

**21-23 NORTH STREET
ROMFORD
LONDON BOROUGH OF HAVERING**

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL DESK TOP ASSESSMENT
AND TEST PIT RECORDING**



Essex County Council

**Field Archaeology Unit
February 2005**

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As part of our desire to provide a quality service, we would welcome any comments you may have on the content or the presentation of this report.
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Client: Stonebond Ltd
FAU Project No.: 1459
NGR: TQ 5110 8896
Planning Application No. P1157.03
Site Code: NSR05
Date of Fieldwork: 10 February 2005

SUMMARY

An archaeological condition was placed upon a planning application made by Stonebond Ltd, for the construction of an eight-storey apartment block. Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) was subsequently commissioned to undertake a documentary and cartographic search and archaeologically record geotechnical test pits to assess the site potential.

The documentary and cartographic search revealed structures standing on the development area since 1777. It is presumed that site was developed earlier than this, as the present town centre plan is not significantly altered from the presumptive medieval layout.

Six geotechnical trial pits spread across the site, however, only revealed early/ mid-20th century remains and a build up of modern demolition rubble to a depth of approximately 1.5m.

It is therefore likely that although medieval, and possibly earlier, structures did formerly exist on the site any traces of them have been destroyed by subsequent construction and demolition.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report is an assessment of the archaeological potential of a development site at 21-23 North Street, Romford, London Borough of Havering. In response to a planning application, by Stonebond Ltd, for the construction of an eight-storey apartment block an archaeological condition was placed on planning permission by the London Borough of Havering (P1157.03). This requires the applicant to arrange for an archaeological investigation before any groundworks take place, following procedures set out in Planning Policy Guideline 16 (DoE 1990) and agreed with English Heritage GLAAS, as advisors to the local planning authority. Essex County Council Field Archaeology Unit (ECC FAU) was commissioned by Stonebond Ltd to undertake a documentary and cartographic search and record test pits to assess the archaeological potential of the site. Copies of the assessment report will be sent to Stonebond and to English Heritage GLAAS to enable a decision to be made on the scope of any further archaeological mitigation measures that might be required. The archive will be deposited at the Museum of London (LAARC).

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Location and Topography (Fig 1)

Romford is situated on the Roman road from London to Chelmsford and Colchester (now the A118 and A12), which crosses the River Rom, a tributary of the Thames, a short distance to the west of the town centre. The historic core of the town is based on the medieval High Street and market place extending along the main road, and the crossroads with North Street and South Street at its western end (Fig. 1). The site (TQ 5110 8896) covers 0.04 ha and has a short frontage onto the west side of North Street, one of the original medieval streets, only 90m north of the central crossroads. Angel Way, on the western side of the site, was not built until the second half of the 20th century.

2.2 Geology

The site was covered with degraded tarmac overlying approximately 1.5m of modern build-up. The drift geology of the area is river terrace deposits, with an underlying geology of London Clay (BGS accessed 18/2/05).

3.0 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aim of the project was to establish the potential for archaeological remains in the proposed development area, with a view to developing an archaeological mitigation strategy if there is potential for significant remains.

Specific objectives in both the fieldwork and the documentary search were to:

- Identify any known medieval or post-medieval structures on the development area by a detailed cartographic search.
- Suggest the potential for the survival of any identified medieval or post-medieval structures using both fieldwork results and documentary evidence
- Record any pre-19th century remains or deposits in the geotechnical test pits and assess the extent of the modern disturbance to the site.

4. METHOD

4.1 Desktop Assessment

The summary of the site's historical and archaeological background is based on an earlier desk-based assessment of a site on the north side of Romford market (Heppell 2000). Many of the documentary sources and maps researched in this previous assessment are relevant to the present development site. In addition, a search of archaeological sites and findspots was made of the Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR), and English Heritage's National Monuments Record (NMR) inventory on the ADS website (<http://ads.ahds.ac.uk>). For the purposes of this assessment the area studied was 21 –23 North Street, Romford and the surrounding area (up to a radius of 500m). Information beyond this limit was included if thought to be relevant to the study area itself. It should be noted that further documents may be held in other collections.

The sources consulted included;

- The Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (references to this are prefixed GLSMR)
- The local studies collections at Central Library, Chelmsford and Romford Library
- Ordnance Survey maps
- Other cartographic sources, such as the Chapman and André map of 1777
- The collection of the Essex Records Office (prefixed by ERO)
- Local journals, dissertations, etc

4.2 Test Pit Recording

The fieldwork element of this project comprised of monitoring and recording geotechnical test pitting across the development area. The test pits were excavated using a mechanical excavator. The sections and location of each pit was recorded and a photographic record comprising of colour slides and monochrome prints was maintained throughout the fieldwork. All plans were linked to the Ordnance Survey National Grid.

Standard FAU methodologies were employed with regard to the recording. All *IFA* standards and by-laws and *ALGAO's* Standards for Field Archaeology in the East of England (EAA Occ paper 14, 2003) were adhered to throughout the project.

5. CARTOGRAPHIC AND HISTORICAL SUMMARY by J Archer

Little archaeological evidence exists for Romford as past archaeological intervention has been limited, consisting only of small excavation trenches or watching brief work. The relative lack of artefacts and remains does not necessarily signify an absence of past activity, but due to the paucity of the evidence only very general statements can be made for the earliest archaeological periods. The most detailed information about the site is derived from the study of old maps dating from 1777 onwards.

Very little is known of the Romford area before the medieval period, although prehistoric worked flint waste has been recovered from an excavation near the market place (NMR 965556). There is thought to have been a Roman settlement at Romford, which is tentatively identified as *Durolitum*, an official posting station listed in the Antonine Itinerary as situated almost mid-way between London and Chelmsford. Roman artefacts have been recovered from several sites in Romford town centre, and five Roman cremation burials, with brooches and coins, were found in an excavation in 1981 at the Dolphin Centre, east of the market place (NMR 965609).

The earliest historical reference to Romford dates to 1166, and it was granted its market charter in 1247. The medieval town may have developed from an earlier settlement to the south of the main road, in the Oldchurch area. The layout of the medieval town and market is still evident in the modern plan of the town centre. The parish church of St Edward the Confessor on the north side of the market was not built until 1849, but occupies the site of a medieval chapel. The Golden Lion inn, on the corner of North Street and the High Street, confirms that North Street was originally part of the medieval town plan, as the present building dates to the 16th century and stands on the site of an earlier inn documented in 1440 (GLSMR 061069).

Chapman and Andre's map of 1777 (Fig 4a) suggests that the town plan had not altered significantly from the original medieval layout. This map shows the western side of North Street to be built up, with open ground behind, largely made up of water meadows beside the river. The stylised nature of the map prevents further analysis of boundaries, building type and usage.

Gotto's map of 1848 and the Ordnance Survey 1st 1876 (Fig 4b) show a largely unchanged layout to the west of North Street, with buildings on the street frontage and open areas behind. These

maps show the site as occupied by the Vicarage, although the house stood in its own grounds and the site area may cover a yard with outhouses on its north side. The Vicarage still stood in 1939, although by now it had become the Employment Exchange (Fig 5).

Angel Way and the postal sorting office to the west of the site were post-World War II developments.

The only archaeological investigation to date in North Street is a watching brief at 274 North Street, where no archaeological evidence was found (Beasley 1996; GLSMR 062505; NMR 1120462). An archaeological watching brief on test pits dug at the former postal sorting office site, to the west of the present development site, recorded alluvial deposits over 1m thick, with no archaeological material in them (Holder 1997: GLSMR 062548). A 19th-century ground surface was identified above the alluvium and below modern made ground, at a height of 13.5m OD, only 35m from the present site.

6. FIELDWORK RESULTS (Fig 2)

Six test pits (TP) were excavated by the geotechnical contractor at various locations across the site. All, with the exception of TP6, measured 1 x 1m and were approximately 1.5m deep. In general the sections showed modern disturbance to this depth and only in TP's 4 and 5 was undisturbed natural geology encountered. Each test pit is briefly described below. Further information can be found in Appendix 1.

6.1 Test pit 1 (Fig 3a)

Located along the northwestern edge of the site, TP1 abutted an extant building (19 North Street). It was excavated to a depth of 1.6m, where the base of the wall to 19 North Street was encountered. Three layers of modern dumped material were identified below degraded tarmac. The undisturbed natural geology was not encountered.

6.2 Test pit 2 (Fig 3b)

Test pit 2 was situated at the approximate middle of the southwest edge of the site. It was excavated to a depth of 1.6m. Below a layer of tarmac was a layer of modern rubble and clay and below this was a buried topsoil at a depth of 0.9m, which was heavily disturbed by modern services. No dateable finds were observed in the lower layer. Undisturbed natural geology was not encountered.

6.3 Test Pit 3 (Fig 3c)

Test pit 3 was excavated to a depth of 1.5m along the northeastern edge of the site. Below the degraded tarmac lay two distinct layers of modern building rubble, and below these lay the buried topsoil as seen in TP2. Again no dateable finds were identified in this buried topsoil and it was heavily disturbed by modern services. The undisturbed natural geology was not encountered.

6.4 Test pit 4 (Fig 3d)

Along the southeastern edge of the site test pit 4 was excavated to a depth of 1.4m. The undisturbed natural geology, mid brown clay, was encountered at a depth of approximately 1.3m. Above the natural geology were two distinct layers containing modern rubble which were capped by a thin layer of very degraded tarmac.

6.5 Test pit 5 (Fig 3e)

In the approximate centre of the development area and excavated to a depth of 1.5m, test pit 5 revealed the undisturbed natural geology at a depth of approximately 1.3m. The modern layers identified were virtually identical in nature and composition to those described in TP4. However, a wall running approximately east-west and comprising of red stock, machine pressed, bricks cut through them. The wall was only two courses wide and so likely to have been an internal wall or the wall for an ancillary building, possibly related to the employment exchange shown on the 1939 O.S map (Fig 5). The base of the wall rested on the top of the undisturbed natural geology.

6.6 Test pit 6 (Fig 3f)

Test pit 6 was located towards the northwest corner of the site. It measured approximately 2 x 1.5m and was excavated to a depth of 1.35m. Immediately below the tarmac was a double skinned wall running approximately northeast – southwest. The wall was made of machine pressed red stock bricks and extended approximately 1m below the present ground surface. Below the wall was a layer of dark brown clay containing fragments of brick rubble. It is likely that the wall is the remains of outer wall of the employment exchange identified on the 1939 map. No undisturbed natural geology was noted in this test pit.

7. FINDS AND ENVIRONMENTAL MATERIAL

No finds were collected and no environmental samples taken. This reflects the amount of modern disturbance to the site.

8. CONCLUSIONS

It is clear from the cartographic and documentary evidence post-medieval, and possibly medieval structures once stood on the site. However, the demolition of buildings during the early/middle 20th century seems to have eradicated any traces of earlier buildings or archaeological features and deposits.

Given the amount and depth of modern disturbance it is unlikely that any archaeological remains survive within the development area.

Acknowledgements

The project was commissioned and funded by Stonebond Limited. Thanks are due to Verry Construction Limited for their assistance on site. The project was monitored by GLAAS. J Archer carried out the cartographic and documentary study and A Lewsey prepared the illustrations. P Allen managed the project and the author carried out the fieldwork.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Beasley, M.	1996	<i>A Watching Brief at 274 North Street, Romford, London Borough of Havering.</i> Newham Museums Service report
British Geological Survey	Accessed Feb 2005	http://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html
DoE	1990	<i>Planning Policy Guideline 16: Archaeology and Planning</i>
Heppell, E.	2000	<i>Wykeham Hall, Market Place, Romford, London Borough of Havering. Archaeological Desk-based Assessment.</i> Essex CC report 821
Holder, N.	1997	<i>Watching brief at Angel Way, Romford, 1997. Site Code ANL97.</i> Museum of London Archaeology Service report



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Figure 1. Location Plan

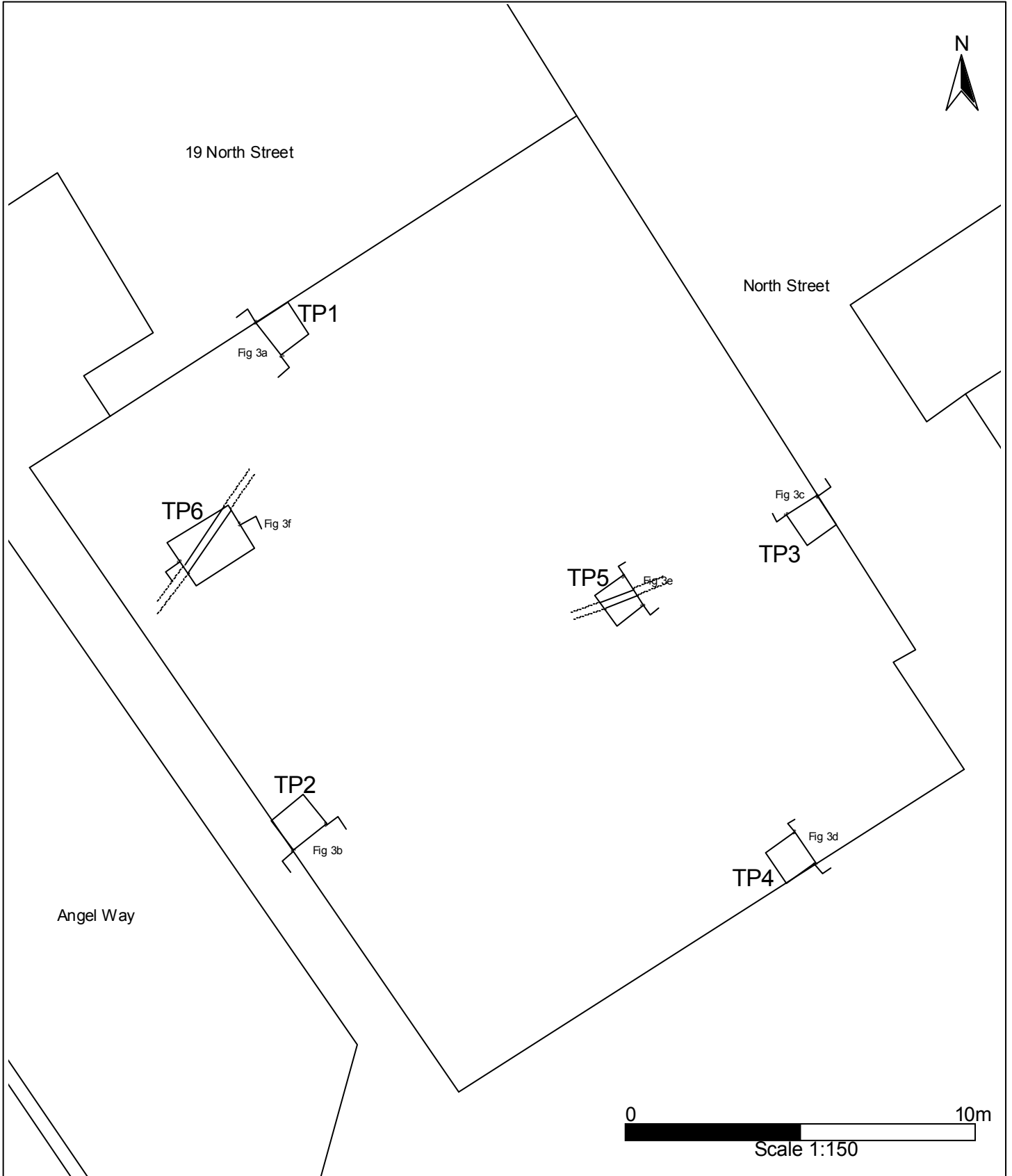


Figure 2 - Test Pit Location

Fig 3a - Test Pit 1 - east facing

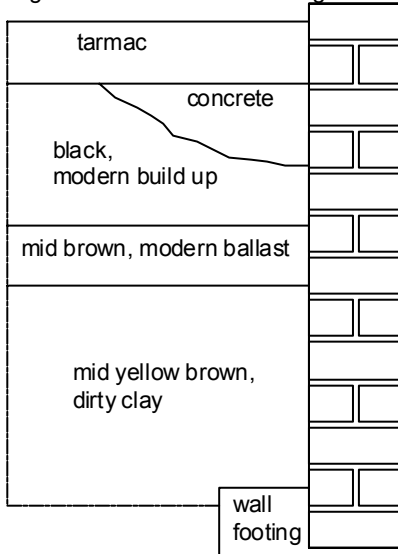


Fig3b - Test Pit 2 - north facing

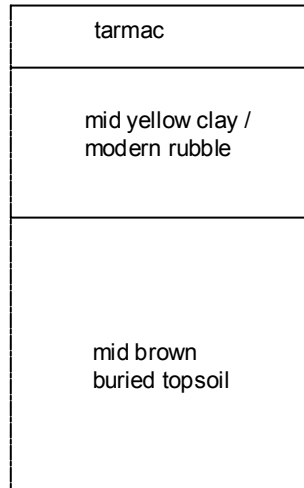


Fig 3c - Test Pit 3 - south facing

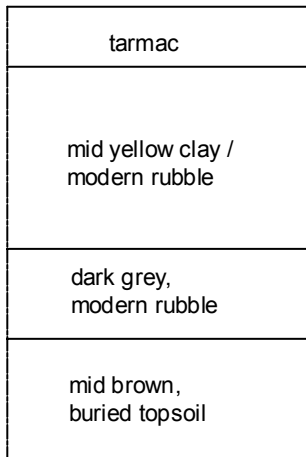


Fig 3d - Test Pit 4 - west facing

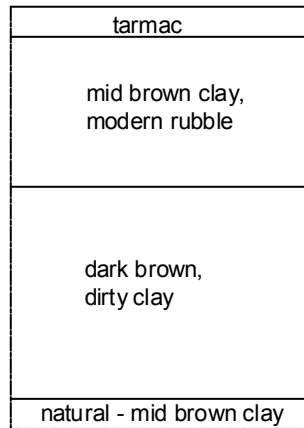


Fig 3e - Test Pit 5 - west facing

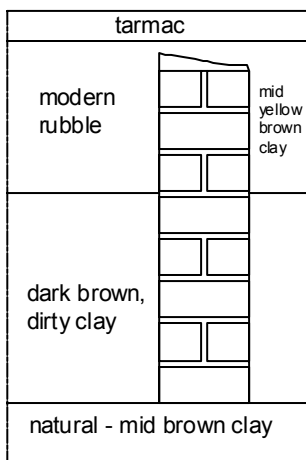


Fig 3f - Test Pit 6 - south facing

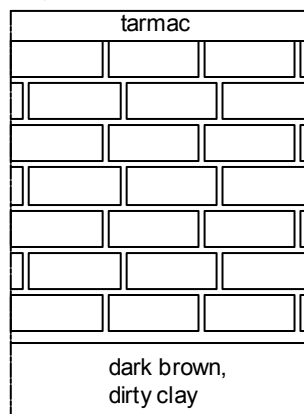


Fig.3. Test pit sections

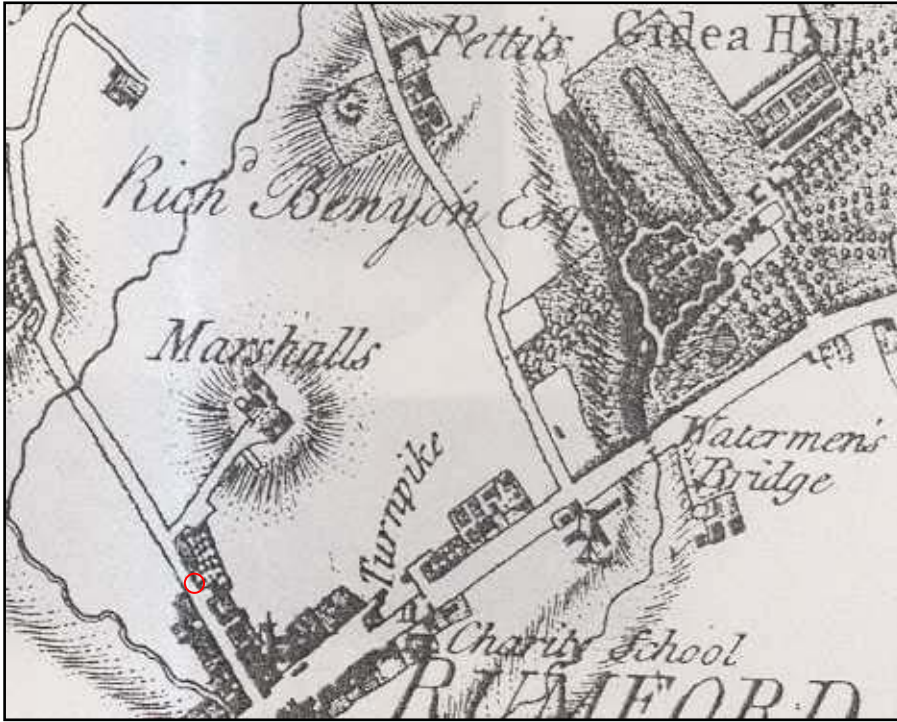


Fig 4a. Chapman and André 1777

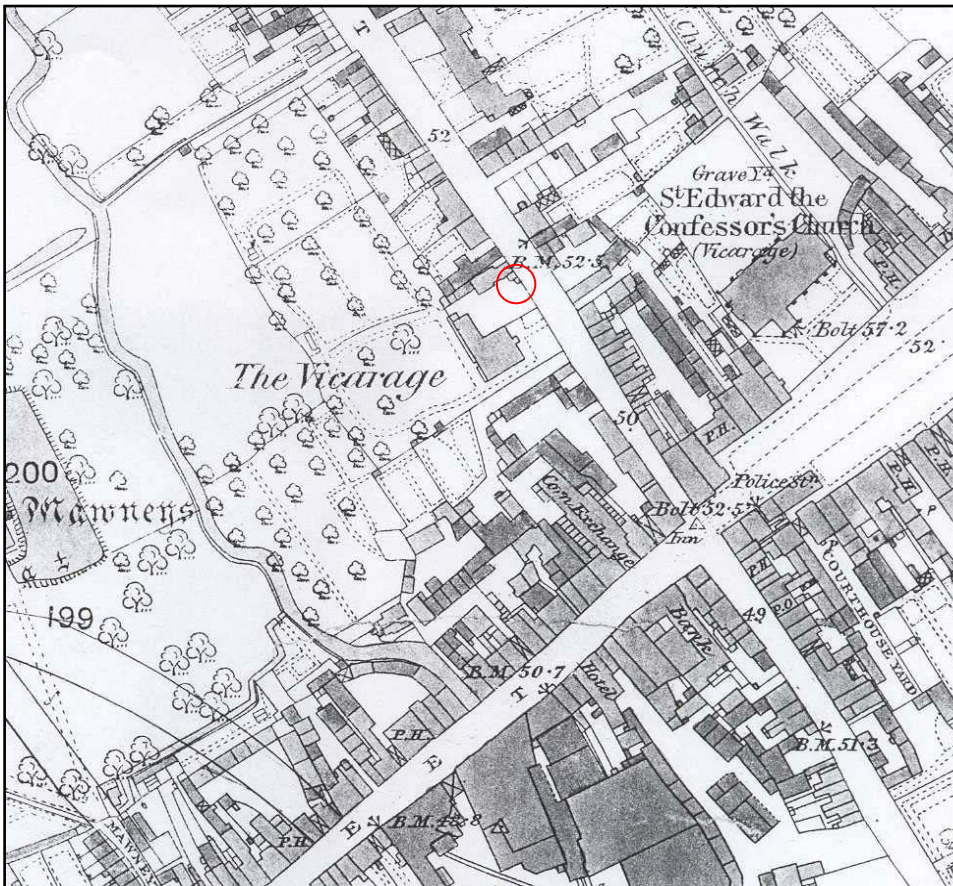


Fig 4b. 1st edition Ordnance Survey map 1874

Figure 4 – 1777 and 1874 1st Edition Maps

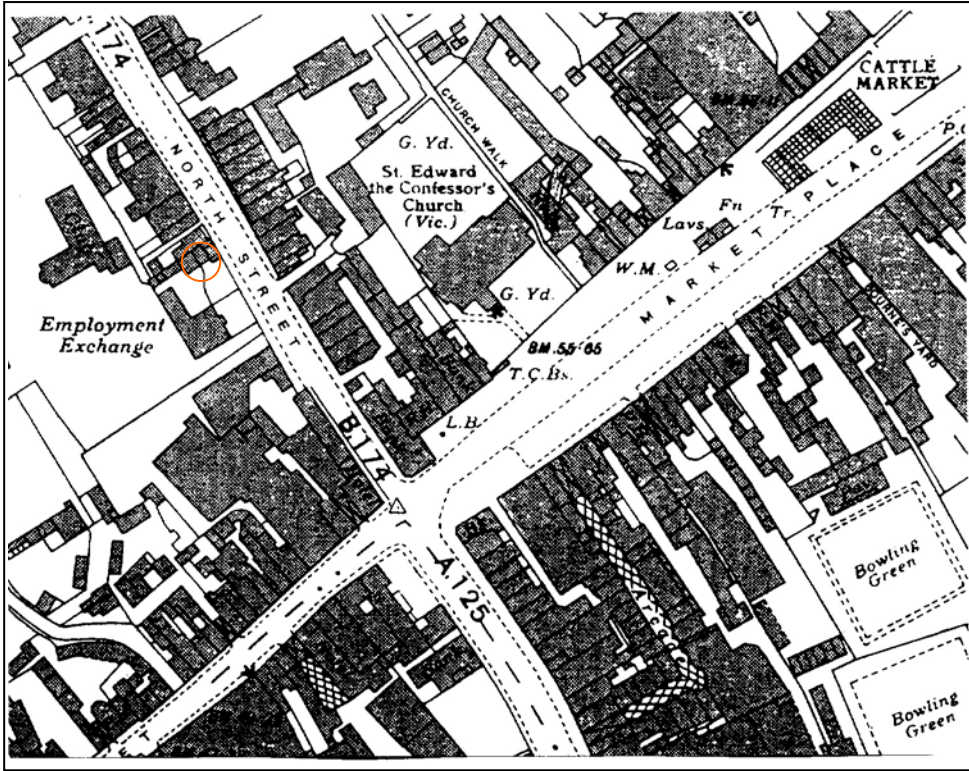


Figure 5 – 1939 OS Map

APPENDIX 1: FIELDWORK DATA

All dimensions are given in metres.

Test Pit	Dimensions	Depth	Natural Seen?	Archaeological Features
1	1 x 1	1.6	No	None
2	1 x 1	1.6	No	None
3	1 x 1	1.5	No	None
4	1 x 1	1.4	Yes	None
5	1 x 1	1.5	Yes	Modern wall
6	2 x 1.5	1.35	No	Modern wall

APPENDIX 2: ARCHIVE INDEX

SITE NAME : 21 – 23 North Street, Romford (NSR 05)

Index to the Archive

File containing:

1. Research Archive

1.1 Client Report

2. Site Archive

2.1 1 x Plans Register

2.2 1 x Sections Register

2.3 2 x Photographic Register

2.4 Site Photographic Record (9 x B+W Prints; 9 x Colour Slides)

2.5 3 x Miscellaneous maps and plans

2.6 1 x Site location drawing

2.7 1 x Section sheet

No finds

6. PERIOD SUMMARIES

Modern over Burden and modern wall remains only

7. NATURAL

Type London Clay

Height above O.D.

8. LOCATION OF ARCHIVE

Please indicate those categories still in your possession:

Notes Plans Correspondence Photos Negs Slides Manuscripts

All will be deposited in the following museum: Museum of London

Year of transfer 2005

Location of copies FAU Offices

Security copy made yes

9. LOCATION OF FINDS

In your possession N/A

All of the finds have been / will be deposited in the following museum: Museum of London:

Year of transfer N/A

10. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Essex and Greater London SMR

21 –23 North Street, Romford, Archaeological Desk Top Assessment and Test Pits. Essex C C Field Archaeology Unit report.