

# 2-4 Limerston Street, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea: An Archaeological Watching Brief Report

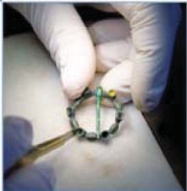
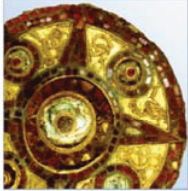
Planning Application: PP/08/02044

National Grid Reference Number: TQ 263 778

AOC Project No: 30703

Site Code: LMJ10

Date: June 2011



ARCHAEOLOGY

HERITAGE

CONSERVATION

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## 2-4 Limerston Street, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea: An Archaeological Watching Brief Report

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**On Behalf of:** Eastleaf Ltd  
208 Fulham Road  
London  
SW10 9PJ

**National Grid Reference (NGR):** TQ 263 778

**AOC Project No:** 30703

**Prepared by:** Ian Hogg

**Illustration by:** Jonathan Moller

**Date of Fieldwork:** 12<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> August 2010

**Date of Report:** June 2011

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

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**Date:** June 2011

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**Date:** June 2011

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**Date:** June 2011

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## **Non-Technical Summary**

*Between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> August 2010 AOC Archaeology Group undertook a watching brief at 2 – 4 Limerston Street, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The watching brief was commissioned by Eastleaf Ltd. The work originally comprised the recording of all intrusive groundworks on site; however only a series of underpinning pits were observed due to contractual disagreements.*

*Natural sands and gravels were identified in both pits excavated; these deposits were directly overlain by modern made ground and wall foundations. There appears to have been significant horizontal truncation in the area of the site monitored; probably associated with the standing buildings on site.*

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The site was located 2-4 Limerston Street, Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (Figure 1). It was situated at the northern end of Limerston Street, near the junction with Fulham Road (National Grid Reference TQ 263 778). The site measured a total area of c.160 square metres. It is bound to the north-east by Limerston Street, to the north-west by 363 Fulham Road (currently Pizza Express) and 365 Fulham Road, to the south-east by 6 Limerston Street and to the south-west by the multi-storey Ellesmere Older People's Centre (Figure 2).
- 1.2 The body of works comprised the demolition of the existing 1950s building currently occupying the site and the construction of two buildings of 4 and 5 storeys, for residential use, including a lower ground floor / basement extending approximately 3.5m below pavement level.
- 1.3 This report details the results of an incomplete archaeological watching brief undertaken on the excavation of a series of geotechnical pits and boreholes.

## 2. Planning Background

- 2.1 The local planning authority is the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. Archaeological advice to the borough is provided by Diane Abrams of the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS), part of English Heritage.
- 2.2 The proposed development (Planning Application Ref No: PP/08/02044) comprised the demolition of the existing 1950s building currently occupying the site and the construction of two buildings of four and five storeys, for residential use, including a lower ground floor / basement extending approximately 3.5m below pavement level (Figure 3).
- 2.3 The site was not located within any of the 35 Conservation Areas designated by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea or within a designated Area of Archaeological Importance. There were no Listed Buildings within the site boundary and the site neither contains nor lies within the area of any defined World Heritage Sites, Scheduled Monuments, Registered Parks and Gardens, Registered Battlefields or Areas of Historic Woodland. It was however, situated immediately adjacent to the Sloane / Stanley Conservation Area designated by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea.
- 2.4 An archaeological condition was attached to planning consent. Through consultation with GLAAS it was agreed that a desk-based assessment (AOC 2008) was the most appropriate first stage in the archaeological process.
- 2.5 The desk-based assessment recommended that as the proposed groundworks extend c. 1m below the depth of the current basement the initial construction groundworks should be archaeologically monitored (archaeological watching brief) to confirm the extent of past impact and whether archaeological deposits do survive. Should any remains be present these can be recorded during the course of the archaeological watching brief.
- 2.6 A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was constructed as a detailed method statement for the works (AOC 2010).

## 3. Geology and Topography

- 3.1 The British Geological Survey mapping (BGS Sheet 270) of this area indicated that the solid geology underlying the site and surrounding area was the London Clay formation. This is an Eocene marine

deposit, laid down c. 55 million years ago. This was overlain by a superficial geology of Kempton Park Gravel comprising sand and gravels formed in the Devensian period (c.110,000 - 25,000 years Before Present (BP)).

- 3.2 The site was located approximately 1 km from the current northern bank of the River Thames, a focus of human activity from prehistory onwards, attested by numerous artefacts discovered from the River and its flood plains (e.g. MoLAS 2000). The presence of firm gravel deposits at the banks of the river provide easy landing for watercraft and, like many other settlements along the Thames, this convenient transportation link probably provided the basis for settlement in the area now occupied by Chelsea (VCH 2004).

## 4. Archaeological and Historical Background

- 4.1 The following historical background is taken from the desk-based assessment undertaken for the site in 2008 (AOC 2008).

### Prehistoric (c. 500,000 BC – AD 43)

- 4.2 The assessment identified a number of entries in the gazetteer relating to prehistoric activity in the 500m study radius around the site. The location of the site within c. 1 km of the River Thames would have provided an excellent resource for prehistoric people and much of the surviving prehistoric evidence has been recovered from the Thames itself (VCH 2004). Remains of a submerged forest have also been found of at Chelsea (MoLAS 2000, 75) and, during the prehistoric period, this would have provided resources and also a sheltered environment for occupation.
- 4.3 Archaeological investigation has yielded evidence of prehistoric activity in the area surrounding the site. Excavation at 2-4 Old Church Street, c.550m to the east of the site, recorded two pits of possible prehistoric date containing struck flints and a burin dating to the Mesolithic period (c. 10,000 - 4000 BC) (Cowie 2001). Further prehistoric remains comprising residual flint artefacts were uncovered during the excavation at the Old Rectory, c. 320m to the east of the site and at 552 King's Road, c. 500m to the south-west of the site.
- 4.4 A spearhead dating to the Bronze Age (c.2200–700 BC) has also been found in the study area, c. 450m to the south-west of the site, buried approximately 4.5 feet deep in clay deposits during the construction of houses in the area.
- 4.5 There was a single entry in the gazetteer dating firmly to the Iron Age (700 BC–AD 43), which relates to the findspot of a coin, found c. 200m to the north-east of the site in at the Michelin Tyre Depot. Sherds of organic tempered pottery uncovered during the Old Church Road excavation were found in a Roman ditch and have been dated to either the Late Iron Age (100BC-AD 43) or early Roman period.

### Roman (AD 43 – AD 410)

- 4.6 Evidence for Roman occupation in the Chelsea area has been uncovered during excavation at 2-4 Old Church Street, c. 550m to the east of the site, where ditches, slots, pits and a posthole dated to the Roman period were recorded. Seven of these features yielded sherds of pottery and fragments of tile; based on analysis of these artefacts it is thought that the site was in use from the mid 1<sup>st</sup> century to the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD. Two parallel slots have been interpreted as an indication that a timber building once stood in this area (Cowie 2001).
- 4.7 A lava quern, of possible Roman date, was also recorded during the excavation at the Old Rectory, c. 320m to the east of the site.

### Early Medieval (AD 410 – AD 1066) and Medieval (AD 1066 – AD 1536)

- 4.8 Chelsea, originally '*Chelcehithe*', or '*Cealchythe*' is first mentioned in AD 785 when it is likely to have comprised a single unit within Kensington (VCH 2004). The name is thought to derive from the Anglo-Saxon '*Chesil*' meaning gravel bank and / or from the Old English '*Cealc*' (chalk) and '*hyth*' meaning 'landing place on a river or inland port' indicating the possibility that chalk may have been brought up the River Thames from Kent to Chelsea, before being transported onwards by road (Denny 1996, Gelling 1984, VCH 2004).
- 4.9 Documentary evidence records that in 898 a council was held in Chelsea attended by King Alfred, Archbishop Plegmund of Canterbury, Aethelred the leader of the Mercians and his sister Aethelflaed, and Bishop Waerferth of Worcester, to discuss the refounding of London after the Danish wars, during which the lands of Chelsea were divided up (VCH 2004).
- 4.10 Physical remains of early medieval (or Anglo-Saxon) activity includes artefacts recovered from the River Thames in the vicinity of Chelsea including a silver finger ring, a Viking axe and also a Middle Saxon fish trap which was uncovered on the Thames foreshore near Battersea Bridge, c. 650m to the south-east of the site (MoLAS 2000). Such remains are focused nearer the river further to the east of the site in the approximate area of what is now a designated Archaeological Priority Area. The site itself lay outside the area of early medieval settlement.
- 4.11 The medieval parsonage is first mentioned in documentary sources in 1388 and in 1230 is referred to in reference to the rector, which implies that this original parsonage may be that which was replaced in 1566, at the southern end of Milman's Street, located c. 450m to the south-east of the site, which is thought to have medieval origins (VCH 2004).
- 4.12 Further evidence of medieval activity have been uncovered during the excavation at 2-4 Old Church Street, which recorded a number of pits and a ditch dating to the medieval period, with the main period of activity assessed as being between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries (Cowie 2001); from the excavation at the Old Rectory which yielded medieval pottery; and from evaluation of 552 Kings Road, which found medieval building material indicating nearby settlement.

### Post-Medieval (AD 1066 – AD 1536)

- 4.13 The main area of Chelsea remained focused to the east of the site, while the area of the site saw the construction of 'a handful of farmhouses and mansions inclosing open fields as gardens' in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century (VCH 2004) and is shown as '*Little Chelsea*' on Rocque's map from the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century. This is supported by the recovery of horticultural / agricultural soils along with evidence for 17<sup>th</sup> century structures (along with other post medieval features) during the evaluation at 552 Kings Road. The area grew up around the Fulham Road and in 1666, seven houses were required to pay hearth tax under Chelsea with several more added by 1674 (VCH 2004).
- 4.14 Further archaeological remains from the post-medieval period have been found during the excavation at 2-4 Old Church Street, which recorded 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century features including rubbish pits, quarry pits, cess pits and a well. There were also a large number of burials dating between the 16<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Cowie 2001).
- 4.15 The area now occupied by the Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, c. 50m to the west of the site, was originally the site for Shaftesbury House, owned by Anthony Ashley Cooper, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Earl of Shaftesbury, who rebuilt (or perhaps significantly altered) a house built in this place in 1635 by the Right Hon. Sir James Smith (Beaver 1971). Shaftesbury House was later incorporated into the



workhouse, established on this site in 1858, which then became St Stephen's Hospital in 1929 (Denny 1996).

- 4.16 The desk-based assessment identified 28 Listed Buildings dating to the post-medieval period, with the closest of these to the site being St. Andrew's Church and the houses on Park Walk. The earliest of these is 5 Park Walk which was constructed in 1725 and comprises three storeys and basement. The remaining houses are two and three storied terraced houses dating to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The church and primary school are later 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 4.17 The Boltons, c. 400m to the north-west of the site, was developed in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century for a wealthy landowner named Robert Gunter who donated the oval space in the centre of the two residential crescents for the Church of St Mary, constructed at the same date. The gardens in this central area were also laid out in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century becoming more elaborate by 1867 and was further altered by 1897, and the area is now a Registered Parks and Gardens.

### **Modern (AD 1900 – Present)**

- 4.18 During the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries Chelsea attracted the residence of a number of artists such as Phillip Wilson Steer, Augustus John, Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Jacob Epstein. A number of buildings in the area were dedicated artist studios, including Nos. 28 and 30 Mallord Street, c. 400m east of the site. Nos. 3-29 The Vale comprises a row of 14 individually designed terraced houses are described in the GLSMR as 'artist's houses'.
- 4.19 During the Second World War, Chelsea suffered considerable damage as a result of bombing raids. On 15<sup>th</sup> October a bomb fell on St Stephen's Hospital, c. 50m from the site, resulting in damage to two ward blocks that was so significant that they required demolition. Such raids continued until 1945 (Denny 1996). The rear of No. 5 Park Walk was also rebuilt as a result of bomb damage.

## **5. Aims of the Investigation**

- 5.1 The aims of the watching brief 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 archaeology advisor to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, 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.
- 5.2 The specific aims of the watching brief were defined as being:
- Determine the presence of any Romano-British activity on site. Does this evidence indicate the presence of settlement at this time?
  - Assess the potential of the site to inform on the recorded early medieval settlement. Is there any evidence to indicate how far the boundary of the settlement extended?



- Determine the presence of any medieval activity on site? Is there any evidence for settlement at this time?
- Assess the potential of the site to inform on the post-medieval development and chronology of London.
- Assess the degree and extent of truncation of earlier deposits by late post-medieval and modern buildings on the site.

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

## 6. Methodology

6.1 An archaeologist was present to observe all intrusive groundworks where notified. The watching brief was suspended after three days attendance and the remaining groundworks were not monitored.

6.2 The archaeologist was positioned outside the working area of the mechanical excavator, in the normal working arrangement. All machining was carried out using a flat bladed toothless bucket.

6.3 Fieldwork procedures followed the Museum of London Archaeological Site Manual (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition) (MoL 1994).

6.4 The excavation, recording and reporting conformed to current best archaeological practice and local and national standards and guidelines:

- English Heritage – Management of Archaeological Projects (EH 1991).
- English Heritage – Archaeological Guidance Paper 3: Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork (EH 1998).
- English Heritage – Environmental Archaeology: A guide to the theory and practice of methods, from sampling and recovery to post-excavation (EH 2002).
- Institute for Archaeologists – Standards and Guidance and Guidelines for Finds Work (IfA 2008).
- Institute for Archaeologists – Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs (IfA 2008).
- Institute for Archaeologists – Code of Conduct (IfA 2010).
- Rescue/United Kingdom Institute for Conservation – First Aid for Finds (Second Edition) (CBA 1998).
- United Kingdom Institute for Conservation – Conservation Guidelines No.2 (UKIC 1983).
- United Kingdom Institute for Conservation – Guidance for Archaeological Conservation Practice (UKIC 1990).

6.4 Archaeological recording consisted of:

- Limited hand cleaning of archaeological sections and surfaces sufficient to establish the stratigraphic sequence exposed.
- The collection of dating evidence from in-situ deposits and spoil scans.
- A scaled photographic recording of representative exposed sections and surfaces, along with sufficient photographs to establish the setting and scale of the groundworks.

- 6.5 A unique site code, **LMJ 10** was obtained from the Museum of London prior to the commencement of fieldwork. This was used as the site identifier on all records.
- 6.6 The watching brief was undertaken by Catherine Edwards and Jonathan Moller, under the overall direction of Melissa Melikian; Operations Director. The work was by Diane Abrams on behalf of GLAAS.

## 7. Results

### 7.1 Underpinning Pit 1

Depth BGL	Context Number	Description/Interpretation
0.00m	(100)	Concrete
0.20m	(101)	Wall foundation
0.35m	(102)	Natural sand
0.20m	(103)	Made ground

- 7.1.1 Underpinning Pit 1 was located on the northeastern limit of the site and measured 2.60m by 1.70m.
- 7.1.2 The earliest deposit observed was brownish yellow natural sand (103), seen at a depth of 0.35m. The sand was cut by wall foundation [101] which consisted yellow stock bricks measuring 240mm x 100mm x 70mm and bonded with cement mortar, the foundation was randomly coursed and measured 1.80m x 0.24m x 0.55m. The wall was abutted by dark brown rubbly silt made ground (103) 0.65m thick. This deposit contained three sherds of 17<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> century pottery, thought to be residual.. The pit was sealed by 0.20m of grey concrete (100). No archaeological features were observed in this pit.



Underpinning Pit 1 Looking North

## 7.2 Underpinning Pit 2

Depth BGL	Context Number	Description/Interpretation
0.00m	(201)	Wall foundations
0.70m	(202)	Natural gravel

7.2.1 Underpinning Pit 2 was located on the southeastern limit of the site, and measured 3.60m by 1.60m in plan.

7.2.2 The earliest recorded deposit was natural orangey brown sandy gravel (202) observed at a depth of 0.70m below ground level. This was overlain by a concrete wall foundation [201] which measured 3.60m x 0.60m x 1.00m. The wall foundation was abutted by a deposit of modern rubble and sealed by a concrete slab. No archaeological features were observed in this pit.



Underpinning Pit 2 Looking East

## 7.3 Underpinning Pit 3

7.3.1 Underpinning Pit 3 was located in the northeastern corner of the site. Due to limited attendance, shoring and the extreme depth of this pit it was not fully recorded. Limited visibility suggested a similar sequence to that seen in Underpinning Pit 2 (natural gravel and sands overlain by rubble and red brick footings on concrete foundations).

## 8. Finds and Environmental Samples

8.1 The only finds retained from the site; a mocha ware and a transfer patterned piece commonly dating from 1780-1900 and half an English tin-glazed egg cup base (1570-1800). All three sherds were retrieved from made ground deposit (103) and are thought to be residual.



## 9. Conclusions

- 9.1 The project aims could not be fulfilled due to the suspension of the watching brief.
- 9.2 The limited nature of this project makes it difficult to discuss with any certainty the archaeological potential of this site; however, no features or significant finds were recorded during the fieldwork.
- 9.3 No evidence of activity prior to the modern period was observed. The site has been the subject of significant horizontal truncation with the natural deposit being immediately overlain by modern made ground; this truncation was probably associated with the construction of the building currently standing on site.

## 10. Publication and Archive Deposition

- 10.1 Due to the nature of the project, publication will be restricted to a summary of results in the London Archaeological Round Up, and via the Archaeological Data Service (ADS) (Appendix B).
- 10.2 The archive, consisting of paper records, drawings, photographs, finds and digital records will be deposited with the LAARC.

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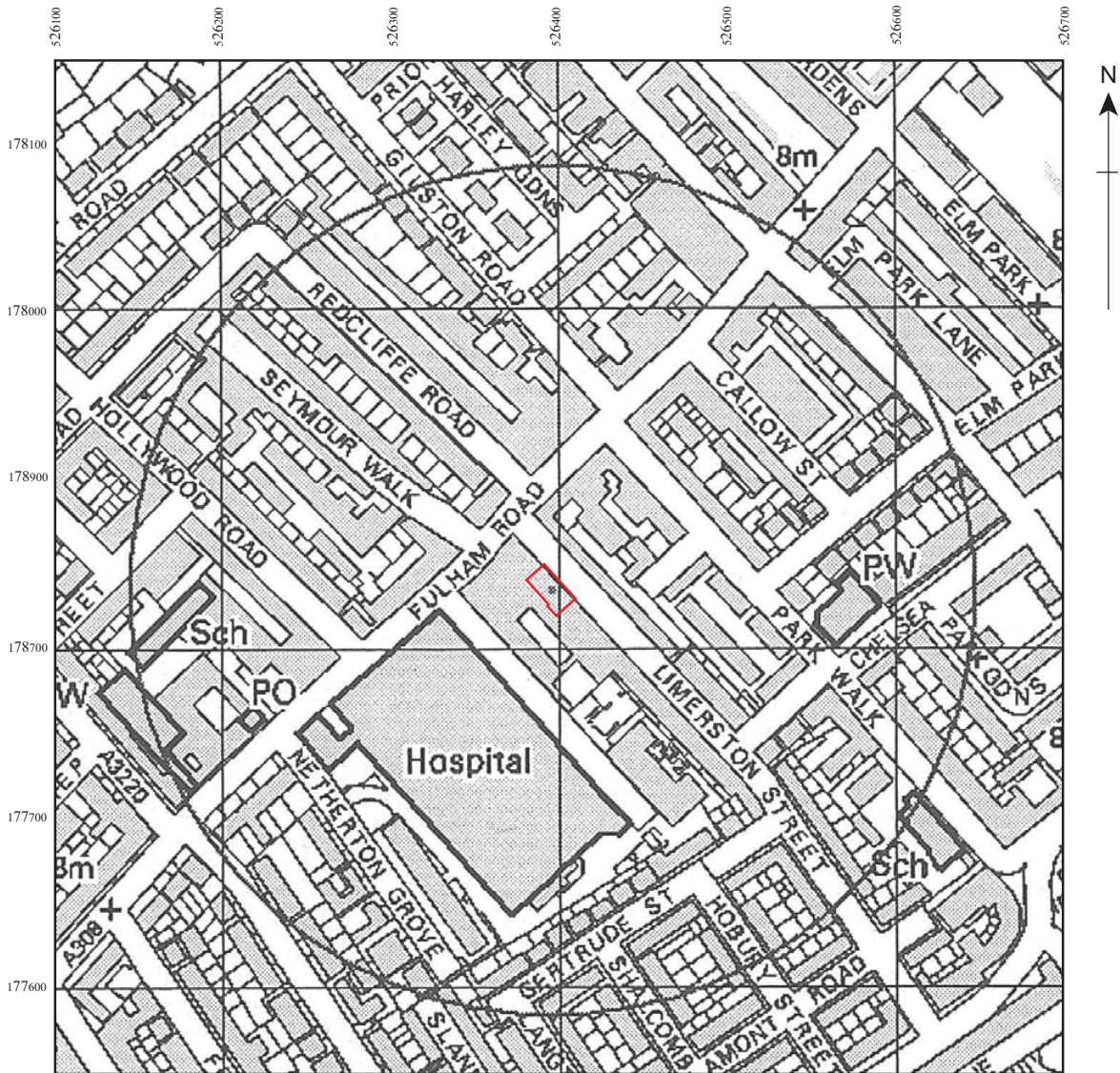


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Figure 1: Site Location





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**Figure 2:** Detailed Site Location





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# Appendices

## Appendix A – Context Register

Context No.	Context Description	Length	Width	Thickness
100	Concrete Surface	2.60m	1.70m	0.20m
101	Wall Foundation	2.60m	0.24m	0.55m
102	Natural Sand	2.60m	1.46m	0.35m
103	Made Ground	2.60m	1.46m	0.65m
201	Wall Foundation	3.60m	0.80m	1.00m
202	Natural Gravel	3.60m	1.60m	0.78m

## Appendix B – Oasis Form

### **OASIS ID: aocarcha1-74182**

#### Project details

Project name 2-4 Limerston Street

Short description of the project A Watching Brief was undertaken on the underpinning works, natural sand of was overlain by rubble made ground and significant horizontal truncation had taken place. The watching Brief was not completed due to contractual disagreements.

Project dates Start: 12-08-2010 End: 17-08-2010

Previous/future work Yes / No

Any project codes associated reference 30703 - Contracting Unit No.

Any project codes associated reference LMJ10 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Site status None

Current Land use Residential 1 - General Residential

Monument type NONE None

Significant Finds NONE None

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

Project location

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Country England  
Site location GREATER LONDON KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA KENSINGTON 2-4  
Limerston Street  
Postcode SW10 0HH  
Study area 160.00 Square metres  
Site coordinates TQ 263 778 51.4845325602 -0.180820994314 51 29 04 N 000 10 50 W  
Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation AOC Archaeology Group

Project brief originator EH GLAAS

Project design originator AOC Archaeology Group

Project director/manager Melissa Melikian

Type of sponsor/funding body Developer

Name of sponsor/funding body Eastleaf Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Physical Archive recipient LAARC

Digital Archive recipient LAARC

Digital Contents      'Stratigraphic'

Digital                Media  
available                'Images raster / digital photography'

Paper                 Archive  
recipient                LAARC

Paper Contents      'Stratigraphic'

Paper                 Media  
available                'Context sheet', 'Plan', 'Report', 'Section'

Entered by             Ian Hogg (ian.hogg@aocarchaeology.com)

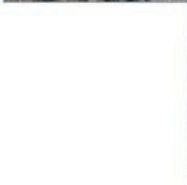
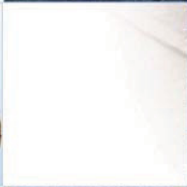
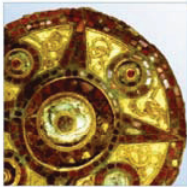
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