ALBERTA HOUSE,BLACKWALL, LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

An Archaeological Evaluation Report

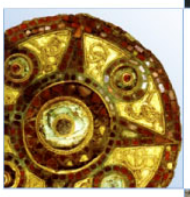
Planning Application Number: PA/O6/01501

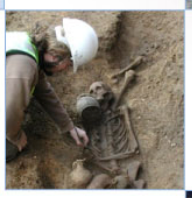
National Grid Reference Number: TQ 3845 8049

AOC Project no: 7912

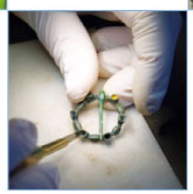
Date: December 2008











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ALBERTA HOUSE, BLACKWALL, LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS

An Archaeological Evaluation Report

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National Grid Reference (NGR):	**TQ 3845 8049**
AOC Project No:	**7912**
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Date of Report:	**December 2008**

This document has been prepared in accordance with AOC standard operating procedures.

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Non-Technical Summary

This document presents the results of an Archaeological Evaluation undertaken at Alberta House, Blackwall, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The archaeological sequence is described, and recommendations for further work indicated.

Two trenches were excavated, each 8m x 2m at base, stepped in several times because of their depth. In both trenches at the base of the sequence were natural Pleistocene gravels. Above this there was a thin layer of peaty clay with frequent wood inclusions, interpreted as a buried land surface. In one trench (Trench 1) this produced a sherd of pottery and a fragment of bone. The pottery is not diagnostic, but appears to be of prehistoric date. It has a carbon residue on its inner surface, which is suitable for radiocarbon dating. The bone is a fragment of cattle-sized longbone. Plant remains within environmental samples taken from this layer show that just before the land surface was flooded it was wet woodland, probably 'Alder Carr'. Land surfaces have been recorded elsewhere in similar topographical contexts in the Thames estuary, and are of prehistoric date.

The buried land surface was sealed by naturally deposited alluvial clay, associated with the rise in sea levels during the Holocene period. In Trench 2 a layer of peat within the alluvium may represent a period of marshy environmental conditions during a phase of marine regression. The plant remains indicate wet woodland was also present when this peat was being deposited. Above the alluvium, made ground completed the sequence.

It is recommended that three radiocarbon dates are obtained from the land surface: one from the pottery sherd and two from plant remains (one from each trench). It is also recommended that mollusc remains from one of the environmental samples is analysed.

1. Introduction

1.1 Site Location

1.1.1 The site is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 3845 8049 (Figure 1) and is within land bounded by Gaselee Street to the west, Blackwall Way to the east and St Lawrence Street to the south.

1.1.2 The site is roughly rectangular, aligned north-south and measures approximately 2000m^2.

1.2 Development Proposal

1.2.1 At the time of the evaluation the site was vacant, with all standing buildings having been demolished. The proposed development is for two residential blocks between 6 and 25 storeys high and associated amenities.

1.3 Planning Background

1.3.1 The local planning authority is the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Archaeological advice to the council is provided by the David Divers of the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS).

1.3.2 GLAAS recommended that an archaeology condition was placed on any planning permission to secure a programme of archaeological work.

1.3.3 Planning permission to undertake the development of Site 1 has been granted under the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) (Ref No.: PA/06/01501), subject to conditions. The condition states that:

"No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme pursuant to this condition. The archaeological works shall be carried out by a suitably qualified investigating body acceptable to the Local Planning Authority"

"Informative: The development of this site is likely to damage archaeological remains. The applicant should therefore submit detailed proposals in the form of an archaeological project design. The design should be in accordance with the appropriate English Heritage Guidelines"

This condition has been required in accordance with Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning (PPG 16) issued by the Department of the Environment in 1990 (DoE, 1990).

1.3.4 The site does not lie within an Area of Archaeological Importance or Potential as defined by the Tower Hamlets Unitary Development Plan. Nor does it lie within a Conservation Area although Nos 1-6 St Lawrence Street, adjacent to the site are locally listed (LST198).

1.3.5 The first stage in the investigation was the production of a Desk Based Assessment (AOC 2007). In response to this, and in order to meet the requirements of the condition detailed above (Section 1.4.3) an archaeological evaluation was undertaken. The evaluation was intended to assess the archaeological potential of the site and inform the planning decision about an appropriate mitigation strategy, in relation to the destruction of the potential archaeological resource.

1.3.6 A Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) for the site was prepared and submitted to GLAAS for approval prior to the evaluation (AOC, 2008).

1.4 Methodology

1.4.1 The Field Evaluation comprised the excavation of 2 trenches each 8m x 2m at the base (Figure 2) representing roughly 2% of the site area. Due to the depth of made ground encountered the trenches were stepped in order to allow safe access.

1.4.2 The entire site was visually inspected before the commencement of any machine excavation. The area was subsequently CAT scanned prior to excavation and service plans consulted.

1.4.3 All overburden was removed down to the top of the first recognizable archaeological horizon or the uppermost natural deposit using a mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. All machining was carried out under direct control of an experienced archaeologist.

1.4.4 On completion of machine excavation, all faces of trenches that required examination or recording were cleaned using appropriate hand tools and the full stratigraphic sequence was recorded.

1.4.5 The site code GAO 08 was obtained from the Museum of London for the project, and used for all fieldwork.

1.4.6 All recording was undertaken in accordance with the standards and requirements of the Archaeological Field Manual (Museum of London Archaeology Service, 1994) and the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC, 2008).

1.4.7 All trenches were accurately located to the National Grid. A temporary benchmark was established on site, transferred from the nearest Ordnance Survey bench mark (OSBM).

1.4.8 After recording the trenches were backfilled with excavated material and compacted with the excavator's machine bucket only.

1.4.9 The Evaluation work was completed in 4 days, supervised by Tim Carew, Project Officer under the overall project management of Andy Leonard, Fieldwork Manager.

1.5 Aims and Objectives

1.5.1 The aims of the Evaluation were defined as being:

- 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 extent of previous truncations of the archaeological deposits.
- To enable the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to make an informed decision on the status of the archaeology condition and any requirement for further mitigation work.

1.5.2 The specific aims of the Evaluation were:

- To determine the presence of any remains of prehistoric, specifically neolithic, date on site.
- To determine the presence of any remains of medieval or post-medieval date on site.
- Assess the degree of modern development on the site, and the extent to which this may have truncated earlier deposits.

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

1.6 Geology and Topography

1.6.1 The British Geological Survey map (BGS Sheet 257), indicates that the underlying solid geology is London Clay which is overlain by a drift geology of River Terrace deposits, sealed by alluvium of recent date. Geotechnical investigations on the site conducted in February 2008 (RSA Geotechnics 2008) indicate that river terrace gravels are present on the site at between 3.60m and 5.35m below ground level.

1.6.2 The site lies near to the Thames on the north-eastern shoulder of the Isle of Dogs loop close to the confluence of the Thames and its tributary the Lea.

1.6.3 Natural sand and gravel was encountered in both evaluation trenches at between -1.63m and -1.84mOD.

2 Archaeological and Historical Background

2.1.1 The site has been the subject of a preceding Desk Based Assessment (AOC 2007). The archaeological and historical background presented here is not exhaustive, for greater detail the preceding desk study should be referred to.

2.2 The Prehistoric Period (c. 500,000 BP – AD 43)

2.2.1 The area now covered by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets has yielded evidence of prehistoric activity in the form of animal remains from as early as the Lower Palaeolithic period (c.500,000-15,000 BP) (MoLAS 2000), discovered during the construction of the Blackwall Tunnel and East India Dock.

2.2.2 An excavation in 2002 c.30m southwest of the site uncovered a Neolithic burial cut into sandbar deposits. The burial was of a female and was accompanied by a carinated bowl and a flint knife. An oak plank associated with the grave was dated to 4220-3979 cal BC. This burial is considered to be of national significance, and is that of the oldest known individual excavated in Greater London.

2.3 The Roman Period (AD 43 – 410)

2.3.1 The site lies to the east of the Roman city of London. The road from London to Colchester crossed the Lea approximately 2.5m km north of the site and the nearest known substantial Roman remains are the possible port complex discovered at Shadwell in 2003.

2.4 The Early Medieval (AD 410-1066) and Medieval Periods (AD 1066-1550)

2.4.1 A ferry is known to have operated from Blackwall in the 14th century. The settlement of Blackwall was confined to a single street running parallel to the river and connected to the hamlet of Poplar, c 1km to the north-west, by Blackwall Causeway. From as early as the 13th century the Thames east of the City of London had begun to be embanked rendering the floodplain useable and encouraging riverside trade and industry. In particular the Blackwell area became associated with shipbuilding Excavations at New Providence Wharf to the east of the site uncovered evidence of a shallow clay bank thought to represent medieval flood defences. This feature might extend onto the site.

2.5 Post-Medieval (c. AD 1550 – 1900)

2.5.1 New Providence Wharf adjacent to Blackwall Way immediately to the east of the site has been extensively excavated since 1999 yielding remains of dockyards and associated structures initially established for the East India Company in 1614 – previously no permanent docks or slipways had existed. The dock continued in use until 1877 when it became a coal depot and rail terminus.

2.5.2 The presence of Blackwall Yard stimulated a number of other maritime related developments in the area. From the early 17th century to the early 19th century the west side of Blackwall Causeway was occupied by a ropeground – in its final form 1,200 feet long and 200 feet wide. The site lies within the former ropeground. It is possible that the remains of some buildings associated with the ropeground may be encountered on the site.

2.5.3 In 1809 the ground was released for speculative building with an agreement made between the owner of the ground and a consortium of local builders to erect 180 buildings. The new buildings were principally houses but also included carpenter's shops, a cooperage and a counting house. The development of the area was complete by the 1840's.

2.5.4 The buildings on the site in the 19th century were probably fairly typical terrace properties with two storeys and a basement. Remains of these buildings may be encountered on the site.

2.5.5 Between 1892 and 1897 the Blackwall tunnel was built by the LCC to improve road communications across the Thames in the East End. The tunnel bore ran to the south-west of the site.

3 Results

3.1 Trench 1 (Figure 3)

3.1.1 Trench 1 measured 8.00m x 2.00m and was orientated north – south.

Height (OD)	Description
2.93 to 0.79m	(**1001)** Post-medieval made ground
0.79 to -1.75m	(**1002)** Firm blue grey alluvial clay
-1.75m to -1.84m	(**1003**) Dark brown organic layer
-1.84m	(**1004**) Natural sand and gravel

Trench 1 – facing south

3.1.2 Natural deposits of sand and gravel (1004) were reached at -1.84mOD.

3.1.3 Overlying the natural a 0.10m thick layer of dark brown silty clay (1003) contained a high proportion of wood and organic peaty material. This layer also contained a single sherd of pottery and a single fragment of animal bone. No features were encountered but this layer appears to represent a buried land surface.

3.1.4 This deposit was sealed by firm blue grey alluvial clay (1002) and post-medieval made ground (1001).

3.2 Trench 2 (Figure 4)

3.2.1 Trench 2 measured 8.00m x 2.00m and was orientated north – south.

Height (OD)	Description
1.96m to 0.59m	(**2001**) Post-medieval made ground
0.59m to -0.31m	(**2002**) Firm blue grey alluvial clay
-0.31m to -1.08m	(**2003**) Peaty organic layer
-1.08m to -1.50m	(**2004**) Firm blue grey alluvial clay
-1.50m to -1.63m	(**2005**) Dark brown organic layer
-1.63m	(**2006**) Natural sand and gravel

Trench 2 – facing north-west

3.2.2 Natural deposits of sand and gravel (2006) were reached at -1.63mOD.

3.2.3 Overlying the natural a 0.13m thick layer of dark blue brown silty clay (2005) contained a high proportion of wood and organic peaty material, and is equivalent to (1003) in Trench 1.

3.2.4 This deposit was sealed by firm blue grey alluvial clay (2004), a layer of dark brown peaty clay (2003), and a second layer of alluvial clay (2002). The latest deposit in Trench 2 consisted of post-medieval made ground (2001).

3.3 Finds

3.3.1 A single sherd of pottery was recovered from (1003), this deposit also contained a fragment of animal bone. The pottery is black in colour, well fired and has calcined flint temper and a sandy matrix (Appendix 2). The sherd appears to have come from the shoulder area of the vessel, and a hole perforated in it after firing may represent a repair to the vessel or was for suspension. There is an internal carbonised residue, which is suitable for radiocarbon dating. Without a radiocarbon date the sherd is hard to date as flint inclusions are not diagnostic and there is little indication of form. The most likely date is prehistoric, especially Iron Age, but the sherd has similarities with early Saxon material as well. The stratigraphic position also makes a prehistoric date more likely.

3.3.2 The animal bone from (1003) consists of a cattle-sized fragment of long bone (Appendix 2), with a weathered surface and flaky appearance and no butchery marks. The bone is blackened, as a result of the peaty deposit it was recovered from.

3.4 Environmental Samples

3.4.1 Bulk samples were taken from the land surface in both trenches, (1003) <2> and (2005) <4>, and the peat layer in Trench 2, (2003) <3>. In addition a sample of wood was taken from (1003) <1>, as there was a larger piece than found elsewhere.

3.4.2 The samples have been analysed and the plants within the three bulk samples are similar (Appendix 3). The remains have been preserved by waterlogging, and there are some fragments of charcoal also present. Tree remains are the most abundant. The wood is dominated by willow / poplar, hazel, and alder, while the plant macrofossils are dominated by the seeds and nuts of alder, hazel, and elder. Plants from marshy ground and disturbed ground are present but less frequent than the woody taxa.

3.4.3 A quantity of molluscs are present in the flot from sample <2> (1003). These have not yet been analysed.

3.4.4 The samples indicate that there was wet woodland in the area of the site at the time of the land surface over the sand and gravel, (1003) and (2005), and during the peat accumulation, (2003). Alder is likely to have been the most abundant species, as often found in modern wet woodland and as recorded in other archaeological sites in the Thames estuary. This environmental picture applies to the period just before the land surface was buried and the plant remains preserved. Before this the area is likely to have been higher above the water and therefore drier, with a different profile of vegetation.

4 Conclusions and Interpretation

4.1 Conclusions

4.1.1 The evaluation achieved its aims in establishing the presence/absence of archaeological remains on the site. No archaeological features were excavated on the site, however pottery and animal bone was recovered from an early deposit on the site (1003).

4.1.2 A layer of peaty clay with frequent wood inclusions (1003), (2005) was identified directly above the natural gravels in both trenches. This deposit represents a buried land surface: comparison with other sites in the area, and the geological and topographical context in the Thames estuary, suggests it may be of prehistoric date. The one sherd of pottery recovered may support this, although its date is still uncertain. Prehistoric activity in the area is of particular archaeological interest, especially as a crouched Neolithic burial has been found nearby.

4.1.3 This buried land surface was sealed by naturally deposited alluvial clay associated with a recent Holocene period of higher sea levels. A layer of peat (2003) within the alluvial sequence in Trench 2, may represent a period of marshy environmental conditions during a phase of marine regression. This may have been absent in Trench 1 either because the marsh was localised or, more likely given how close the trenches were, because it was truncated by water action when the site was flooded once more.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Given a lack of archaeological features, the depth of the archaeological deposits encountered, the size of the site, and the limited impact of the development proposal, further fieldwork on the site is not considered to be necessary. GLAAS signed off the archaeological constraints on groundworks at the end of the evaluation fieldwork.

4.2.2 The date and nature of the buried land surface, (1003) and (2005), is however of interest. In order to find out more about these deposits, and in order to fulfil the condition attached to the planning permission for the proposed development, it is proposed that a limited programme of further analytical work is undertaken on the finds and samples taken from these contexts. There would be two parts to this work: radiocarbon dating samples from the land surface and analysis of the mollusc remains from sample <2>.

4.2.3 It is recommended that three samples are submitted for radiocarbon dating. One of these will be the carbon residue from the inside of the pottery sherd. The second and third will be items subsampled from the flots of the samples from the land surface: (1003) <2> and (2005) <4>. This should provide dates for the land surface just before it was flooded, and a date for the human presence on the site.

4.2.4 It is recommended that the mollusc remains from sample (1003) <2> are analysed by a specialist in this field. This will refine the environmental information available for the land surface.

4.2.5 The final decision regarding need for further archaeological work will rest with the Archaeological Advisor to the Local Planning Authority, David Divers of GLAAS.

4.2.6 It is recommended that publication of the results of this Evaluation will be through a summary in the London Archaeologist field-work round up and the ADS OASIS form (Appendix 4).

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Based on the Ordnance Survey's 1:50 000 Landranger Map of 2004
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Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Detailed Site/Trench Location Plan

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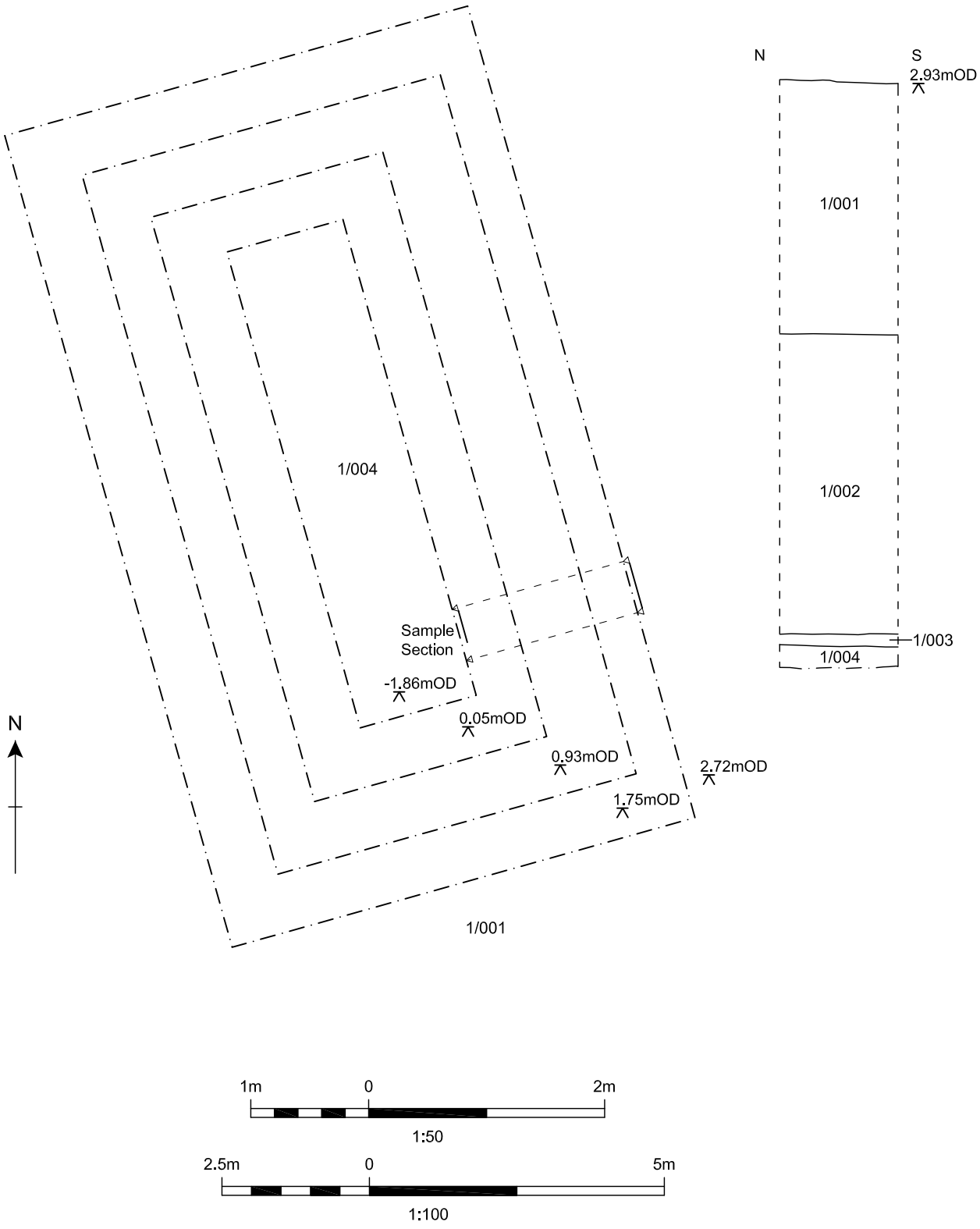

Figure 3: Trench 1: Plan (1:100) & Sample Section (1:50)

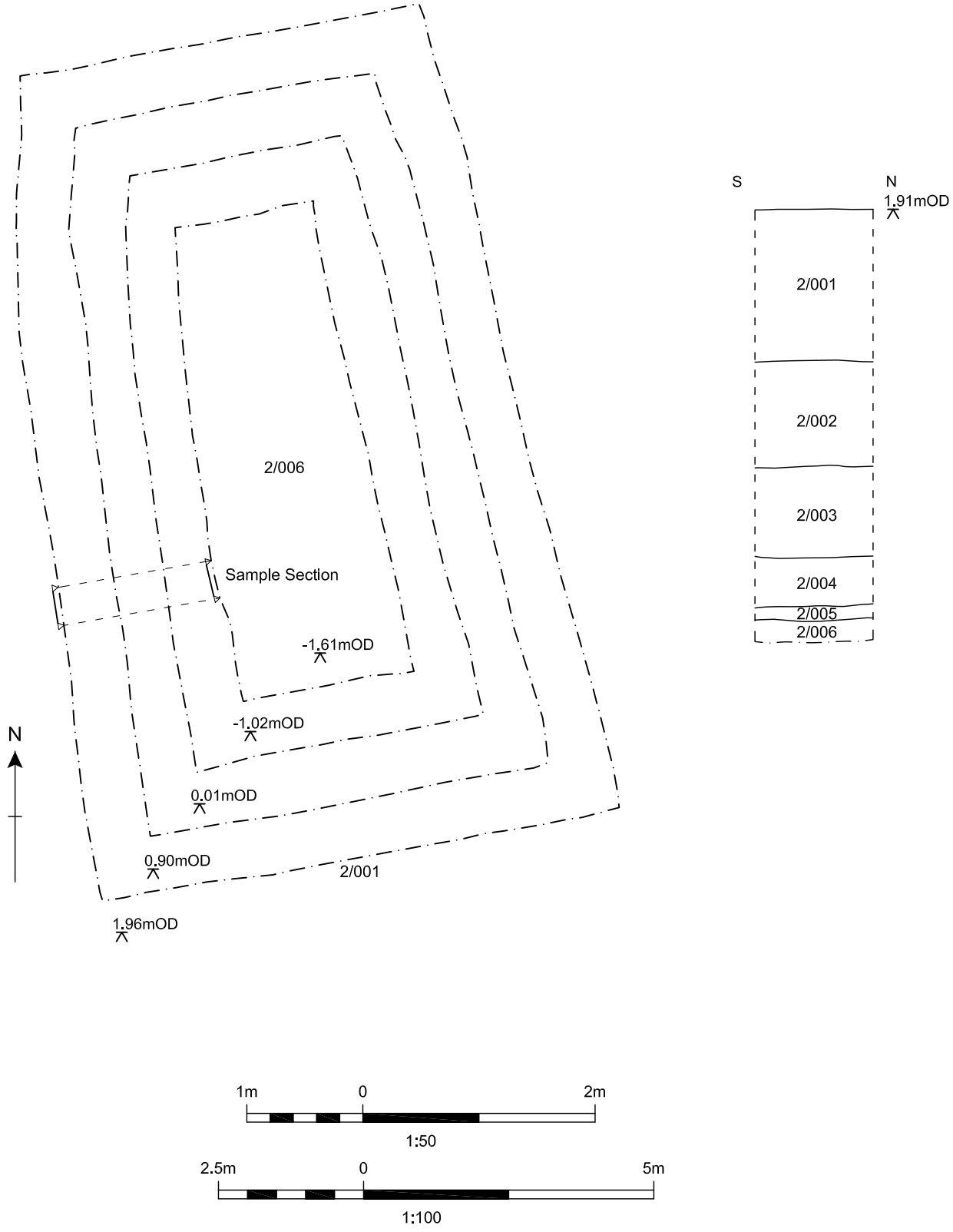

Figure 4: Trench 2: Plan (1:100) & Sample Section (1:50)

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Context Register

Context	Length	Width	Depth	Plan	Section
1001	8.00m	2.00m	2.20m	1	1
1002	8.00m	2.00m	2.55m	-	1
1003	8.00m	2.00m	0.10m	-	1
1004	8.00m	2.00m	NFE	1	1
2001	8.00m	2.00m	1.30m	2	2
2002	8.00m	2.00m	0.90m	-	2
2003	8.00m	2.00m	0.76m	-	2
2004	8.00m	2.00m	0.31m	-	2
2005	8.00m	2.00m	0.13m	-	2
2006	8.00m	2.00m	NFE	2	2

Appendix 2 – Finds

Introduction

A small but mixed assemblage of artefacts has been recorded and assessed for archaeological significance and potential in line with guidelines for archive deposition at the Museum of London (REF) and Management of Archaeological Projects 2 (English Heritage 1991).

Prehistoric / Uncertain Pottery

Louise Rayner

A single sherd recovered from [1003] is of uncertain, possibly prehistoric date. The sherd is dark grey/black, fully reduced in colour with sparse, fine calcined flint inclusions in a sandy matrix. The sherd appears to derive from the shoulder area of the vessel and retains a single post-firing perforation, probably drilled to enable repair of the vessel or suspension. The exterior surface retains tooled burnishing marks and the sherd is relatively thin walled with a rounded shoulder.

Dating of this sherd is problematic as flint-tempering alone is not diagnostic of period and no other distinguishing features are present; the perforation is also not chronologically indicative. The sherd does retain internal carbonised residue which could be submitted for radiocarbon dating, which would provide a direct date for the sherd. The possible attributions for this sherd are Iron Age or less likely early Saxon.

Significance and Potential

Although only a single sherd, accurate dating of this sherd is likely to be of significance and will aid dating of the peat sequence recorded on site. Once the date is established it will be possible to consider the sherd in relation to other locally recovered material, although only limited further work would be required. The sherd should be included in any publication of the site.

It is recommended that the sherd is sent to Glasgow (SUERC lab) for C14 dating.

The Animal Bone

Gemma Driver

Two fragments of animal bone were recovered from contexts [2005] and [1003]. Context [1003] produced a cattle-size long bone fragment and context [2005] produced a fragment of lumber vertebrae belonging to a cat (*Felis silvestris*). Neither of the fragments shows signs of butchery, burning or pathology though the long-bone fragment is weathered with the surface of the bone having a flaky appearance.

Significance and Potential

The small size of this assemblage means that it has no potential for further statistical analysis and no further work is required.

Note by AOC: the bone in context [2005] is intrusive in sample <4>.

Post-Medieval Pottery

Luke Barber

Only two tiny chips (<1g combined) of post-medieval pottery were recovered from the site. These consist of English white porcelain sherds of later 18th- to 19th- century date, both from context [2005], sample <4>. One sherd has sandy mortar adhering including its broken edges.

Significance and Potential

The post-Roman pottery does not hold any potential for further analysis and no work is proposed.

Note by AOC: these fragments are intrusive in the sample

Ceramic Building Material

Elke Raemen and Luke Barber

A total of ten high fired, small granular brick fragments were recovered from layer [2005] (environmental sample <4>). The pieces are sparse fine sand-tempered, some with slag inclusions to 3mm, and are of late 18th- to 19th- century date. Two tiny chips (<1g combined) of well-fired tile, tempered with sparse fine sand, were recovered from context [2005], sample <4> where they were originally identified as pottery during the residue sorting. Both pieces appear to be of later 18th- to 19th- century date.

Significance and Potential

Although the assemblage corroborates the dating evidence for layer [2005], its fragmentary nature means that any further analysis would be superfluous. No further work is required.

Note by AOC: these fragments are intrusive in the sample.

Mortar

Luke Barber

Two pieces of sandy mortar (172g) were recovered from context [2005], sample <4>, where they had originally been grouped with stone during the initial residue sorting. Both pieces are yellow-buff in colour, quite hard, with occasional flint inclusions to 6mm. One pieces has a flat face, suggesting it may be a thick piece of external render. Both pieces are likely to be of late post-medieval date.

Significance and Potential

The material is not considered to hold any potential for further analysis and no further work is proposed.

Note by AOC: these fragments are intrusive in the sample.

Geological Material

Luke Barber

All of the stone from the site came from context [2005], sample <4>. The material consists of four small pieces of Welsh slate (2g), undoubtedly from 19th- to early 20th- century roofing, and five pieces (586g) of sub-angular igneous rock, quite possibly diorite from the south-west. The size and shape of the pieces would be in keeping with 19th- century ballast/aggregate such as that used in roads and bedding railway tracks. The same context contained in addition fourteen small pieces of flint gravel.

Significance and Potential

The material is not considered to hold any potential for further analysis and no work is proposed.

Note by AOC: all 19th century material is intrusive in the sample.

The Glass

Elke Raemen

Three fragments of clear window glass were recovered from layer [2005] (environmental sample <4>). The pieces date to the 19th century. The same context also contained a single amber circular- or oval-sectioned bottle fragment of the same date.

Significance and Potential

Apart from giving further dating evidence for layer [2005], the assemblage does not hold any potential and does not merit further research.

Note by AOC: these fragments are intrusive in the sample.

Appendix 3 – Environmental Samples

Introduction

This work assesses several organic rich deposits uncovered during an archaeological evaluation at Alberta House. A wood sample, <1>, and two bulk samples <2>, and <4> were taken from organic rich horizons [1003] and [2005] located immediately above the natural gravel. Sample <3> was taken from a peaty clay layer [2003] located higher up in the stratigraphic sequence (see main report). The nature of these deposits and the potential for dating these horizons is presented here.

Methods

Bulk samples <2> and <4> were processed using flotation by AOC. The flots and residues were retained on 300µm and 1mm meshes respectively and the residues were sorted for environmental and archaeological remains. Wood, seeds and molluscs extracted from the residues and the intact flots were passed to Archaeology South-East for assessment. A two litre subsample of sample <3> was wet sieved by ASE through graded geological sieves (>8mm, 4mm, 2mm, 1mm, 500µm and 250µm) to remove the clays and silts. Environmental remains in all fractions have been retained in ziplock bags and stored in cool, wet anaerobic conditions. Environmental remains in fractions >4mm were recorded during processing, while the smaller fractions have been viewed using a stereo zoom microscope. Wood sample <1>, context (1003) and wood fragments from the bulk samples have been sub-sampled and thin sections viewed using a transmitted light microscope at 50, 100 and 200x magnifications. Preliminary identifications have been made for both macrofossils and wood fragments by comparing the ancient specimens with modern reference material held at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London and in reference atlases (Cappers *et al*. 2006, Hather 2000, Schoch 2004, Schweingruber 1990). The contents of each sample including preliminary identifications are recorded in Table A.

Results

These samples have produced assemblages of uncharred waterlogged remains that are typical of organic rich peaty deposits. They are dominated by fragments of woody tissues and indeterminate humic matter. Larger wood and root fragments, seeds/fruits and molluscs are also present. With the exception of the molluscs, that are only present in sample <2> from [1003], the contents of each sample are very similar. The wood assemblage contains *Salix/Populus* (willow/poplar), *Corylus avellana (hazel) and Alnus* cf. *glutinosa* (common alder) and several unidentified root wood specimens. The macrobotanical assemblage is dominated by seeds and nuts of alder, hazel and elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and catkins of *Salix/Populus* and or *Alnus sp.* are also evident. Plants common on wetter marshy ground, such as *Carex* sp. (sedges) and also those found on disturbed ground such as *Polygonum/Rumex* sp. (knotweed/docks), *Rubus* sp. (brambles) and *Chenopodium* sp. (fat hen) are also present although more infrequent than the woody taxa.

Charcoal fragments present in sample <4>, context [2005], have been identified as hazel/alder and small-leaved lime (*Tilia* cf. *cordata*). There are further fragments that are vitrified and unidentifiable.

A moderate quantity of molluscs, including bivalves, gastropods and occasional fragments of larger shells, are present in the flot from sample <2>. There are also additional mollusc elements that remain unidentified but that may be highly diagnostic of vegetation environment.

Significance and Potential

Samples from Alberta House are predominantly of environmental importance. They provide evidence for a sequence of peat deposits that has also been recorded at other sites in East London. These peat deposits are likely to have accumulated during phases of marine regression, interspersed with sediment-rich deposits that would have accumulated during phases of higher water levels. Dates for such deposits span the early

Neolithic through to the Iron Age although the exact date of this section of the sequence is currently unknown.

Plant taxa present in these samples suggest a damp woody vegetation environment that is likely to have been dominated by alder trees. The plant macrofossils have some potential to establish whether there is evidence for different horizons within the peat that suggest changes in local vegetation, such as the elm decline that has been noted in several Thames Estuary sequences however samples from a continuous stratigraphic sequence would be ideal for such work. Molluscs in these samples have the potential to assist in refining the interpretation of the stratigraphic sequence, to establish the nature of the local vegetation and to establish whether there is any evidence for saline conditions. While these samples hold very little evidence for human interaction at the site the deposits themselves provide an ideal environment for the preservation of timber structures and trackways such as those recorded to the east at Fort St. Silvertown (Crockett et al. 2002) and to the south of the river at Bramcote Green, Bermondsey (Thomas & Rackham 1996). It is of interest to obtain dates on macrobotanical and wood remains from these deposits to establish their antiquity and the duration of peat accumulation at Alberta House. There are several macrobotanicals in addition to the wood specimens that are suitable for radiocarbon dating.

Further work

It is recommended that some of the macrobotanicals and wood remains are submitted for dating. The molluscs should be examined and identified by a specialist prior to publication to establish evidence for local paleoenvironmental conditions. Although further identifications of plant taxa could be obtained from the bulk samples no further work is recommended unless further samples from interspersing layers are also available. If so, it may be possible to obtain information regarding the development of the peat and the changing vegetation conditions in the area. A short report should be prepared for publication once dates have been obtained for the sequence. It is recommended that during any future work in the area column/monolith samples are also taken. This would enable pollen analysis to be undertaken and such data would provide a more complete image of the palaeovegetation while the macrobotanicals from bulk samples provide more localised information.

References

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Table A. Environmental samples (flots, residues, wet sieved fractions and wood) quantification (* = 1-10, ** = 11-50, *** = 51-250, **** = >250) and preliminary identifications

Sample Number	Context	Sample Vol. litres	sub-Sample Vol. litres	Processing Method (wet sieve/ flotation)	Fruits/seeds	Wood/roots	Molluscs	Charcoal
1	1003	-	-	wood sample		*Salix/Populus* sp.		
2	1003			Flotation	100ml of flot viewed ** *Alnus glutinosa*, *Carex* sp., *Rumex/Polygonum* sp., *Sambucus* sp., *Rubus* sp.	** (3 frags *Corylus/Alnus* sp.)	*** gastropods, bivalves & others	
3	2003	10	10	Wet Sieved	**** *Corylus avellana, Alnus glutinosa, glutinosa, Salix/Populus* sp., Sambucus sp.	**** including *Corylus /Alnus* sp.		
4	2005			Flotation	100ml of flot viewed cf. *Ranunculus* sp., *Chenopodium* sp., *Carex* sp.	** (2 *Corylus/Alnus* sp.)		* (including *Corylus/Alnus* sp., cf. *Tilia* sp. & indet. vitrified fragments)

Appendix 4 – OASIS Summary Sheet

OASIS ID: aocarcha1-49335

Project details	
Project name	ALBERTA HOUSE, BLACKWALL
Short description of the project	An evaluation at Alberta House, Blackwall consisted of two trenches measuring 2.00m by 8,00m at base. Natural sand and gravel was sealed by a 0,10m thick peaty brown clay layer with wood inclusions, from which a single sherd of pottery and a fragment of animal bone was recovered. This was sealed by alluvial clay and post-medieval made ground.
Project dates	Start: 15-09-2008 End: 18-09-2008
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	GAO08 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Current Land use	Other 3 - Built over
Significant Finds	POTTERY Iron Age /Roman
Significant Finds	ANIMAL BONE Uncertain
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Urban residential (e.g. flats, houses, etc.)
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS POPLAR Alberta House
Postcode	E14 9XX

Study area	2000.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3845 8049 51.5058576872 -0.00487023316792 51 30 21 N 000 00 17 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: -1.84m Max: -1.63m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	AOC Archaeology
Project brief originator	Local Planning Authority (with/without advice from County/District Archaeologist)
Project design originator	AOC Archaeology
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard
Project supervisor	Tim Carew
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Higgins Construction

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Museum of London
Physical Contents	'Animal Bones','Ceramics'
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Microfilm','Plan','Section','Unpublished Text'

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	ALBERTA HOUSE, BLACKWALL, LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS: AN

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION REPORT

Author(s)/Editor(s)	'Eddisford, D.'
Date	2008
Issuer or publisher	AOC Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	AOC Archaeology
Description	A4 unpublished text with illustrations

Project bibliography 2

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	ALBERTA HOUSE, BLACKWALL, LONDON BOROUGH OF TOWER HAMLETS: A DESK BASED ASSESSMENT
Author(s)/Editor(s)	AOC Archaeology
Date	2007
Issuer or publisher	AOC Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	AOC Archaeology
Description	Unpublished A4 report with illustrations

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