

# 8 Scarsdale Studios, Stratford Road, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief

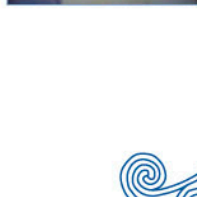
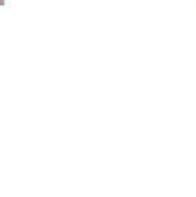
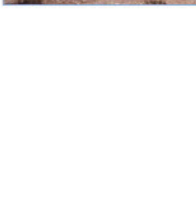
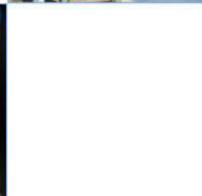
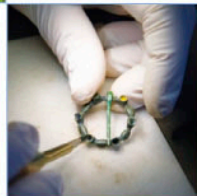
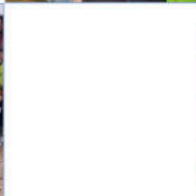
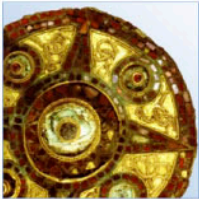
Planning Application Number: PP/08/02076

National Grid Reference: TQ25367912

Site Code: SSU09

AOC Project no: 30519

November 2009



ARCHAEOLOGY

HERITAGE

CONSERVATION

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**8 Scarsdale Studios, Stratford Road,  
Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea  
Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief**

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**National Grid Reference (NGR):** TQ 2536 7912

**AOC Project No:** 30519

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**Date of Document:** November 2009

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

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**Date:** November 2009

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**Date:** November 2009

**Draft Report Stage:**

**Date:** November 2009

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## Summary

*A Watching brief was carried out on the excavation of new foundations, which revealed deep and widespread truncation of the potential archaeological horizon, all intrusions relating to the current building. No significant archaeological remains were present.*

## **1 Introduction**

1.0.1 This document presents the results of an Archaeological Watching brief carried out during extension and enlargement of the basement at 8, Scarsdale Studios in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. (Figure 1).

### **1.1 Site Location**

1.1.1 The site lies on the north side of Stratford Road, 100m west of Earls Court Road, and is centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) TQ 2536 7912. The site is bounded upon the north and south sides by residential properties and upon the east and west by gardens. The site is approximately 60 square metres in size (Figure 2).

### **1.2 Development Proposal**

1.2.1 The site is currently occupied by a 3 storey residential building including a basement, the development comprises the construction of a second basement and associated groundworks.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

1.3.1 The local planning authority is the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. Archaeological advice to the Council is provided by Diane Abrams of the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS), part of English Heritage. Planning permission to undertake the development was granted under the Town & Country Planning Act (1990) (Application number: PP/08/02076) subject to an archaeological condition. A record of exposed soil profiles was made, and foundations for the new development were monitored.

1.3.2 The methodology for the work was presented in a Written Scheme of Investigation, which included some background history of the site (AOC 2009). This was approved by GLAAS prior to any development of the site.

1.3.3 The site falls within a conservation area as defined by the Local Council. The site does not contain any listed buildings.

### **1.4 Geology and Topography**

1.4.1 The British Geological survey (Sheet 270) indicates that the site lies upon superficial geology of gravels and sands of the second river terrace; these are underlain by solid geology of London Clay.

1.4.2 A borehole was excavated on the site in June 2009. The report indicated that around 2 metres of made ground overlay the natural geology (Chelmer Site Investigations, 2009).

## 2 Archaeological and Historical Background

- 2.1 No previous archaeological investigations have occurred on the site. There are a number of entries in the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) for archaeological features or chance finds within 1km of the site.

### Prehistoric (before c.AD 43)

- 4.1 A number of excavations close to the site have recorded Bronze Age and Iron Age features; at Vicarage House to the northeast of the site a field system dating to the Bronze and Iron Age was recorded. At the Sir John Atkins Building, evidence of late Bronze Age occupation was observed, sealed by an early Iron Age ploughsoil. This was in turn cut by later Iron Age pits. This evidence suggests a continuation of agricultural use of the area throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages.

### Roman (c.AD 43 – 410)

- 4.2 It has been suggested that a Roman Road between London and Silchester ran along the course of Kensington High Street. Possible evidence of a roadside ditch was found during excavations at Earls Terrace to the north-west of the site, as well as a series of associated field boundaries. More evidence of Roman field boundaries was also recorded during fieldwork at St Mary Abbots Hospital and the Sir John Atkins Building.

### Anglo-Saxon (c.AD 410 – 1066)

- 4.3 Little evidence of Anglo-Saxon activity has been recorded in the area of the site. The main Saxon settlement of *Lundenwic* lay some distance to the east of the site, located in modern-day Covent Garden, and much of Kensington seems to have continued as agricultural land or lain fallow throughout the period. Documentary sources record considerable activity in Chelsea to the south where, it has been suggested, the Mercian kings had an estate in the 8<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.4 The name Kensington may stem from *Chenestun* meaning the town of Chene's people.

### Medieval (c.AD 1066 – 1485)

- 4.5 The Domesday Book records that Kensington belonged to Aubrey De Vere; much of Kensington appears to have remained agricultural throughout the medieval period, although excavations at Earls Terrace found evidence of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century buildings.
- 4.6 The Vere family became Earls of Oxford and subsequently their Kensington estate became known as Earl's Court. During the 11<sup>th</sup> century, part of Kensington came into the possession of Abingdon Abbey while this area was known as Abbey Kensington.

### Post-Medieval (c.AD 1485 - Modern)

- 4.7 During the early 16<sup>th</sup> century Kensington developed considerably, Thomas More lived in Kensington during the 1620's and other aristocratic families followed so that the area became known as the 'village of palaces'. In 1536, Henry VIII built a palace for his last wife Katherine Parr; this building was later home to Lady Jane Grey.
- 4.8 Kensington continued to develop in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries as a destination for the rich. During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries pleasure gardens were built in the area, the Ranelagh Pleasure Garden included a rotunda larger than that of the Coliseum in Rome. Despite these grand houses and

gardens much of the borough remained agricultural with many market gardens including Earls Court Farm, a 190-acre farm that was only sold off in the 1870's.

- 4.9 During the Victorian era a great deal of development was seen in Kensington, this included an extension to the District and Metropolitan railway and the construction of such buildings as the Victoria and Albert hall. Much of the agricultural land was also developed into streets of terraced house and villas.

### **3 Methodology and Strategy**

#### **3.1 General**

- 3.1.1 All records are identified by the Site Code SSU 09. This unique site identifier was supplied by the Museum Of London. All recording and monitoring was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (AOC 2009). The Watching Brief was conducted primarily upon intrusive excavations on the east, undisturbed, part of the site (Figure 3). It was anticipated that the existing basement had destroyed any archaeological remains.

#### **3.2 Watching brief**

- 3.2.1 The Watching brief was conducted over two visits to the site, timed to coincide with excavation of assumed undisturbed ground. Excavations beneath the basement slab were also monitored.

#### **3.3 Aims of the Investigation**

- 3.3.1 The aims of the investigation were set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation (2009): and were defined as follows:
- 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 Diane Walls, archaeology advisor to Local Planning Authority to make an informed decision on the status of the condition, 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.
- 3.3.2 The specific objectives of the investigation were to:
- Determine the presence of any remains of prehistoric date.
  - Determine the presence of any remains of Roman date.
  - Determine the presence of post-medieval remains.
  - Assess the degree and extent of truncation of earlier deposits post medieval building on the site.
- 3.3.3 The final aim is to make public the results of the investigation, subject to any confidentiality restrictions.



## 4 Watching Brief Results

- 4.1 Two areas of supposed undisturbed ground were monitored. The first (Trench 1) was on western end of the northern side, where modifications to light wells exposed a full sequence from natural deposits to modern ground level. The second (Trench 2) was in an area where the basement was being extended eastwards. This revealed made ground associated with the standing building, disturbance, which was widespread. During these visits, the character of the deposits beneath the basement slab was also recorded. Visits to the site were undertaken on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> October 2009. All locations were reduced for a new, second basement.
- 4.2 The lowest deposit recorded was a layer of yellowish brown sand and gravel, over 4m deep (108), which the present basement had truncated to a depth of 0.7m, and was only present in Trench 1 (Figure 4, Section 1). This showed that the potential archaeological horizon had already undergone significant truncation. This was sealed by a layer of yellowish brown sandy clay (106) that was up to 0.42m deep, which resembled brickearth, and is assumed to be a naturally lain deposit. Above the brickearth, a thin layer of pale grey sandy clay with very occasional gravel (105) was present. This was 0.38m deep, and may have been a disturbed version of the natural deposits. This was sealed by 0.20m depth of greyish brown silty clay that resembled topsoil (104), and may be an old land surface sealed by upcast material from construction of the basement. Above this, a deposit resembling the brickearth (103), 0.08m deep probably derived from excavation of the basement. This redeposited natural was sealed by dark brown sandy silt, a garden soil (102), and the entire sequence was cut by a 2.4m deep, vertical sided cut for the current basement [110]. The cut was backfilled with a mix of sandy clay and building materials. The topmost deposit here was a mix of topsoil and tarmac pieces (101).



Plate1: Terrace gravels below basement slab.

- 4.3 Trench 2 was dominated by a large foundation of a yellow brick wall that encompassed its entire south side and holds up the building. The edges of its cut lay beyond the trench, but it cut over a metre into the terrace gravel, from the level seen in Trench 1. The footing of this brick wall was stepped out by three courses. The wall was sealed by layers of silt and clay, backfill of the construction episode. The lowest fill was sticky greyish brown clay with occasional fragments of brick (117). A thin lens of brick fragments and mortar (119) overlay this, possibly being a

construction horizon that indicates gradual backfilling of the construction cut as the wall was erected. Above the building material was a deposit 0.40m thick resembling terrace gravel (116), and probably upcast natural. Three thin patchy lenses of made ground sealed this. The lowest was greyish brown silt (125), which contained undecorated fragments of English Porcelain. The second dump was sand (124). The third thin layer was greyish brown silty sand (123). Above this, a layer of mixed brownish yellow and grey sandy clay (122) was the uppermost deposit clearly relating to the backfill of the cut for the wall.

- 4.4 The uppermost dump of the sequence was cut by a channel for a drain [121], which started as a brick structure (115) made of half-bricks, later replaced by a ceramic drainpipe. The fill of the cut was mixed yellowish brown and dark grey sandy clay (120).
- 4.5 The entire sequence was cut [127] for the basement wall of the current building. This suggests that the neighbouring property, 7, Scarsdale Studios was built prior to No.8. The wall is red brick, the bricks 240mm by 115mm by 61mm, and are bonded with a cement-rich mortar. The face of the wall has repairs using modern bricks. The wall is English bond and 0.38m wide. The construction trench is backfilled with concrete (124). This is in turn sealed by a thick raft of concrete (113) 0.68m deep, and the east part of the ground floor of the building is built upon – or underpinned with – this, a mix of red and yellow bricks (112) in English bond, the bricks 240mm by 110mm by 64mm. The wall includes a damp course below ground floor level.

## 5 Conclusions and Interpretation

- 5.1 The Watching brief has shown that the construction of the basement caused the removal of 0.70m depth of terrace gravel and 0.42m of brickearth above, reducing the potential for archaeological features across most of the site. Beyond the basement, construction of the terrace also had a deep impact, removing all potential stratigraphy in the east of the site. The only area where potential archaeological material was present was in the area of light wells on the north side of the basement, where removal of the light well walls revealed disturbed ground and topsoil above the natural sequence. No archaeological features or finds were retrieved from this area, and the stratigraphy will be retained northward beyond the area of the basement.
- 5.2 The watching brief has been suspended due to the extensive truncation of potential deposits.
- 5.3 There are no revised research aims to be attended, due to the lack of archaeological material.

## 6 Bibliography

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Figure 1:

Figure 2:

Figure 3:

Figure 4:

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# Appendices





## Appendix A, Context Register

Context No.	Context Description	Length	Width	Depth	Section No.
101	Mixed soil	4.00m	1.00m	0.21m	1
102	Garden soil	4.00m	1.00m	0.50m	1
103	Redeposited natural	4.00m	1.00m	0.08m	1
104	Disturbed natural	4.00m	1.00m	0.20m	1
105	Dumped deposit	4.00m	1.00m	0.38m	1
106	Brickearth	4.00m	1.00m	0.42m	1
108	Terrace gravel	4.00m	1.00m	0.70m	1
109	Construction fill	4.00m	0.30m	2.40m	
110	Construction cut	4.00m	0.30m	2.40m	1
111	Basement	4.00m	1.00m	0.15m	1, 3
112	Standing building	2.50m	1.00m	0.82m	2, 3
113	Concrete footing	2.50m	1.00m	0.70m	2, 3
114	Basement wall	1.00m	0.37m	4.80m	3
115	Drain channel	2.50m	0.02m	0.15m	3
116	Redeposited natural	2.50m	1.00m	0.40m	2, 3
117	Clay backfill	2.50m	1.00m	0.50m	2, 3
118	Foundation	2.50m	0.30m	3.20m	2
119	Construction debris	2.00m	1.00m	0.04m	2, 3
120	Fill of 121	2.50m	0.40m	0.52m	2, 3
121	Cut for drain	2.50m	0.40m	0.52m	2, 3
122	Made ground	2.50m	0.64m	1.75m	2
123	Made ground	1.00m	1.00m	0.05m	2
124	Made ground	1.00m	1.00m	0.05m	2
125	Made ground	1.00m	1.00m	0.05m	2
126	Fill of 127	1.00m	0.60m	1.75m	3
127	Construction cut	1.00m	0.60m	1.75m	3

## Appendix B, OASIS Form

**OASIS ID: aocarcha1-67185**

### Project details

Project name 8 Scarsdale Studios

Short description of the project A Watching brief was carried out on the excavation of new foundations, which revealed deep and widespread truncation of the potential archaeological horizon, all intrusions relating to the current building. No significant archaeological remains were present.

Project dates Start: 18-09-2009 End: 27-10-2009

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes SSU 09 - Sitecode

Any associated project reference codes 30519 - Contracting Unit No.

Type of project Recording project

Site status Conservation Area

Current Land use Other 2 - In use as a building

Monument type NONE None

Significant Finds NONE None

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

### Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA KENSINGTON 8  
Scarsdale Studios

Postcode W8

Study area 60.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 2536 7912 51.4966063369 -0.193884269895 51 29 47 N 000 11 37 W  
Point

### Project creators

Name of Organisation AOC Archaeology

Project brief originator EH GLAAS

Project design AOC Archaeology  
originator

Project director/manager Andy Leonard

Project supervisor Les Capon

Type of Developer  
sponsor/funding body

### Project archives

Physical Archive No  
Exists?

Digital Archive Museum of London  
recipient

Digital Archive ID SSU 09

Digital Contents 'Stratigraphic'

Digital Media available 'Images raster / digital photography','Images vector','Text'

Digital Archive notes held at AOC until transfer

Paper Archive recipient Museum of London

Paper Archive ID SSU 09

Paper Contents 'Stratigraphic'

Paper Media available 'Report','Section','Unpublished Text'

Paper Archive notes held at AOC until transfer

## Project bibliography

1

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

Title 8 Scarsdale Studios, Stratford Road, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Report on an Archaeological Watching Brief

Author(s)/Editor(s) Capon, L.

Date 2009

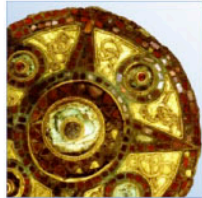
Issuer or publisher AOC Archaeology

Place of issue or publication London

Description A4 23 pages, 4 illustrations

Entered by Les Capon (les.capon@aocarchaeology.com)

Entered on 11 November 2009



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