

1 ABSTRACT

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group between 24th and 25th July 2007 at St Mary's CE School, Fowler Rd, London Borough of Islington, on behalf of CB Swift. The aim of the watching brief was to assess the impact of the proposed development on any surviving archaeological remains.

The watching brief involved the removal of a garden planter retaining wall and the observation of an L shaped foundation trench excavation. Natural gravels were identified 1.65m below ground surface. They were overlain by a deposit of dark brown sandy silt and subsequent layers of made ground associated with the construction of the present school building. No significant archaeological remains or finds were identified during the watching brief.

2 SITE LOCATION

- 2.1 The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 3184 8399, and is within land bounded by Shillingford Street to the west, Fowler Road to the south, and residential properties to the north and east.
- 2.2 Currently the site is occupied by St Mary's Church of England School.

3 GEOLOGY AND TOPOGRAPHY

- 3.1 The British Geological Survey map (BGS Sheet 256), indicates that the site is situated upon London Clay.

4 PLANNING BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The local planning authority is the London Borough of Islington. Archaeological advice to the Borough is provided by the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service (GLAAS).
- 4.2 The proposed development (Application No.: P061376), had an archaeological condition placed upon it, stating that a watching brief should be maintained during ground works.
- 4.3 This document reports on the results of the archaeological watching brief undertaken to identify any archaeological remains that might be threatened by the proposed development.

5 ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- 5.1 The following information is drawn from the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 2007), and the results of a search on the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR).

Prehistoric

- 5.2 A number of prehistoric implements have been found in Islington, but most are from secondary deposits. A prehistoric river ran through the area in nearby Finsbury Park (ML01693). In nearby Clerkenwell evidence for a Late Iron Age settlement was discovered during excavations, with a large Middle to Late Iron Age 2m wide terminus at Clerkenwell Close.

Roman

- 5.3 Roman finds are rare in Islington even though it is thought that Ermin Road passed through the area from Cripplegate to St Alban's. However 4 sherds of residual pottery were found mixed in later medieval deposits at Popham Street (MLO74915), and two Roman gravestones were discovered although these are now thought to be imported.

Anglo-Saxon

- 5.4 In late Anglo-Saxon times Islington was known as *Gislandune*. From about the 5th century most of the land in what is now Islington was owned by religious institutions and was divided up into six manors. These manors belonged to the canons of St Paul's, before being sold to Ralph de Berners and the knights of St John. Excavations at 71-85 Essex Road produced a single sherd of pottery in a water logged deposit (MLO63326).

Medieval

- 5.5 Islington, called in the Domesday Book Iseldone, or the "lower town," appears to have derived its name from its situation with regard to Tolentone, the modern Highbury. A small village on the fringe of the city, it was an overnight stop for cattle on the way to Smithfield's. Several public houses are mentioned in the records. An inn on Essex Road bore the coat of arms for Henry VII and Henry VIII (MLO404). The courts of the Manor of Barnsbury were held in an unnamed public house on Upper Street in the 19th century (MLO1452).
- 5.6 Excavations in nearby streets are consistent with open fields or gardens; cultivation soil being found in Popham Street (MLO74916). A rubbish pit was found on Essex Road (MLO63370) and a pit on Upper Street contained a nearly complete 16th century vessel (MLO76149). Two ditches were excavated in Dagmar terrace and produced material of 14th or 15th century date (MLO16268).
- 5.7 Islington was also an important route for fresh water to enter the city of London and several mentions of culverts and conduits can be found in the GLSMR. A conduit providing a second water supply to the city at Cripplegate was located in Canonbury. This also supplied a pump at the west end of St Paul's Rd (MLO343) although this has not been confirmed by excavation. A 16th century culvert was excavated on Essex Road (MLO63360) and several wells made up part of the Charterhouse conduit (MLO46142).
- 5.8 The former Church of St Mary's Islington stood on the site of the present church and could date back to Saxon times. References to the church go back to 1128. However, when the present church was built in 1741 no structures were found to date earlier than the 15th century (MLO1751).

Post-Medieval

- 5.9 The six manors during this period were split into smaller parcels of land until the dissolution of the monasteries when most of the estates were sold off to Tudor courtiers. In the 16th century Islington was renowned for its handsome mansions with gardens and orchards. Many excavations around Essex Road have revealed brick cellared houses. One of these; the 17th century Fisher House, was located on Essex Road and was the home to the Fowler and the Fisher families, before being used as an asylum and eventually demolished in 1845 (MLO1517). Several excavations in the area have uncovered rubbish pits. Investigations at 131-132

- Upper Street identified several pits sealed by a gravel courtyard surface (MLO76997).
- 5.10 The area also became noted for good dairy farms which supplied London's milk and for the pure water from its springs. Several excavations have uncovered water management schemes such as drainage ditches and brick built culverts. A farmstead is recorded as being a farm for the poor of the city and was located on Essex Road (MLO16281).
- 5.11 The major redevelopment of Islington began at the end of the 18th century, by which time the High Street and some terraces had been built. The main building period began in the 1820s as the squares and terraces of Barnsbury appeared.
- 5.12 An excavation at St Mary's Primary School revealed the basement of a domestic building (MLO63431).

6 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 The aims of the Watching Brief were:
- To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the site.
 - To determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality and date of any archaeological remains encountered.
 - To record and sample excavate any archaeological remains encountered.
 - To assess the ecofactual and environmental potential of any archaeological features and deposits.
 - To determine the nature and extent of existing truncations of the archaeological deposits.
 - To enable GLAAS to make an informed decision on the status of the condition on the planning permission, and any possible requirement for further work in order to satisfy that condition.
 - To make available to interested parties the results of the investigation in order to inform the mitigation strategy as part of the planning process.
- 6.2 The specific objectives of the Watching Brief were to:
- Determine the presence of any remains of prehistoric date.
 - Determine the presence of any remains of Saxon date on the site.
 - Assess the potential of the site to inform on the medieval development and chronology of Islington.
 - Assess the potential of the site to inform on the post-medieval development and chronology of Islington.
 - Assess the degree and extent of truncation of earlier deposits by the phases of late post-medieval and modern building on the site.

- 6.3 The final aim is to make public the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality restrictions.

7 METHODOLOGY

- 7.1 All works were conducted in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 2007).
- 7.2 Prior to commencing work a unique site code for the project (**FOW 07**) was obtained.
- 7.3 All excavations were carried out using a 360° tracked excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under the constant supervision of an experienced archaeologist.
- 7.4 Initially a garden planter and associated made ground were removed. The trench was then excavated for the placement of foundation footings. Excavation continued until the contractor reached the required depth.
- 7.5 On completion of machine excavation, all faces of trenches that required examination or recording were cleaned using appropriate hand tools.
- 7.6 Although no archaeological remains were identified, the full stratigraphic sequence was recorded.
- 7.7 All excavation was undertaken with a view to avoiding damage to any archaeological features or deposits which appeared to be demonstrably worthy of preservation *in situ*.
- 7.8 The watching brief was undertaken by Leigh Savage under the overall project management of Ron Humphrey for AOC Archaeology.

8 RESULTS

8.1 Table of results

N.B. 0.00m = top of garden planter and retaining wall. Present ground level at 1.50m.

Trench 1

0.00 to 0.30m	(1/001). Loose dark brown clayey silt. Topsoil.
0.30 to 1.50m	(1/002). Loosely compacted crushed hardcore in a yellow white sandy silt matrix. 20 th century made ground.
1.50 to 2.00m	(1/003). Moderately compacted mid brown silt matrix. Frequent building material inclusions. 20 th century made ground.
2.00 to 2.20m	(1/004). Grey white concrete. 20 th century concrete slab.
2.20 to 3.10m	(1/005). Moderately – firmly compacted mid brown silty clay. 20 th century made ground.
3.10 to 3.24m	(1/006). Loosely compacted dark brown/grey damp sandy silt. Peat lens.
3.24 NFE	(1/007). Compact stained mid brown gravel. Natural gravels.

8.2 Trench 1 was located to the east side of the present school building (Figure 2). A garden planter retaining wall 1.50m high resulted in all measurements being taken from the top of this feature. The actual present ground level is 1.50m below the first measurement.

8.3 The earliest deposit was a stained mid brown firmly compacted natural gravel (1/007). Overlying this was a deposit of damp dark brown/grey peat (1/006). This was 1.06m long in section. No archaeological remains were present overlying or cutting these deposits. Sealing the peat and gravels was a silty clay (1/005) with frequent gravel and brick fragment inclusions, laid to level the ground surface when the present school was built. It was sealed by a concrete slab (1/004) 0.20m thick. The slab was in turn sealed by two deposits of made ground (1/003) and (1/002) which were overlain by a topsoil deposit (1/001).

8.4 No significant archaeological remains were identified in Trench 1.

9 FINDS

9.1 No finds, *in situ* or residual, were retrieved from the trench.

10 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 No evidence for any archaeological activity was identified on the site.
- 10.2 The watching brief met its primary objective: to establish the presence/absence of any archaeological remains. As no significant archaeological remains were present it is therefore recommended that no further archaeological fieldwork is required to satisfy the archaeological planning condition on this site. However, the final decision regarding any further work will rest with the London Borough of Islington and its archaeology advisor.
- 10.3 Publication of the results will be through the ADS OASIS form (Appendix B) with a short summary submitted to the London Archaeologist fieldwork round-up.

11 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Figure 1 – Site Location

Figure 2 – Detailed Site location

Figure 3 – Trench Location

APPENDIX A – CONTEXT REGISTER

Context No.	Context Description	Length	Width	Depth
1/001	Topsoil	5.00m	0.70m	0.30m
1/002	Garden Planter and made ground C20th	5.00m	0.70m	1.20m
1/003	C20th made ground	5.00m	0.70m	0.50m
1/004	Concrete slab	5.00m	0.70m	0.20m
1/005	C20th made ground	5.00m	0.70m	0.90m
1/006	Peat patch and natural gravels	1.06m	NFE	0.14m+
1/007	Stained natural gravel	5.00m	0.70m	NFE

APPENDIX B: Oasis Form

1 OASIS DATA COLLECTION FORM: ENGLAND

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1.1.1 Printable version

1.2 OASIS ID: aocarcha1-29666

Project details

Project name	St Mary's CE School, Fowler Road, London Borough of Islington: An Archaeological Watching Brief Report
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by AOC Archaeology Group between 24th and 25th July 2007 at St Mary's CE School, Fowler Rd, London Borough of Islington, on behalf of CB Swift. The aim of the watching brief was to assess the impact of the proposed development on any surviving archaeological remains. The watching brief involved the removal of a garden planter and the observation of an L shaped foundation trench being excavated. It was evident that the ground had been raised during the demolition of the previous school and the building of the new school. No in-situ archaeological remains were observed
Project dates	Start: 24-07-2007 End: 25-07-2007
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	FOW 07 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'

Prompt Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON ISLINGTON ISLINGTON St Mary's CE School
Postcode	N1
Study area	4000.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3184 8399 51.5388983591 -0.09875579255910 51 32 20 N 000 05 55 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	AOC Archaeology
Project brief originator	Contractor (design and execute)
Project design originator	AOC Archaeology
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard
Project supervisor	Leigh Savage
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	C. B. Swift Building Consultancy and Project Management

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London
Digital Archive ID	FOW 07
Digital Contents	'none'
Digital Media available	'Database','Images raster / digital photography','Images vector','Spreadsheets','Text'
Digital Archive notes	Archive to be retained at AOC until ready for deposition with the Museum of London.
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London
Paper Archive ID	FOW 07
Paper Contents	'none'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Correspondence','Drawing','Map','Microfilm','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Unpublished Text'
Paper Archive notes	Archive to be retained at AOC until ready for deposition with the Museum of London.

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Entered by Andy Leonard (andyleonard@aocarchaeology.co.uk)

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2 OASIS:

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