them.

After the 1914 Ordnance Survey map (Fig 8) the High Street was brought south, across the frontages of the building which formerly fronted onto the street. Fig 8 depicts the current south side of the High Street superimposed onto the buildings demolished as a result of the road widening. The widening is the reason that the

NORTH

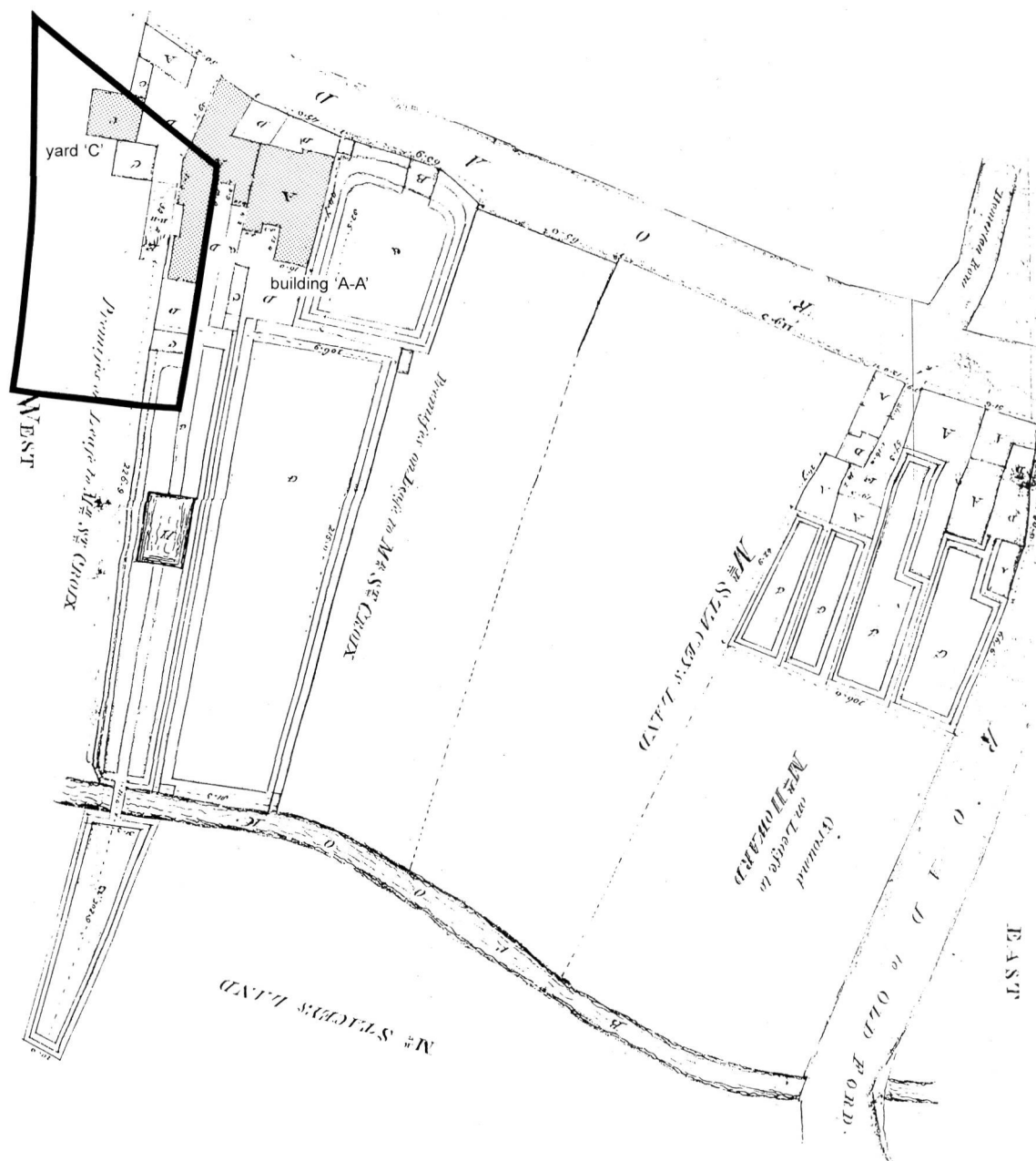


Fig 5. Plan of the site area, 1792 (courtesy of Hackney Archives Department)

current north frontage to the site is located behind former buildings which had fronted onto the narrower High Street. The High Street was renamed Homerton High Street in 1935 (Mander 1996, 57).

### THE SITE SEQUENCE

Neither the pottery nor building material assemblages merited reporting in individual specialist sections and the results of the analyses

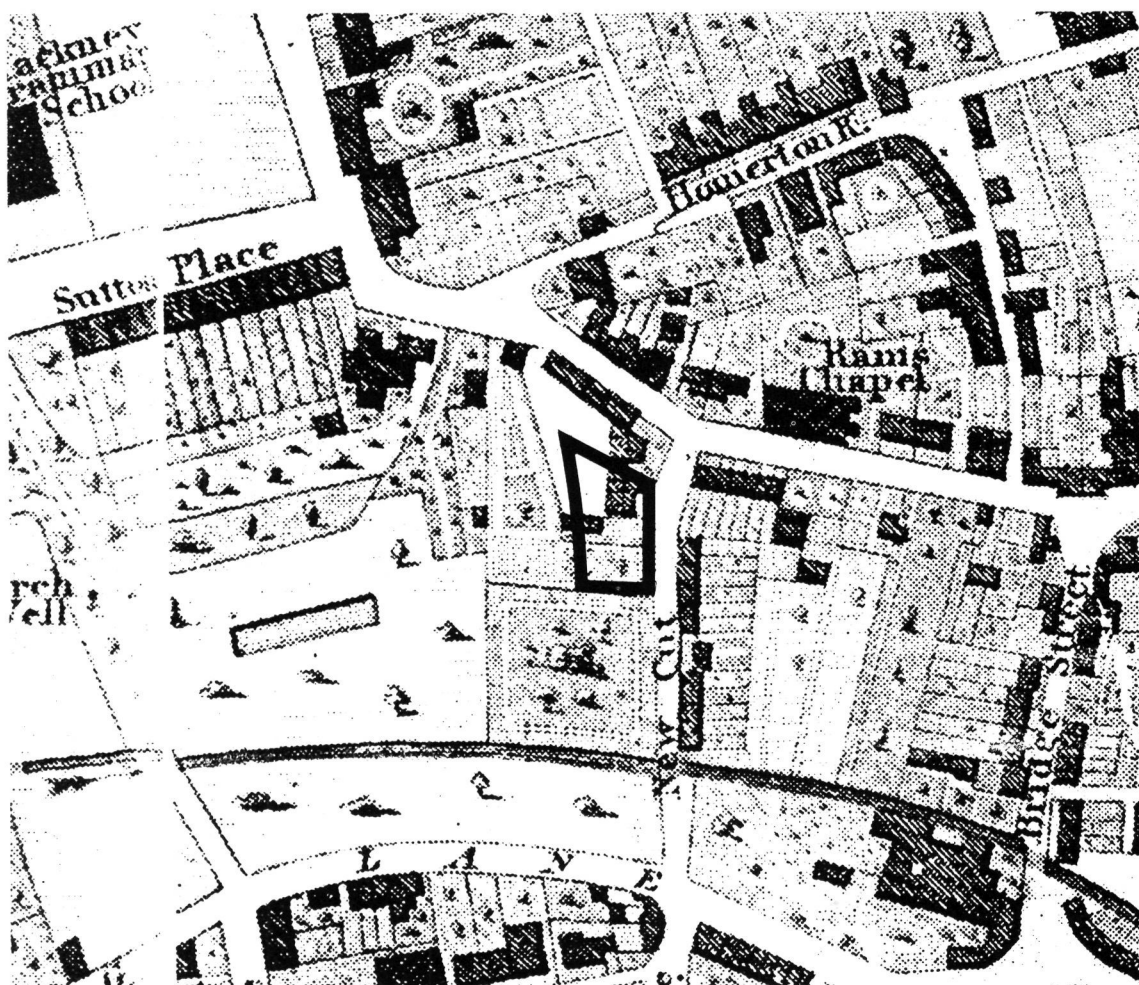


Fig 6. Map of the parish of St John Hackney, 1831 (courtesy of Hackney Archives Department)

of both assemblages are incorporated into this summary of the site sequence.

#### **Period 1: Open Area 1 (geological deposit)**

Open Area 1 represented the surface of the geological horizon before any cultural activity had taken place. Both alluvial gravels and brickearth were recorded at the site.

The surface of the alluvial gravels sloped down to the south across the excavation area from 10.24m OD to 8.75m OD. The gradient of *c.* 1 in 10 was a reflection of the slope from the Homerton High Street frontage down to Hackney Brook. At the north of the site the gravels were overlain by brickearth with a relatively level surface at *c.* 11.57m OD to 11.73m OD.

These observations indicate that the edge of the brickearth capping of the gravels crossed the site. There are two possible explanations for the lack of brickearth at the south of the site, from east to west. Firstly, the periodic flooding of Hackney Brook may have prevented the build up of this deposit. Secondly, and less likely, there may have been truncation, in the form of quarrying at the south of the site.

#### **Period 2: agricultural activity and Structure 1 (1080/1200–1230/1400)**

The earliest cultural activity at the site was represented by Period 2, including evidence for arable farming and the construction of an isolated



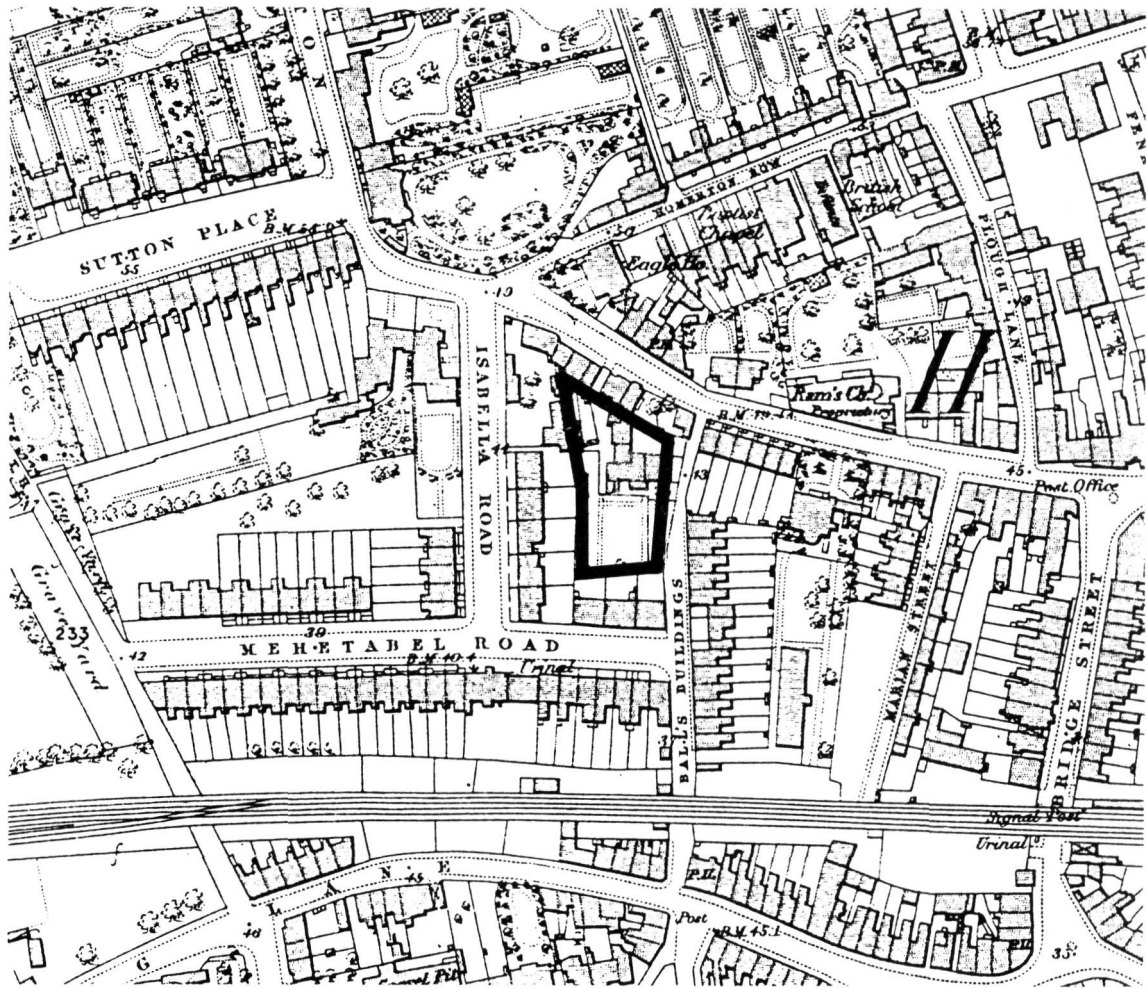


Fig 7. Ordnance Survey map, 1870

chalk foundation. The dating evidence for these features demonstrates that they pre-date the earliest reference to Homerton by at least 150 years.

#### **Open Area 2: cut features made into Open Area 1 (1080–1200)**

To the north of the site a series of successive cut features penetrated the surface of the brickearth. The three parallel cuts were probably remnants of successive north-south plough furrows, made into the face of the slope down to Hackney Brook in the 11th or 12th centuries (Fig 9).

The earliest cut had been backfilled with sandy silt (on the right of Fig 9). Although truncated, it was apparent that the cut was aligned north-south and had a minimum east-west width of 0.61m. Base level was 10.56m OD, and the cut was truncated at 10.89m OD. The east side of this cut had been truncated by a further cut backfilled with sandy silt. Again the cut appeared to be aligned north-south, with a minimum width of 0.90m. Base level was at 10.36m OD, and the cut was truncated at 10.79m OD. The latter cut had been truncated to the east by a third cut, also aligned north-south, again backfilled with sandy silt, this time dated 1080–1200 by the presence of coarse London-type ware pottery.

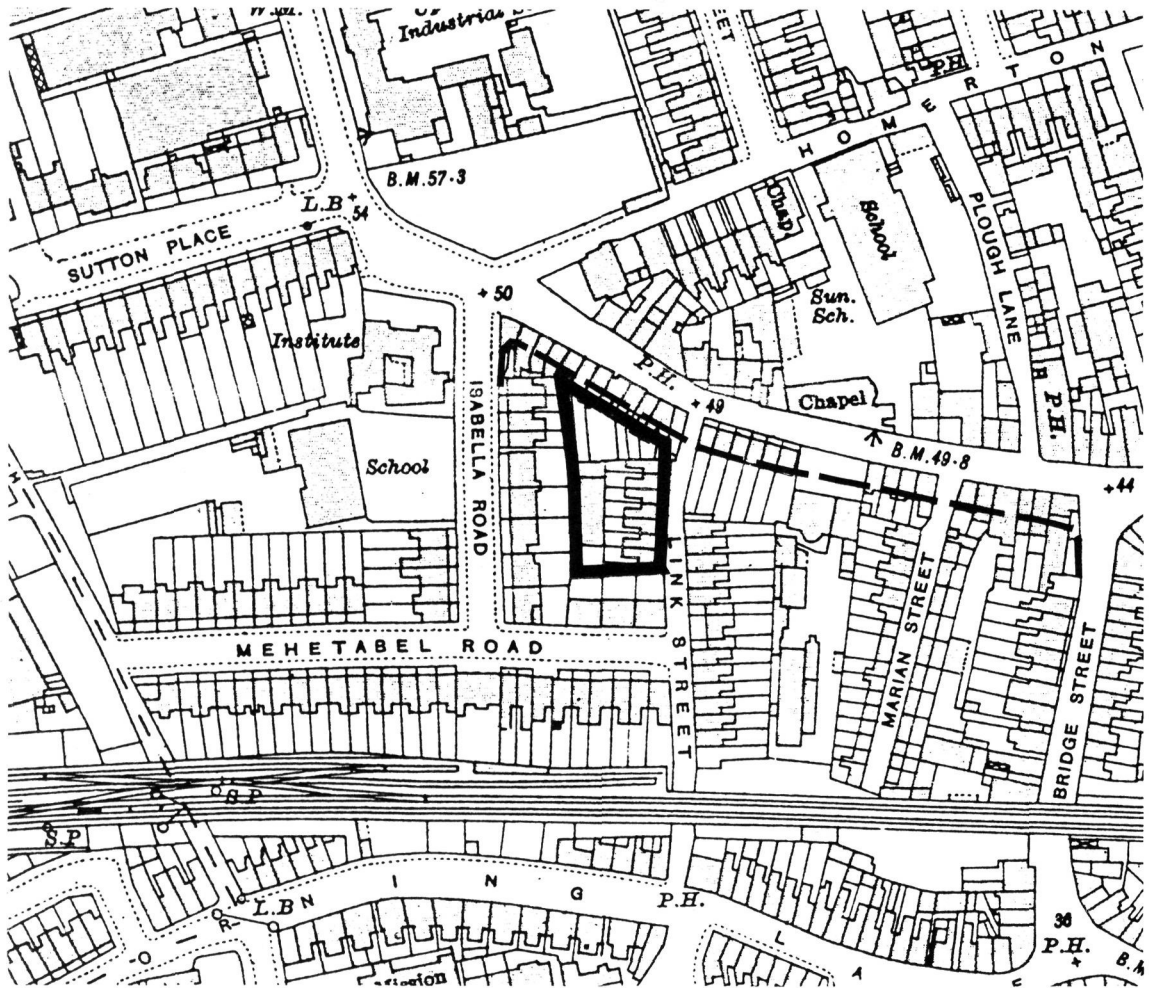


Fig 8. Ordnance Survey map, 1914

The cut edge extended beyond the limit of excavation, but the minimum east-west width was 0.20m. Base level was at 10.42m OD, with truncation at 10.70m OD.

North of the plough furrows was a pair of cuts with indeterminate purpose which were dated to the same period as the plough furrows. The first cut feature was sub-square with vertical sides and an irregular base. This had been backfilled with mottled brown green and orange yellow sandy clay. The fill was dated to 1000–1150 by early medieval sand and shell ware. The cut measured a minimum of 1.72m east-west  $\times$  1.86m north-south with the east end beyond the limit of excavation. Base level was at 10.94m OD and the cut was truncated at 11.55m OD. An east-

west aligned cut was recorded to the north of the sub-square cut. Only the south edge was recorded, as the remainder was beyond the limit of excavation. The cut was backfilled with a mixture of clay and sand which included local grey ware dated to 1050–1150. The observed portion allowed for minimum measurements of 0.94m east-west  $\times$  0.60m north-south. Base level was at 11.21m OD, with a truncated top level of 11.47m OD.

The two discrete cuts had not been made to as great a depth as the plough furrows and probably represent localised digging within the open area, perhaps as bedding trenches or maybe for the removal of obstructions such as tree bases or roots.

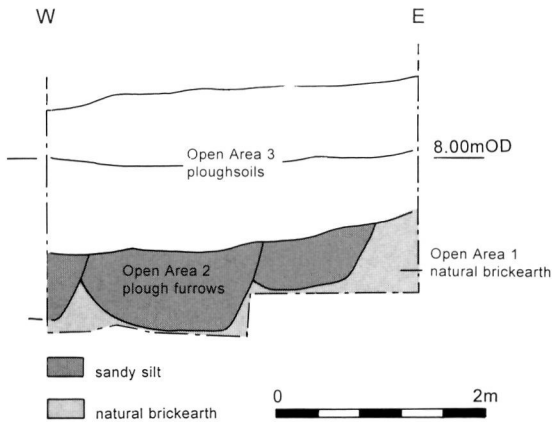


Fig 9. North facing section through the Open Area 2 plough furrows overlain by the Open Area 3 plough soil (located on Fig 10)

### Structure 1 (1080–1200)

Structure 1 was an isolated stone foundation located near the southern limit of the excavation area (Figs 10, 11). This foundation did not relate to any building. It was constructed from uncoursed chalk blocks with some ragstone and flint bonded with pale grey sandy silt which made up no more than 20% of the whole foundation. The bonding material included

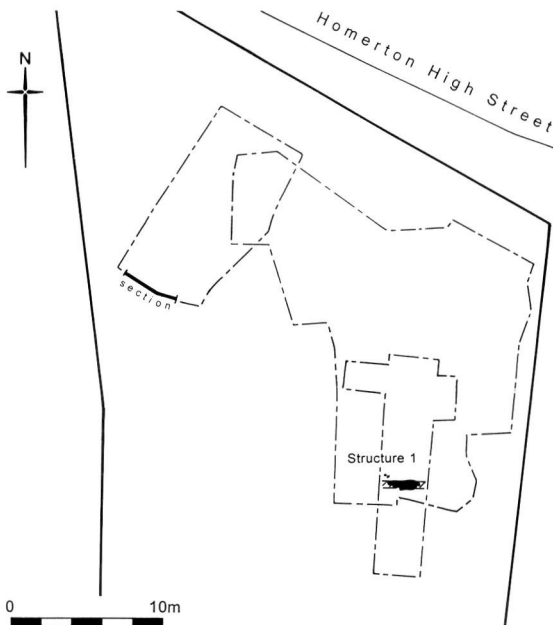


Fig 10. Location of the Structure 1 foundation

calcareous London-type ware dated to 1080–1200. The coursing can be seen on Fig 11. The base of the foundation was at c.9.60m OD, and it was truncated at 9.93m OD. The foundation measured 2.04m east-west  $\times$  0.66m north-south. No superstructure survived. As the foundation survived in isolation, little interpretation as to the type of structure of which it was part is possible. The subsequent water related activities indicate that this area of the site was marginal ground, so Structure 1 is unlikely to be part of a building. It was more probably a lining, or part of a feature related to water management.

### Open Area 3: plough soil (1080/1200–1230/1400)

A plough soil overlay the disused, backfilled Open Area 2 plough furrows and cut through features (Fig 9). The working of the ground marked by Open Area 3 indicated a separate, subsequent phase of activity, of the first three decades of the 13th century. The plough soil was a pale brown-grey fine sandy silt with a green tinge up to 0.42m thick (top level was 11.24m–11.35m OD, and base level was 10.93m OD). Base level marked the maximum penetrative depth of the agricultural activity. The plough soil was truncated, but contemporary ground level was higher than 11.35m OD. The dating of Open Area 3 is based on placing the plough soil between the preceding phase dated to 1080–1200 and the succeeding phase dated to 1230–1400.

### Period 3: Open Area 4, Building 1, Ditches 1, 2, and 3, Open Area 5 (1230/1400–1500/1600)

Period 3 saw the construction of a building at the north of the site and a change in the type of agricultural activity from arable to cultivation which exploited the proximity of Hackney Brook through the excavation of a series of ditches (Figs 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17). The date range for Period 3 includes the period from which Homerton is first known: the mid 14th century.

The Open Area 3 plough soil was overlaid by a series of successive external surfaces, laid to consolidate the ground surface in preparation for the construction of Building 1 (see below). This demonstrated a change of land use with the cessation of agricultural activity datable to the 13th or 14th centuries.





Fig 11. Structure 1 viewed from the north. The foundation measured 2.04m east-west

The earliest deposit was an 0.08m thick layer of redeposited brickearth with a surface level of up to 11.32m OD. The surface was burnt. This was dated to 1230–1400 by the presence of pottery including early-medieval iron rich sandy ware, local grey ware and Kingston-type ware. Overlying this was an 0.08m thick layer of dark grey-green silty sand with an uneven surface level of up to 11.12m OD. This may have been a make up layer which in turn was overlaid by a c.10mm layer of dirty white mixed chalk and mortar. Surface level was 11.11m OD. This deposit was an external surface.

#### *Building 1 (after 1230–1400)*

Building 1 consisted of foundations constructed upon make up layers which sealed Open Area 4 (Fig 12, 13, 14). As stated above, the layers which comprised Open Area 4 may have been laid in preparation for the construction of Building 1. The dating of Building 1 is based on it being

later than the underlying surfaces (Open Area 4) which were dated to 1230–1400. The building was standing by 1400–1500, as evidenced by finds recovered from the foundation to an alteration to the building. Within the south-west corner of the building was an oven, the presence of which may suggest a use for the structure, perhaps as a cooking block.

#### Phase 1: make up layer

The foundations of Building 1 were constructed upon a mixed grey silt and brickearth make up layer which was up to 0.36m thick (surface level 11.31m OD, base level was 10.95m OD). This layer comprised Phase 1 of the construction of Building 1.

#### Phase 2: foundations

The second phase of Building 1 was the construction of its foundations between the 13th

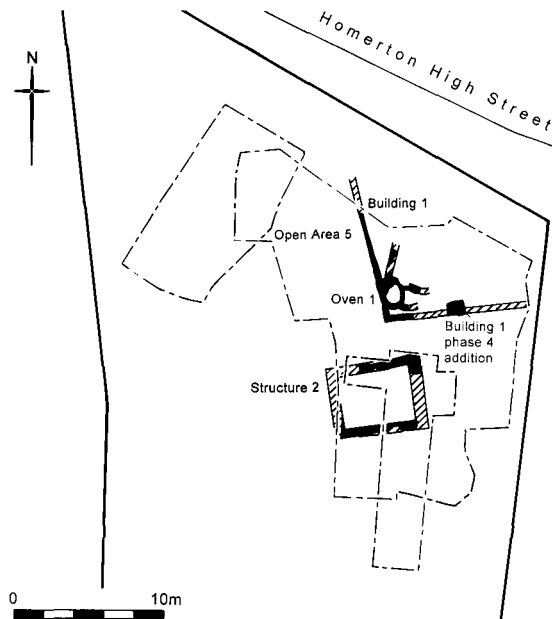


Fig 12. Building 1 with Open Area 5 to the west and Structure 2 (reservoir) to the south

and late 16th centuries. These shared certain characteristics: they were all constructed of chalk and flint, the bonding material was a similar grey mortar, they were all of a sleeper type (*ie* flat based) and they were of similar thickness (between 0.32m and 0.50m) (Fig 12, 13, 14).

The west side of Building 1 was marked by the most substantial foundation, a random coursed mixture of 80% chalk blocks (up to 360mm) and 20% flint nodules (up to 180mm) with occasional peg tile used as levelling courses (Fig 14). The bonding material was a light grey coarse mortar with flecks of charcoal and chalk. The west and east sides were fair faced. Traces of a mortar rendering survived on the east face. The maximum width of the foundation was 0.43m, with a surviving height of up to 0.52m. A length of 6.90m was recorded, and the foundation extended north beyond the limit of excavation. Base level was 11.20m OD, and the foundation was truncated at 11.62m OD. The south end curved eastwards respecting the outline of a feature within the building.

The south end of the north-south foundation was abutted by the L shaped foundation of the south-west corner of Building 1 (Figs 12, 13). The corner foundation was constructed from a random coursed mixture of 70% chalk blocks

(up to 230mm) and 30% flint nodules (up to 120mm) with occasional peg tile. The bonding material was a light grey coarse mortar with flecks of chalk and fine pebble. The west and south (external) sides were fair faced, with the east and north (internal) sides rough faced. Base level was 10.89m OD, and the foundation was truncated at 11.34m OD. The maximum width of the foundation was 0.44m, with a surviving height of 0.45m.

Both the foundations were of one build; their abutting relationship prevented interpretation as to which was the earlier construction.

The Building 1 foundations represent the south-west corner of a building at least 7.60m north-south by 5.50m east-west. The foundations would have supported the base plate of a timber framed building, a construction method which kept the wood stable, and free of damp. It is known that timber framed buildings were present in Homerton High Street from at least the late 16th century, a period when brick was also in use for construction in the Homerton area. These sleeper type foundations contained no brick and date from an earlier period – after 1230–1400 and before the late 16th century.

#### OVEN 1

Within Building 1 were three further abutting foundations which represented the bases of internal features (Fig 12). Each was constructed from a random coursed mixture of chalk blocks, flint nodules, ragstone and peg tile. They were bonded with a light grey coarse mortar with fine pebble and flecks of charcoal or chalk.

Taken together these foundations described an oval/circular feature within Building 1, most probably the base of an oven (internal diameter 1.30m) constructed integral to the building. The disuse of Oven 1 was marked by an internal fill of compacted brickearth deposit. Excavation of the backfill revealed no finds or debris from the use of the oven.

The location of Oven 1 at the south-west of the Building 1 was clearly to isolate fumes and any debris associated with its function and the use of Building 1 may have been defined by the presence of the oven; the building may have been an outhouse, perhaps a cooking block. Although this is perfectly likely the archaeological evidence alone is not enough to support this proposition.

#### Phase 3: make up deposit

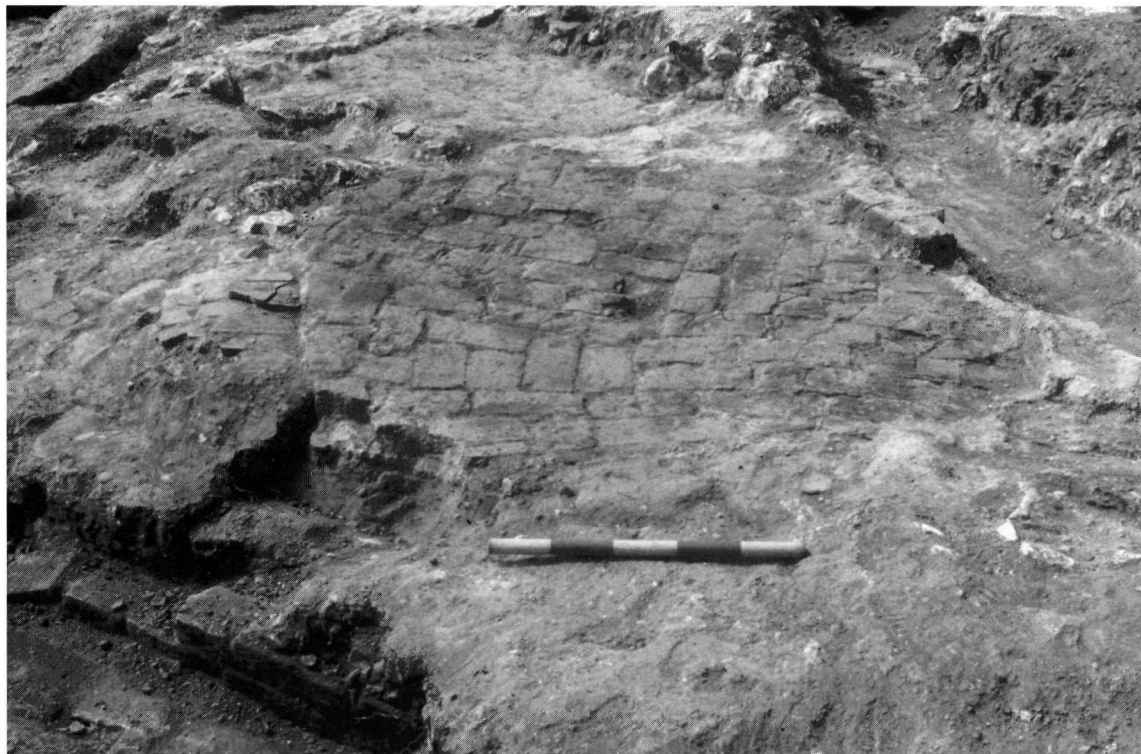
Phase 3 of Building 1 consisted of layers lain against the Building 1, Phase 2 foundations, after



*Fig 13. View south across Building 1 with Structures 1 and 2 visible in the background*



*Fig 14. View east of base of west wall of Building 1. Scale is 5 × 100mm units*



*Fig 15. View west of brick base of Oven 2. Scale is 5 × 100mm units*

the early 13th century, both within and without the building. These were make up deposits which preserved the foundations and protected them from external forces such as weather. After their construction, a protective dump was effectively deposited over the foundations.

A layer of grey brown silty-sand (surface level 11.31m–11.46m OD) with fragments of mortar, chalk and flint had been deposited within Building 1, and a further layer of crushed chalk (surface level 11.40m OD), had been deposited outside (to the west). These two layers were formed from the same types of material employed in the foundations of Building 1. They acted as a base for a compact layer (surface level of 11.37m–11.64m OD) of redeposited natural gravel (50% orange sand, 50% pebble) lain within and without Building 1.

After the deposition of the extensive make up layers further deposits were lain within Building 1 to bring up ground level to the level within the building. A chalk and mortar layer was deposited within the oval shape of Oven 1. The deposit was up to 5mm thick, with a surface level of 11.14m OD. This was overlain by a layer of

redeposited brickearth up to 300mm thick with a surface level of 11.37m OD.

No dating evidence was recovered from the make up deposit. The layer must however date from the same period as Building 1 – after 1230–1400.

Phase 4: alterations to Building 1 (1230/1400–1400/1500)

Phase 4 of Building 1 included changes made to the structure after it's completion. Oven 1 fell out of use during the deposition of the Phase 3 make up deposit and Oven 2 was constructed. A further alteration to Building 1 was the insertion of a foundation along the south side of the building during the period 1400–1500.

#### OVEN 2

Within Building 1 the truncated base of a second oven was recorded to the immediate north-east of Oven 1 (Fig 15). Oven 2 extended partially across the brickearth backfill of Oven 1.

The base of Oven 2 consisted of a layer of bricks (surface level 11.32m OD) set into a cut which truncated the foundations which surrounded Oven 1. Overall the bricks were set on a bed in an uneven pattern and bonded with an off-white compact mortar, which also underlay the bricks as a bedding layer up to 40mm thick. Up to 70% of the bricks were whole. Oven 2 was oval (long axis of 1.60m aligned north-west/south-east). The bricks were in a fairly soft orange to red type known to be in use before the Great Fire of 1666 and perhaps a little beyond. In this case the bricks appeared overfired, probably a result of use within the oven. The surface of the bricks were scorched in patches unconfined to one particular area of the feature. The bricks had a size range of 214–20mm × 99–104mm × 45–58mm. Bricks which showed a distinct curve along their stretcher faces were also used and these had a size range of 195–215mm × 92–104mm × 51–5mm. This type of distortion is sometimes caused by overfiring, however as they were within a curved oven feature, they may have been deliberately formed in this shape (Smith in Tyler, 1997 48–9).

Elements of the vertical side of the oven survived at the north-west, in the form of one brick course. To the south-east a layer of tile was set at the same level as the base.

This feature represents the survival of the truncated base to an oven. The walls of the oven were originally of vertically coursed brick. The base of a possible flue or firebox was recorded to the south-east of the base (the tile layer). The oven was located within Building 1, and as no waste products, such as misfired pottery, were recovered from this excavation the oven must be treated as domestic, probably for bread.

The brick base of Oven 2 was sealed by a layer of silty sand with mortar inclusions up to 120mm thick. Surface level was 11.32m OD. This deposit was retained within the limits of the oven. Two interpretations are possible: first the layer may have been deposited as make up to raise the base level of the oven, secondly the layer was deposited to infill the oven at its disuse.

#### ALTERATION TO THE SOUTH SIDE OF BUILDING 1 (1400–1500)

A foundation had been inserted along the length of the south wall of Building 1. The first stage of the alteration consisted of a cut made through the Building 1 Phase 2 foundation to a depth of 10.57m OD, and backfilled with a mixed loamy

deposit, which included a proportion of ceramic tile, Kingston-type ware and late London-type ware dated to 1400–1500.

The backfill was cut into by a foundation constructed from chalk, flint and broken brick (base level 10.49m OD). It was bonded with a compact light grey brown chalky mortar. Modern truncation meant that only a 1m east-west length of the foundation survived. The maximum north-south thickness was 1.50m. This contrasts with the Building 1 Phase 2 foundations which were between 0.32m and 0.50m thick.

The construction of this foundation was very similar to the foundation of Building 1 Phase 2 (chalk and flint, bonded with similar grey mortar and all of a sleeper type) but with the addition of brick. There may have been reuse of the fabric of an earlier foundation which had been removed.

An addition to the south of Building 1 at foundation level must have been a form of underpinning to strengthen the fabric of the building. Perhaps subsidence had occurred subsequent to the insertion of the reservoir, built into a construction cut which extended to the edge of Building 1. The finds from this alteration are significant as they demonstrate that Building 1 was standing by 1400–1500, and support the earlier surmise that Building 1 as a whole was constructed before the late 16th century.

#### Open Area 5: external surfaces associated with Building 1 (1230/1400–1500/1600)

Open Area 5 was a series of successive metallings and surfaces, recorded to the west of Building 1 (Fig 12). As with Building 1, the dating is based on it being later than the underlying surfaces (Open Area 4) dated to 1230–1400. A 20mm thick compact deposit (surface level was 11.40m OD) of mid grey and orange sand mixed with pebbles was overlaid by further metalling with less pebble content and an overall grey/green colour. This was 0.45m thick with a surface level of 11.72m. The east edge of the metalling was sealed by a rammed surface of crushed chalk (surface level 11.70m OD) which stretched to the edge of Building 1. The surface was up to 100mm thick, and extended 1.20m west from the west side of Building 1.

*Pit (1500–1600)*

To the west of Building 1 was a pit feature with backfill dated to 1500–1600 cut into Open Area 5. This would appear to be evidence of external activity contemporary with Building 1. The pit was approximately 6.5m to the west of Building 1 and sub-circular with shallow sides and a concave base (base level 11.13m OD). It was backfilled with light-mid brown grey sandy clay with frequent fine-medium pebbles and occasional charcoal flecks. The backfill included Tudor Brown ware dated to 1500–1600.

**Ditches 1, 2, 3, and 4: water management (before 1480–1550)**

To the south of Building 1 was a series of successive channels which had been, in turn, recut and backfilled (Fig 16). Disuse (backfilling) of the ditch features is dated to 1480–1550. These cuts and related features managed the flow of water in this area of the site and a suggestion can be made as to the purpose of the

water management. Cress beds were arranged along Hackney Brook during the 19th century, and although the ditches on the site were in use some 300–400 years earlier than this, it is not unlikely that Tudor or earlier Hackney Brook provided a source for the managed irrigation of a similar type of cultivation.

*Ditch 1*

Ditch 1 consisted of a cut aligned north-south which measured 1.60m east-west (Fig 16). The east side had largely been truncated. Base level was *c.*8.53m OD. The unevenness of the sides indicated that recuts had been undertaken. It had been backfilled with a pale brown-grey fine sand with coarse pebble from which no finds were recovered. The backfilling marked the disuse of Ditch 1 and a realignment of the water channel in this area.

*Ditch 2: sluice (before 1480–1550)*

Ditch 1 was replaced by a masonry-sided drain which incorporated a timber sluice (Fig 16, 17).

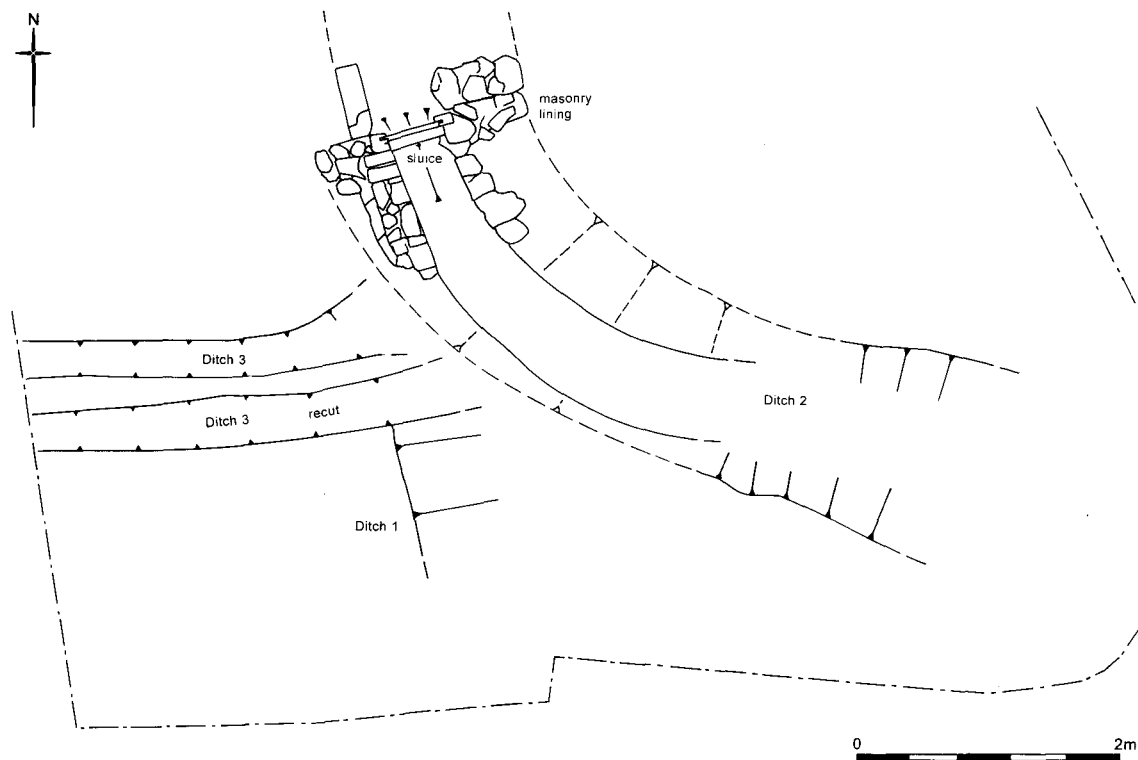


Fig 16. Plan of Ditches 1, 2 and 3. Ditch 2 with sluice





Fig 17. View north of sluice in Ditch 2

The dating of this feature is based on it being earlier than the backfill which marked its disuse (see below).

A cut had been made into the backfill of Ditch 1. This curved from a north-south alignment to an east-west alignment (Fig 16). Within the cut was a masonry lining, aligned north-south, constructed from a random coursed mixture of flint, Reigate stone, ragstone, chalk, brick and peg tile bonded with a yellow-brown sandy mortar with chalk. Later features had truncated the top of the drain and only the west and east sides were recorded. There was no constructed base.

The masonry lining housed a timber sluice which had been constructed across the north-south flow of the channel (Fig 16, 17). The sluice consisted of an oak base plate (1.31m east-west  $\times$  0.17m north-south  $\times$  0.14m top to bottom), into which two upright oak posts had been tenoned. The base plate extended under the masonry indicating that the sluice and the masonry were constructed together. The oak could not be dated by dendrochronology as it was fast grown with too few rings. An elm door

was retained within rebates cut along the inside faces of the posts and the upper face of the base plate. This was the element which regulated the flow of water through the sluice. In effect the sluice was constructed somewhat like a sliding window. Reuse of the timber was indicated by an unused mortise in the base plate and peg holes, irrelevant to the use under discussion here, in the upright posts. The elm door was apparently constructed solely for use in the sluice.

#### *Ditch 2: disuse (1480–1550)*

The channel to the south of the timber sluice was infilled with a mixture of materials (sandy silt) interpreted as waterlain build up during the use of the channel and backfill of the channel after its disuse and infilling. Included in the fill was Raeren stoneware and post-medieval redware dated to 1480–1550. A cut was made into the backfill of Ditch 2 near the eastern limit of excavation. This marked a recutting of Ditch 2. The recut was aligned roughly north-west/south-east with a maximum width of 0.90m. Base level

was 9.35m OD. The cut was truncated at 9.85m OD.

*Ditch 3: re-alignment of Ditch 2 (1480–1550)*

Ditch 3 was an east-west channel dug to the west of Ditch 2, cutting into the waterlain element of its infill (Fig 16). This had vertical sides and measured 0.35m north-south, with a base level of 9.45m OD. It appeared to drain into the east-west element of Ditch 2, implying the disuse of the north-south section of Ditch 2 which incorporated the timber sluice. Ditch 3 had been backfilled with a sandy silt.

Ditch 3 had been recut into the above backfill. The recut was also aligned east-west, with a base level of 9.22m OD, and measured 0.30m north-south. This recut also drained into the east-west element of Ditch 2. Disuse of Ditch 3 was marked by the deposition of infill which included post-medieval redware and Raeren stoneware.

The re-alignment of the water channel in this area of the site indicated that either there was a need for an overspill channel or that the area of the north-south element of the channel into which the sluice drained (*ie* the north-south element of Ditch 2) was subject to a change of land use. In view of subsequent activity the second explanation is preferred.

**Period 4: Structure 2, reservoir and associated features (1480–1600)**

In Period 4 the ditches to the south of Building 1 were replaced by a brick lined, rectangular reservoir (Figs 12, 18). This feature respected the alignments of Building 1, which remained standing. During Period 4 the site and the land surrounding came into the ownership of Ralph Sadleir from 1535–50. Some redevelopment would be expected during this period.

The reservoir was constructed after the backfilling and disuse of the ditch features and was concerned with the retention of water, rather than the control of its flow. The reservoir was dated to 1480–1600 by pottery recovered from the clay which lined the construction cut.

*Foundation*

The brick foundation of the south side of the reservoir blocked the Ditch 2 timber sluice and

encased the masonry which incorporated the sluice. The foundation appeared to have been constructed as one unit, and was not part of a larger structure. It is possible that it was constructed to restrict the flow of water preliminary to the remainder of the construction work represented by Structure 2.

The foundation was aligned east-west with a base level of *c.*9.22m OD. The foundation was truncated at a level of 9.57m OD, with a maximum of nine irregular English bond courses surviving. The mortar was pale brown and sandy. The north-south thickness of the foundation was 0.70m. The blocking was made with bricks of a fairly soft orange to red fabric in a type dating before *c.*1666 and slightly later. The bricks measured 220–222mm × 107–122mm × 57–8mm. Also present was a silty variant with a size of 219–20mm × 104–5mm × 54–6mm. One brick was particularly well-shaped, with sharp arrises (Smith in Tyler 1997, 48–9).

Subsequent to the construction of the foundation, a rectangular construction cut was made for the insertion of the brick lining noted below. The cut extended around the perimeter of the reservoir and survived to a maximum level of 10.82m OD, at which it cut into the Open Area 4 make up layer associated with Building 1. It is clear that the cut was made when Building 1 was standing.

Within the northern side of the cut was a chalk footing which consisted of roughly hewn blocks (up to 280mm) bonded with light brown sandy mortar. No coursing was apparent, and the footing was the base for subsequent construction, either as a levelling support for masonry, or as a working platform.

*Tanking (1480–1600)*

The construction cut of the reservoir was backfilled with a clay lining which acted as a seal to prevent the egress and ingress of water. The light brown/tan compact clay included occasional chalk and ragstone blocks with flint pebble and pieces of post-medieval redware and yellow glazed post-medieval slip-coated redware dated to 1480–1600.

Within the clay was an 800mm long north-south aligned oak plank set on edge, held vertical by stakes on either side at the north end and half-bats at the south. An elm plank also set





Fig 18. Structure 2, the reservoir, seen from the north-east

vertically on its edge (560mm long) projected east from the north end on the oak plank. These timbers were remnants of shuttering within the tanking.

#### *Brick lining*

The rectangular brick lining of the reservoir had been built against the clay lining. The internal dimensions were 3.60m north-south  $\times$  4.70m east-west. The northern and southern east-west elements were observed. Additionally, the south end of the western north-south element was observed. The main body of the eastern north-south element had been cut away by later intrusions, but the corners where this side joined the east-west elements survived. This level of survival therefore allowed for a reconstruction of the whole extent of the feature.

Base level of the walls was at c.9.40m OD. The feature survived to a maximum level of 10.01m OD. The northern side of the feature employed tiles as a levelling course at the base

of the brickwork. The maximum north-south thickness of the east-west walls was 0.65m. The bricks were bonded with tan/pale brown sandy mortar, and set in English bond with regular coursing. The lining was constructed again from bricks with sunken margins which were in use up to the late 17th century. The size ranges were 215–16mm  $\times$  107–8mm  $\times$  52–8mm to 230–34mm  $\times$  109–15mm  $\times$  56–9mm. One brick showed a large and deep impression, perhaps of a cow's hoof. This had distorted the brick itself quite seriously and it is surprising it was fired by the brickmakers. It would have been of no use for facing work, although it was perfectly usable in this lining. Also present were a sandy variant, with sizes in the order of 218–25mm  $\times$  106–12mm  $\times$  55–7mm (Smith in Tyler 1997, 48–50).

The east-west and north-south alignments of brickwork were parallel to the foundations of Building 1. It would appear that the brickwork was constructed with a knowledge of the alignments of Building 1 which remained standing at the time of construction.

*Backfill of construction cut (1480–1600)*

Sealing the clay tanking and brickwork were successive backfills (dated to 1480–1600 by the presence of post-medieval redware and 1580–1700 by Cheam redware and post-medieval black glazed ware) of the construction cut. The later backfill may have been deposited as part of the repair.

*Drain (1550–1650)*

South of the reservoir were the fragmentary remains of a possible drain constructed upon the backfill of Ditch 2. All that remained was a brick base as truncation had removed any attendant features associated with the drain.

The drain was set upon a make up layer (dated by the presence of Dutch red earthenware, post-medieval redware and yellow-glazed post-medieval slip-coated redware to 1550–1650) which underlay horizontally lain bricks set on a bed and bonded with grey brown sandy mortar (surface level 9.90m OD). The drain base was constructed from bricks of a pre-Great Fire type with sunken margins measuring 223–4mm × 110mm × 55–9mm. The bricks had become misshaped during firing (Smith in Tyler 1997, 48–9). The bricks were constructed to respect the same north/west-south/east alignment of the Ditch 2 channel cut.

A narrow brick base such as this, constructed to the alignment of a former channel was most probably the base of a brick drain constructed to replace the earlier channels, possibly at the same time as the brick reservoir. The drain will have emptied to the south, into Hackney Brook.

**Period 5; Open Area 6, disuse of Structure 2 (after 1500–1600, possibly 1650–1700)**

Period 5 saw the backfilling and disuse of the reservoir and the laying of new external surfaces to the west of Building 1. It is known that development took place along Homerton High Street during the late 16th century and it is possible that both of these activities were undertaken during this period.

A series of successive external agricultural/garden soil type deposits sealed the Open Area 5 backfilled pit to the west of Building 1. These made up Open Area 6, the dating of which is

based on the fact that it is later than the backfill of the pit which it sealed, 1500–1600.

The earliest layer was a mid green grey silt/clay with occasional fine-medium pebbles (surface level 11.89m–12.37m OD) overlain by a dark grey brown silt/clay with frequent fine-medium pebbles, moderate brick and tile fragments, fine chalk fragments and occasional coarse pebbles (average surface level 12.24m OD). Sealing this was a layer of loose reddish brown clay/sand/silt with frequent fragments of brick and tile, lenses of buff mortar, fine-coarse pebbles and moderate charcoal fragments (average surface level 12.84m OD).

Open Area 5 had been characterised as a series of external surfaces. It was succeeded by Open Area 6 which used the area as a garden rather than open ground.

*Backfill of Structure 2 (after 1500–1600)*

The reservoir was backfilled with successive deposits which included demolition debris. This infilling marked the disuse of the reservoir. The lowest demolition/infill deposit was gravel (surface level up to 10.74m OD), itself overlaid by silty brown clay (surface level up to 10.90m OD). This was sealed by a deposit of clay with occasional chalk blocks interpreted as the remains of tanking which had collapsed inwards. This was overlain by successive layers which included a brick and mortar rubble, silty yellow clay and a mid-dark orange brown silty clay with frequent orange brown clay patches (further tanking), up to 50% made up from brick derived from the demolition of reservoir walls. This included Tudor Brown ware (dated 1480–1600) which may have been redeposited during the demolition process. The demolition layer was overlain by a mixture of dark brown silty sand and buff mortar with brick, tile and charcoal fragments (*ie* general demolition debris).

*Post hole (1650–1700)*

The brick drain base to the south of the reservoir was cut into by a post hole. This was backfilled with material dated overall to 1650–1700 by the presence of green-glazed post-medieval slip-coated redware, red Border ware, Staffordshire slipware and Staffordshire white salt-glazed stoneware.

The cutting of this feature marks the disuse of the drain and may also coincide with the demolition of the reservoir, and as such would date the disuse of the reservoir.

### **Period 6: Open Area 7, Structure 3 (well) (1500/1600–1792)**

In Period 6 Building 1 had been demolished and then covered over by a new external surface. A brick-lined well replaced the disused reservoir. During the late 16th century a range of timber framed buildings had been constructed along Homerton High Street and, as with Period 5, it is possible that redevelopment was undertaken during this period. Building 1 was demolished and replaced by a building beyond the site limits. The new external surface served this building, probably Yard C depicted on the plan of 1792 (Fig 5).

Open Area 7 included extensive successive brickearth surfaces deposited across Open Area 6 and the plot of Building 1 after its demolition. Metallings and dumps had been deposited along the western edge of the surfaces. A linear gully marked the division between the metallings and the surfaces.

#### *Phase 1*

Building 1 had been truncated at a general level of up to c.11.54m OD. The truncation level applied equally to foundations and make up layers. After truncation make up layers and an overlying brickearth surface had been deposited, sealing the remains of Building 1.

A compact brickearth had been deposited over the truncated base of Building 1. This layer was between 20 and 60mm thick with a surface level of 11.60m OD. This layer may have been a surface. It acted as the base for gravel, deposited as a make up layer which was up to 80mm thick with a surface level of 11.69m OD. The make up was overlain by brickearth slab (surface level 11.83m OD), which was up to 130mm thick. The remains of a chalk surface adhered to the upper face of the slab and some scorching was visible. This represented the remains of an extensive surface, the west edge of which was beyond the limit of the demolished Building 1.

The foundation which delimited the west side of Building 1 was not parallel to the edge of the

brickearth surface. Apparently the alignment and limits of Building 1 were unknown at the time of the deposition of the surface.

As no foundations, robbing cuts, internal features (eg stake holes) or other indicators survived it is probable that the brickearth slab did not represent surfaces within a building. Such an external surface may have related to a building beyond the limits of the excavation area.

#### *Phase 2*

To the west of and overlying the Open Area 7 Phase 1 surfaces was a series of metallated surfaces which incorporated a shallow gully at the western edge of Open Area 7 Phase 1. The gully marked the limit of Open Area 7 Phase 1.

A demolition dump of chalk and peg tile dump overlay Open Area 7 Phase 1 at its western edge. This deposit was 80m thick with a surface level of 11.81m OD. The debris probably derived from the demolition of Building 1. To the west of this dump were successive metallings with surface levels of 11.62m OD and surface level 11.87m OD. These were deposited over surfaces contemporary with Building 1.

A shallow (base level 11.44m OD, depth 290mm at maximum) north-south gully overlay the metallings discussed above. The linear alignment of this gully was the same as that of the west edge to the Open Area 7 Phase 1 surfaces. The gully was 1.50m wide and acted as a water run-off for Open Area 7.

#### *Phase 3: disuse (1792–1800)*

The disuse of Open Area 7 was marked by the infilling of the gully which had been backfilled with a grey-brown silty clay which extended east to seal the Open Area 7 Phase 2 demolition debris dump. The backfill was dated overall to 1700–1800 by pottery which included Frechen stoneware, Nottingham stoneware, post-medieval black-glazed ware, post-medieval redware, red Border ware, Staffordshire butterpot and English tin-glazed ware. The deposition of this infill marked the disuse of the gully and related surfaces which had also been sealed. Open Area 7 was probably sealed over as part of the demolition known to have taken place of Building 'AA' on Fig 5 between 1792 and 1800.

### Structure 3: well (before 1770–1900)

The backfill of the Structure 1, the brick-lined reservoir, had been cut through by a circular brick-lined well. The insertion of this feature implied foreknowledge of the water source which had been exploited earlier in this area of the site. The dating of the use of the well is based on it predating the backfill, which marked its disuse. The well survived to a level of 10.51m OD, and although not bottomed, its base level was below 9.32m OD.

The well been backfilled with successive deposits which included creamware and post-medieval redware dated overall to 1770–1900. It is probable that the backfilling took place at the time of the demolition of buildings depicted on the 1792 plan of the site area (Fig 5).

### Period 7: disuse of Open Area 7 (1792–1800)

Period 7 saw excavation into the external surfaces which extended across the demolished Building 1. The building stood beyond the site limits of which Open Area 7 was part and was demolished in the period 1792–80. Period 7 is thus associated with this demolition.

### Robbing cut (1792–1800)

A cut had been made into the surface of Open Area 7. This cut respected the alignment, depth and extent of the east-west aligned southern Building 1 foundation. Presumably the cut had been made as an exploratory cut to find out the extent of any underlying foundations. The cut had been backfilled with material which included post-medieval redware and Nottingham stoneware dated overall to 1600–1800. It is most likely that this was also associated with demolition known to have taken place between 1792 and 1800.

### Stake hole group (1792–1800)

A group of two parallel rows of stake holes cut through Open Area 7 into the east-west aligned southern Building 1 foundation. Eight stake holes were recorded; two rows aligned north-south. The rows were 1.20m apart, with the north-

south distance between each stake hole 1.60m. Each stake hole was rectangular with rounded corners. Base levels were 10.35m OD–11.03m OD. The stake hole group was backfilled with a uniform dark grey-brown silt which included demolition rubble and pottery including post-medieval redware and English tin-glazed ware dated overall to 1600–1800.

The stake holes were made for a structure with a uniform construction. As they were cut through the Building 1 foundation to the east of surfaces Open Area 7 their association with demolition, or possibly construction would be apparent. They were possibly the base for scaffolding and were associated with demolition known to have taken place between 1792 and 1800.

### Period 8: Building 2 (after 1792–1800)

In Period 8 a complex of brick foundations was constructed to the north of the site after the backfilling of the stakeholes discussed above (Figs 19, 20). The buildings represented by these foundation are depicted on maps of 1831 and 1870 (Figs 6 and 7). They were probably constructed shortly after the demolition known

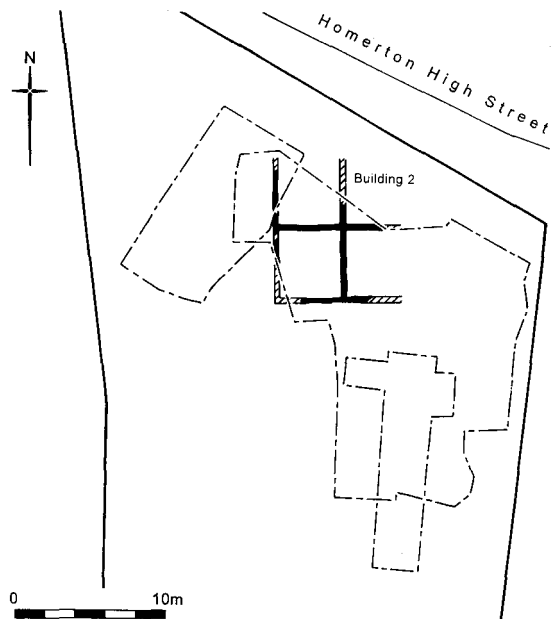


Fig 19. Plan of Building 2

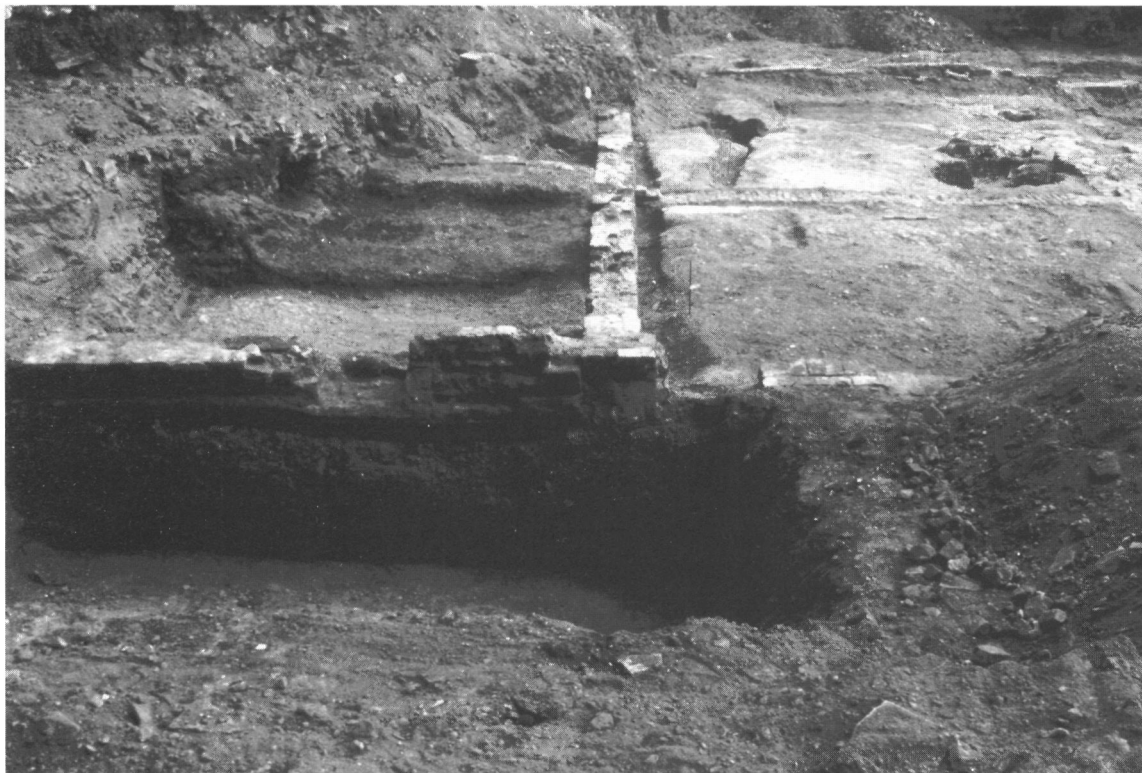


Fig 20. The foundations of Building 2 seen from the west. Scale is  $5 \times 100\text{mm}$  units

to have been undertaken in preparation for the setting out of Link Street by 1800.

Building 2 represents the remains of the buildings constructed along the newly laid out Link Street after 1800 subsequent to the demolition of the buildings on the 1792 plan (Fig 5). Building 2 consisted of a series of brick foundations constructed at right angles and parallel to each other (Figs 19, 20). The relationships were mainly abutting and the foundations could be of one building, or a group of adjacent buildings constructed together. Map evidence would suggest the latter. No surfaces of internal features survived. The backfill of the construction cuts for these foundations included English tin-glazed ware, yellow glazed border ware, post-medieval redware and imported German Frechen stoneware dated overall to 1600–1800.

The bricks employed were of various types including both pre-Great Fire types and later types indicating reuse of demolition debris. Base level of the foundations was 11.44m OD–11.80m OD. They were truncated at up to 12.27m OD.

## CONCLUSIONS

The excavation at the Link Street site has provided evidence for the nature and date of the earliest cultural activities in Homerton. Additionally, the presence of brickearth overlying the Taplow Gravel on the site adds to the geological knowledge of the area.

There was no evidence for prehistoric or Roman activity on the site, thus bearing out the theory that there was no Roman precursor to Homerton High Street. Furthermore, there was no indication of Saxon activity. As the earliest features on the site directly overlay the geological horizon it would appear that these represent the earliest cultural indicators in this part of Homerton. If Saxon, or earlier, development had taken place in Homerton evidence might have been expected in the site area due to its location between the road and Hackney Brook.

The excavation has provided evidence for agricultural activity in the early hamlet of Homerton. The earliest activities on the site included a series of plough furrows cut into the

surface of the brickearth and backfilled between the late 11th century and the late 13th/early 14th centuries (Open Area 2). The backfilled furrows were overlain by plough soil, further evidence for agricultural activity. During this period a chalk foundation (Structure 1) was constructed at the south of the site, near to Hackney Brook which flowed eastwards to drain into the River Lea. Structure 1, although fragmentary, constituted the earliest recorded evidence for the built environment in Homerton and possibly dated from the 11th or 12th centuries. Homerton was known as a hamlet by the third quarter of the 14th century.

There is evidence, supported by archaeology, that Homerton had begun to expand during the mid 1400s. By the late 15th/early 16th centuries the plough soil on the site had been sealed by external surfaces of brickearth, sand, chalk and mortar which acted as the base for Building 1. This was probably constructed during the period of Homerton's expansion. The Homerton ward was established as a sub division of the parish of St John at Hackney by the mid 1400s. The ward itself was primarily a unit for the assessment and collection of parish taxation. This suggests that Homerton had increased in prosperity to such degree that it had gained a greater profile in the parish as a whole. It would therefore be expected that Homerton had begun to flourish during this period and was being developed.

Building 1 would have been timber-framed with an oven, integral to its construction, within its south-west corner. There were external metalled and chalk surfaces to the west of the building, with a pit cut made into them.

A series of ditches had been cut to the south of the building, one of which incorporated a timber sluice. Water management was taking place behind Building 1, between the building and Hackney Brook. It is probable that as well as being a ready water supply for agricultural purposes, the brook may have been prone to seasonal flooding which required management.

By 1540 the site area had been incorporated into the estate of Ralph Sadleir, resident at the newly built Sutton House from shortly after 1535. This estate included a house on the south side of Homerton High Street, perhaps Building 1 which was standing during this period. Even if not this particular house, Building 1 must have changed hands when Sadleir's estate was formed. Sadleir's acquisition of the property may have seen changes made to the building or the area

surrounding it. Homerton overall would have undergone further changes when the Manor of Hackney was granted to Thomas, Lord Wentworth in 1550. Beyond the limits of Sadleir's estate it is known that a range of timber framed buildings were constructed on the north side of Homerton High Street between c.1570–80. It is clear that the second and third quarters of the 16th century saw major changes to Homerton.

The pit to the west of Building 1 had been backfilled during the 16th century after which a garden type soil was laid outside the building. The ditches to the south of the building were backfilled between the late 15th century and the mid 16th century. It is possible that these changes took place when the site passed into the ownership of Sadleir. After their backfilling the ditches were replaced by a brick-lined reservoir (Structure 2) which was constructed to the south of Building 1 by the late 16th century. The reservoir was built to respect the alignment of Building 1 which must have been standing at the time of its construction.

Although the excavation could not establish a date for the demolition of Building 1, it had been demolished by the time of the 1746 Rocque map, and the reservoir was backfilled after 1500–1600. An external brickearth and metalled surface extended across the truncated foundations of Building 1. This surface was depicted on a plan dated 1792, to the west of a building beyond the eastern limit of the site. The 1792 plan shows a reservoir to the south of this later building, probably a replacement for the one to the south of Building 1. This later building was pulled down to make way for Link Street, which was set out by 1800.

This excavation has demonstrated that meaningful archaeological evidence exists in this part of Hackney. It has shown there was an unbroken sequence of development from the 11th to the 19th century. Not only does this site show the potential for archaeological survival in this area, it also provides a bench mark against which any future archaeological investigation in Homerton should be measured.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> British Geological Survey England and Wales sheet 256 North London 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Unitary Development Plan (UDP) 26 SMR 080018A.

<sup>3</sup> UDP 29 SMR 080024.

<sup>4</sup> UDP 40 SMR 080059.

- <sup>5</sup> UDP 43 SMR o8o075.  
<sup>6</sup> UDP 85 SMR o8o111.  
<sup>7</sup> Pete Mills pers comm.  
<sup>8</sup> which extended back from a frontage on Lower Clapton Road between the current Laura Place and Linscott Road.  
<sup>9</sup> UDP 48 SMR o8o090/1.  
<sup>10</sup> UDP 50 SMR o8o106.  
<sup>11</sup> Hackney Archives Department (HAD) Topographical Index.  
<sup>12</sup> HAD M820.  
<sup>13</sup> HAD M820, HAD M1045, EPNS, 108.  
<sup>14</sup> HAD D/F/TYS/1.  
<sup>15</sup> HAD M 1049.  
<sup>16</sup> HAD Topographical index.

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