

**REPORT ON
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF
AT
178-182 NEW CROSS ROAD**

1 ABSTRACT

- 1.1 *The following report details the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken by AOC Archaeology between 4th January and 8th January 2007 at 178-182 New Cross Road, (TQ 3573 7690)*
- 1.2 *Following on from building recording of the properties 178 and 182 New Cross Road, all properties save the front of No. 182 and an adjoining arched entrance were demolished and a scheme of ground reduction to set formation levels for the new builds was observed. Other than 19th and 20th century service runs and foundations for the previously demolished buildings, no archaeology was observed.*

2 INTRODUCTION

Site Location ([Figures 1](#) and [2](#))

- 2.1 The site is located in the London Borough of Lewisham. The National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is TQ 3573 7690. The site was most recently occupied by 182 New Cross Road along the southern boundary, together with a range of buildings to the west and north. 178 New Cross Road bound the site to the northeast.

Development Proposals

- 2.2 The development of the site includes the retention of the facade of the former cinema and the demolition of the other buildings occupying the site. These are to be replaced with the construction of a residential development to the west, office space within the former cinema (182 New Cross Road), a central open area and restaurant space at 178 New Cross Road.

Planning Background

- 2.3 Planning consent for the redevelopment of 178 & 182 New Cross Road has been granted by Lewisham Borough Council (Planning Application Nos. 06/61637 & 06/61638/CAC). Due to the location of this site within an Archaeological Priority Zone, as designated by the London Borough of Lewisham in its Unitary Development Plan, a condition was attached to the planning consent requiring the applicant to implement a programme of archaeological work in advance of any development.
- 2.4 The first stage of this programme of archaeological work was the production of an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment (CgMs 2006). On the basis of this

document the archaeology advisor to the London Borough of Lewisham, Mark Stevenson, required further archaeological mitigation works be undertaken in the form of a Level 2 Historic Building Record. This was duly executed and the Watching Brief on the ground disturbance works was conducted in January 2007

3 SCOPE OF WORKS

- 3.1 The Watching Brief was conducted upon the excavation of any deposits below the removed concrete floor levels of the demolished buildings and tarmac of the yard surfaces.

4. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Prehistoric occupation in New Cross was largely confined to gravel islands and brickearth. Previous archaeological work in the area has revealed surviving brickearth deposits beneath the 19th and 20th century made ground. Of particular note was work undertaken at Bramcote Lane to the north of the site where a prehistoric trackway was excavated.
- 4.2 The Roman Watling Street between Dover and London had been maintained into the modern period and allowed a significant increase of haulage traffic and passenger coaches.
- 4.3 The original name for the area, Hatcham, is of Saxon origin; and the toll gate at Hatcham was called New Cross Gate, after the New Cross Inn: the new name gradually replaced the old.
- 4.4 A building in the location of 182 New Cross Road is shown on the 1844 Tithe Map and two other buildings are present: one at the rear, identified as the Coach-house; and one at the end of a terrace, which became No. 178. The terrace is dated by a plaque to 1836
- 4.5 A directory of London businesses, published 1892-1893, mentions the 'dealer in horses and job master', Mr Charles Ranford at 182 New Cross Road was established there 'over sixty years ago'. It is this stable precinct that appears to be shown on the map.
- 4.6 The 1868 Ordnance Survey Map (Figure 5) shows more of the site developed save for an open area in the middle, and these buildings had been altered by the time of the publication of the 1894 OS Map. Three images of the site predating the establishment of the Electric Empire Cinema give images of the site as it appeared during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

- 4.7 Mr Ranford vacated the site, and the Electric Cinema, 182 New Cross Road opened on September 23rd, 1909. The advertisements described the cinema as the 'most up to date in south London', with admission prices being 3d and 6d for a reserved seat. Apparently, 2,000 people turned up for the opening show, but the capacity was little more than 300. The owners of the cinema frequently ran foul of the London County Council, particularly due to the absence of public conveniences. Licensing and regranting of the license to operate was allowed on the guarantee that such facilities would be constructed. This finally seems to have occurred in January 1915 (*George, 1987*). The Electric Empire closed in 1917 and was used thereafter as a car workshop. Minor alterations to the layout of the site continued throughout the 20th century, including the conversion of 178, New Cross Road to a nightclub.

5 METHODOLOGY

- 5.1 Prior to the building recording phase a unique code for the project **NXR06** was obtained from the Museum of London
- 5.2 Ground reduction below the floor levels was monitored starting on the south side of site (from the facade of 182) moving from east to west and moving northerly behind the property of 180 New Cross Road. This was followed by reduction from the front of 178 New Cross Road again moving westerly. Two small trial pits, against the south facing wall of 176 and the north facing wall of 180 were dug. A record was made of these since they showed the average depth of subsoil onto the natural soils.
- 5.3 The watching brief was maintained during five days of ground reduction. Due to the absence of any archaeological features, the watching brief was suspended after across 75% of the site had been monitored. Care was taken to especially observe the street front areas and their back plots.
- 5.3 The Watching Brief was undertaken by Mr Fitz under the overall project management of Ron Humphrey for AOC Archaeology.

6 RESULTS

- 6.1 The lowest deposit encountered during the watching brief was firm yellowish brown silty clay (004), interpreted as naturally deposited brickearth. This lay at around 4.52m OD, and was observed to be very clean, with no organic or cultural remains apparent. The full depth of the brickearth was not investigated.
- 6.2 Above the brickearth was a layer of mid-brown clayey silty sand (003), with rounded and sub-rounded gravel inclusions. Although moderately compact, it was quite soft and friable. This lay at 5.28m OD and was up to 0.80m thick. This is interpreted as subsoil.

- 6.3 Light brownish yellow silty sand (002) up to 0.20m thick was observed in sporadic areas all over site. It also lacked any evidence of disturbance or reworking, and therefore be little more than variation in the subsoil. Its surface was at 5.47m OD.
- 6.4 The uppermost soil horizon was dark brown sandy silt likely to have been buried topsoil (001). It lay directly under the most recent floor and yard surfaces, and had been intruded upon by foundations and services relating to the recently demolished structures. It was up to 0.35m thick, and lay at 5.78m OD
- 6.5 There was the potential for earlier yard or building surfaces to be present beneath the standing buildings' associated concrete and tarmac surfaces. Only one small patch of previous flooring was present: three bipartite bricks moulded with "1837-1897 Diamond Jubilee" survived cemented to a manhole chamber. No other evidence of any previous flooring was apparent. If any had been present, they must have been comprehensively removed prior to the addition of the most recent floors

7 FINDS

- 7.1 No finds were retained during the Watching brief. All finds were 19th Century or later in the fills of service cuts.

78 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 No evidence of any buildings predating the recently demolished structures survive, the diamond jubilee bricks are from Queen Victoria's reign, and only serve to prove that there was a yard surface in 1897. This was previously known through examination of historic Ordnance Survey maps.
- 8.2 Also, no cut features of any date were observed, indicating that the site was undeveloped until the establishment of the buildings on the site that are now demolished.
- 8.3 It is assumed that the layer of mid brown clayey sand (003) is naturally formed subsoil and not widespread made ground. Whilst being a fairly rich alluvial soil it was quite sterile with not even evidence of decomposing vegetation or tree root runs. So it would seem it was unworked until development in the 19th century. Had it been market garden soils or similar, a certain amount of inclusions are likely to have been present.

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Fig.1

Fig.2

APPENDIX A: CONTEXT REGISTER

Context	Context Description	Length	Width	Depth
001	Made ground-current surface	site	site	0.20m
002	Light brown yellow silty sand	Variable/patchy	Variable/patchy	0.20m
003	Mid brown subsoil	site	site	>0.80m
004	Fluvial brickearth	site	site	n/a

Appendix B: OASIS Form

Project details

Project name	178-182 New Cross Road, Lewisham. Archaeological Watching Brief
Short description of the project	Following on from HBR work in 2006, a watching brief was conducted on limited ground reduction of the area once the buildings were demolished. no archaeological features or artefacts were recorded.
Project dates	Start: 04-01-2007 End: 08-01-2007
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	7625 - Contracting Unit No.
Any associated project reference codes	NXR06 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON LEWISHAM DEPTFORD AND NEWCROSS 178-182 New Cross Road
Postcode	SE15
Study area	1350.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3573 7690 51.4742547984 -0.04542260313870 51 28 27 N 000 02 43 W Point
Height OD	Min: 4.55m Max: 4.60m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	AOC Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	Les Capon AOC Archaeology

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Project director/manager	Les Capon
Project supervisor	Fitz
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Pure lake

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London
Digital Archive ID	NXR 06
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Digital Media available	'Spreadsheets','Text'
Digital Archive notes	Archive will be amalgamated with the 2006 HBR project
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London
Paper Archive ID	NXR06
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Microfilm','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Report'
Paper Archive notes	Archive will be amalgamated with the 2006 HBR project

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	an archaeological watching Brief on ground reduction at 178-182 New Cross Road, Lewisham
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Fitz
Date	2007
Issuer or publisher	AOC Archaeology Group
Place of issue or publication	Twickenham office
Description	A4 text and illustration document