

Sutton Archaeological Services

Evaluation Report

on

St. Georges Estate,
Cable Street, London, E1 8HS
SGJ 09: (TQ 344808)

for

Eastend Homes

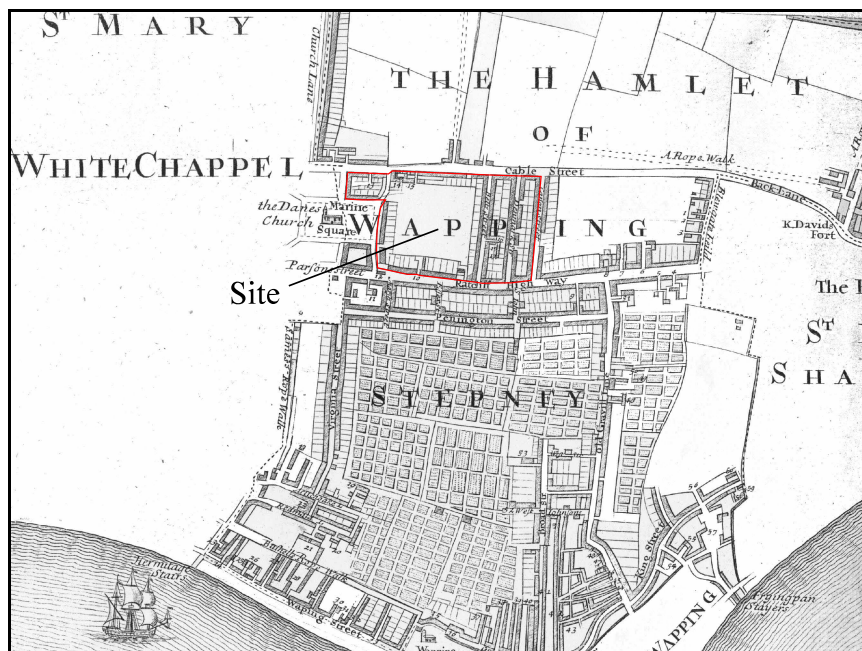


Fig. 1

Gascoigne's map (1703)

Evaluation Report

on

St. Georges Estate,
Cable Street, London, E3 4SY
London Borough of Tower Hamlets
SGJ 09: (TQ 344808)

by

J G PERRY: May 2010

Summary

Sutton Archaeological Services (SAS) carried out an archaeological evaluation at St. Georges Estate, Cable Street, London, E3 4SY between 16th and 23th March 2009 and a watching brief between 16th and 17th February 2010.

The site lay in an area of archaeological importance as defined in London Borough of Tower Hamlets's Unitary Development Plan. Research by Sutton Archaeological Services for the research design indicated that there was Roman and Post-Medieval archaeology in the surrounding area.

The evaluation and watching brief only revealed turf and topsoil, made ground, demolition deposits, as well as the remains of 18th and 19th century occupation. These remains covered the natural brickearth and gravels.

No Roman to Medieval archaeology was found and the finds range from 18th to 20th century Ceramic Building Materials (CBM), pottery, bone, glass, metal and clay pipes. A single residual sherd of Roman pottery was found in trench 1.

Our findings set out above lead us to conclude that this phase of the proposed development does not threaten to destroy any archaeological remains of national, regional or local importance, deserving further investigation or preservation.

We suggest that no further archaeological monitoring or intervention is needed and that the archaeological condition in the planning consent has been fulfilled. The decision to discharge the archaeological condition, however, rests with the local planning authority on the advice of the Archaeological Officer at English Heritage.

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Situation

This report relates to the proposed development at St. Georges Estate, Cable Street, London, E3 4SY.

The site lies in an Area of High Archaeological Potential (AHAP's) and English Heritage advised the London Borough of Tower Hamlets a that an archaeological condition under PPG 16¹ should be included in any planning approval. The following condition was included in permission AP/08/00146 dated 18th January 2009:

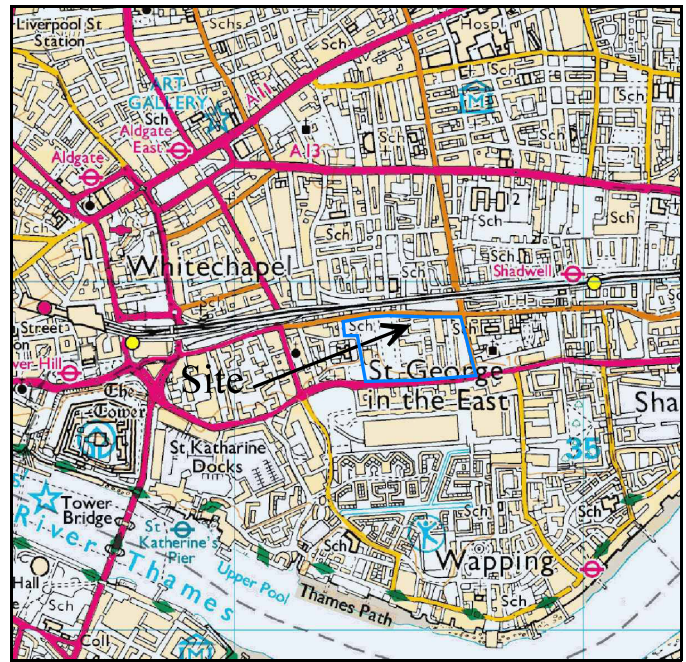


Fig. 2 Site Location © Crown Copyright MC/98/38

- 13 *The developer shall ensure than an archaeological investigation and excavation is carried out (after site clearance and before groundworks) on the site by an archaeological organisation to be approved by the Council. The specification and programming for archaeological work shall be a matter for negotiation between the developer and the approved archaeological organisation, but all such work shall be carried out to the general satisfaction of the Council.*

Eastend Homes Limited (the developer) has commissioned Sutton Archaeological Services (SAS) to carry out an archaeological evaluation and any resulting archaeological work that may be necessary.

The Site

Location: The sites lie in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, in a rectangular area of land bounded by Cable Street to the north, the Cannon Street Road to the to the east and Well Close Square and Fletcher Street to the west and the Highway to the south.

¹ Department of the Environment: *Planning Policy Guidance: Archaeology and Planning*, HMSO, 1990.



Fig. 3

Site Location Plan

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Topography: The sites lie in a mainly residential area on the northern side of the Thames valley. The ground slopes downwards to the south, with the sites lying at a height of between 12.5m aOD (north) to 12.5m aOD (south).

Geology: Under the sites lies brickearth and/or alluvial deposits over the natural sand and gravel.

The development consists of a 1960's council housing estate. Eastend Homes has obtained permission to upgrade the site with addition housing units attached to the existing flats and the demolition of some old stair wells. (fig. 4).

Archaeological discussion

There is plenty of evidence for human occupation and activity in the research area, though this is mostly confined to the Roman and Post-Medieval periods.

Taking the evidence as a whole, before the archaeological work, the potential for Prehistoric, Saxon and Medieval occupation and activity is considered low. Roman and Post-Medieval occupation and activity is, however, considered medium to high.

Prehistoric: There have only been a few Bronze Age finds recorded in the research area, suggesting that the area was mainly unoccupied. In other riverine areas of London, Bronze Age trackways have been found on the river margins, implying extensive exploitation of river resources.

Pre-evaluation and watching brief evidence suggested there was a low potential for Prehistoric archaeology on this site.

Roman: The main Roman occupation and activity is in London, Shadwell, Ratcliffe and at Old Ford, indicating the area between London and the River Lea was in extensive use. The Highway is on the line of a suspected Roman road running to the suspected settlements at Shadwell and Ratcliffe. There are extensive cemeteries to the east of London, the nearest known one being in Hooper Street, 200m to the east of the site. The full extent of the cemeteries is not known, but burials are also known in Canon Street Road along the eastern end of the site, suggesting the cemeteries may extend across the site.

Pre-evaluation and watching brief evidence suggested there was a medium to high potential for Roman archaeology on this site.

Saxon: There is no evidence for Saxon occupation or activity until late in the period. Domesday records that the surrounding land and river were extensively exploited. When this exploitation started is not known. It may well have followed on from the Roman period. Other than river exploitation there appears to be little activity in the area of the site.

Pre-evaluation and watching brief evidence suggested there was a low potential for Saxon archaeology on this site.

Medieval: Other than Domesday, there is little evidence for Medieval occupation in the immediate area around the site. There was quite a large population in the area, but the known settlements were well away from the site. The exploitation of the river resources was very profitable. The site is located on the probable edge marginal land alongside the Thames on what would have been marshland and/or meadowland. During the summer months the land would dry out and be used for

grazing animals. It is also possible that drainage ditches, such as those found in Dock Street would have been on this marginal land.

Pre-evaluation and watching brief evidence suggested there was a low potential for Medieval archaeology on this site.

Post-Medieval to Modern: The historic and cartographic evidence suggests that development spread out eastwards from London. The area to the south of the Highway was mainly marsh and meadow. The riverside to the east of London was developed for docks with the East India Company building its principal shipyard at Blackwall in the early 17th century, with the London Docks starting in the early 19th century. The site was gradually developed in the 17th and by the early 18th century was fairly well developed. and redeveloped throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

Pre-evaluation and watching brief evidence suggested there was a Medium to High potential for Post-Medieval to Modern archaeology on this site.

Research objectives

In March 2009 Sutton Archaeological Services produced its research design. Based on our assessment of the evidence, we formed the objectives to look for signs of Roman and Post-Medieval occupation and activity on the site, and if found to determine their extent, date, condition and significance.

The Institute for Field Archaeologists has defined the purpose of a field evaluation as follows.

“The purpose of field evaluation is to gain information about the archaeological resource within a given area or site (including its presence or absence, character, extent, date, integrity, state of preservation and quality), in order to make an assessment of its merit in the appropriate context, leading to one or more of the following:

- the formulation of a strategy to ensure the recording, preservation or management of the resource
- the formulation of a strategy to initiate a threat to the archaeological resource

- the formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigation within a programme of research.”

Standards and Guidance for Archaeological Field Evaluations, IfA, 2001

Archaeological Proposals

Usually, where development may destroy archaeology, an evaluation is undertaken to identify the presence or absence, extent, character, quality and date of any threatened deposits and, where necessary, to develop a suitable mitigation strategy or design measures to protect the archaeology. If significant remains are encountered then further investigation will be needed to mitigate the impact of development, and the scope of that work will be detailed in another Research Design.

SAS proposes to excavate 3 trenches (30m x 2m) across the site, with a watching brief in area A.

Archaeological methodology

Standards: SAS carried out the archaeological evaluation in accordance with

- our research design dated March 2009. Due to site constraints the dimensions of the trenches were changed.
- the Institute for Field Archaeologists’ Code of Conduct, Code of Approved Practice for the Regulation of Contractual Arrangement in Field Archaeology, Standards and Guidance for Field Evaluations
- the archaeological guidance papers issued by English Heritage.

Control: All excavation work was done under the control of the archaeologists on site.

Trenches: We dug 3 stepped trenches as shown on fig 4.

We broke open the trenches with a JCB 3CX excavator, using a smooth-edged ditching bucket and a toothed bucket where appropriate.

Non-archaeological deposits: In each trench we removed by machine, in level spits of no more than 10-15 cm, the concrete, made ground and demolition deposits. Work continued removing all overburden until we reached the first significant archaeological layer (or the natural deposits), at

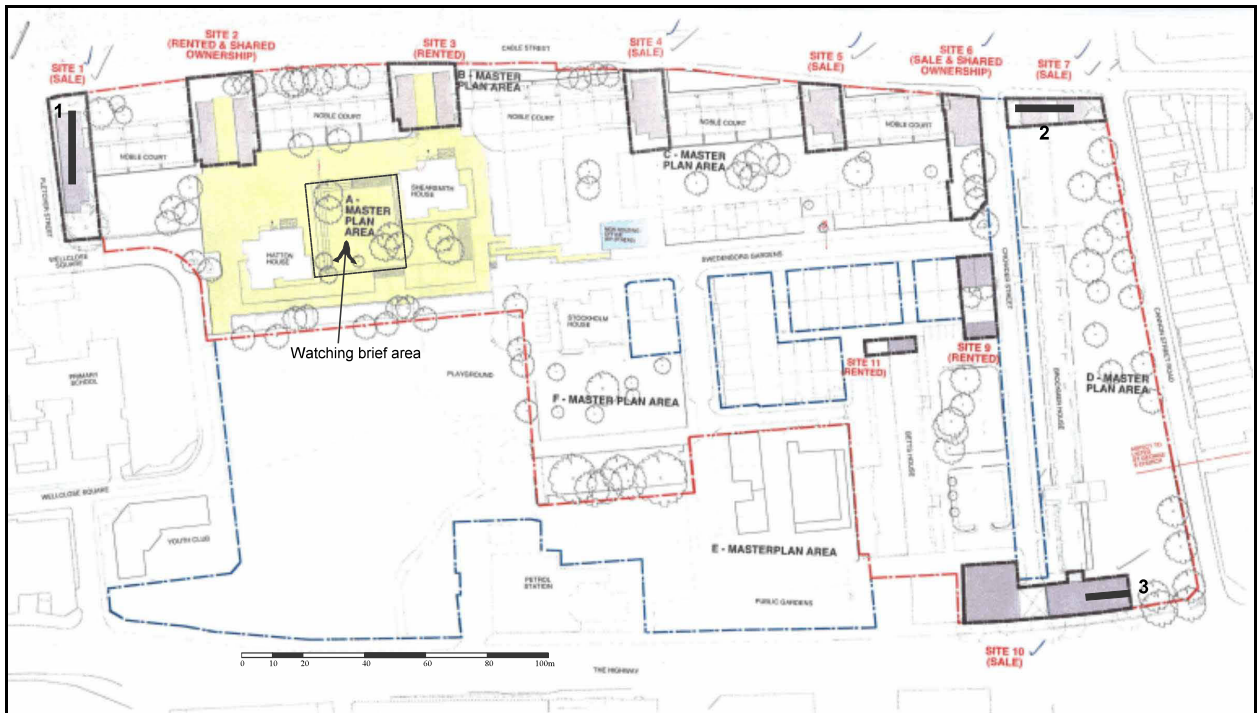


Fig. 4 Development plan showing archaeological trenches and watching brief area

which point all machine work ceased in that trench. (We excavated up to 25cm into the natural to make sure we had reached true natural and not re-deposited material.) In this way we excavated the trench without finding any archaeological deposits.

Site records: We recorded all features as we proceeded, by written records, plans, sections and photographs. In all, we recorded 40 contexts - numbered [001] to [040] - in a single context recording system. The site was recorded in accordance with the Fieldwork Methodology in our research design, and using the Museum of London’s recording system.

Levels: All levels were taken from the developers site survey 27060/1/2/3.

Backfilling: After excavating and recording the trench was backfilled and all surplus spoil left on site.

Evaluation results

Trench 1

We excavated Trench 1 on the north-western end of the estate in area 1. The trench was aligned roughly north to south, but was only excavated to a length of 23m as a large gas main crossed the southern part area 1. A telecommunication cable also crossed the trench, which was excavated in two parts (5.5m and 16m), leaving a 1.5m berm in the centre. Some deposits, therefore, will have two

context numbers where the same context was excavated in the northern and southern parts of the trench.

The first context was the turf and topsoil [001](north: 10.99m aOD to south: 11.07m aOD) which covered the whole trench to a depth of between 8-11cm. Below the turf was a modern made ground deposit, a mid to dark brown sandy silt [002], containing 10-15% modern CBM, as well as modern pottery, bone, glass, metal and clay pipes. The context covered the whole trench to a depth of between 91-106cm.

The next context was the demolition deposit relating to the 19th century houses that once occupied the site. In the northern part it was a medium to light olive brown silty sand [006] containing 15-20% modern CBM fragments and frequent small to large flint pebbles. In the southern part it was a medium brown silty sand [009](north: 10.21m aOD to south: 10.72m aOD), but contained only frequent fragments of modern CBM and small to large flint pebbles. Both context contained 19th to 20th century pottery, bone, glass, metal and clay pipes.

Contained within the context were the remains of an north to south 19th century brick wall [003] (top 10.62m aOD) and also a part of a 19th century concrete floor [010]. The two features were not archaeologically associated, but were obviously part of the same building. The wall had been built over an east to west circular brick drain [004] (top 9.94m aOD), which had sagged under the weight of the wall. The bricks in the drain were hand made with only the occasional shallow frog, suggesting they were of late 18th to early 19th century date. The drain ran over the remains of an 18th century wall [005] (top 9.55m aOD), also on an east to west alignment, with a junction to the south. This southern extension was also found in the southern part of the trench.

All of the above features were cut into a series of rubbish deposits. In the northern part of the trench the context was recorded as 007 (9.99m aOD) and in the southern part as 011 (10.00m aOD). It was a dark brown silty sand, containing medium to large fragments of 18th century CBM as well as pottery, bone, glass, metal and clay pipes. A sherd of Roman pottery was also found in 007. Context 007 was a more homogenous deposit, but context 011, was more mixed, comprising a number of dumped deposits. Most of these deposits were small, but contained within the context was a large dump of crushed chalk. In the southern part of the trench a further deposit of burnt clay and ash was present [013](9.27m aOD to 9.29m aOD). There were no finds from this context.

Natural brickearth lay below context **007** and **013**. This was a light brown, slightly sandy silt [**008**] (top 8.61m aOD) in the north and **014** (top 9.20m aOD) in the south. The context contained 10-15% small to medium flint pebbles. The natural gravel [**015**](north: 7.50m aOD to south: 8.98m aOD) lay below the brickearth.

Trench 2

We excavated Trench 2 on the north-eastern end of the estate in area 7. The trench was aligned roughly east to west, but was only excavated to a length of 22.5m, as a large brick and concrete structure occupied the eastern end of the trench. A telecommunication cable also crossed the trench, causing it to be excavated in two parts (6.5m and 15m), leaving a 1m berm over the cable. The made ground deposits in trench 2 were very loose, particularly at the western end, and even with a stepped trench it was not considered safe to enter the trench. Only at the eastern end was it possible to quickly enter the trench and record the lower contexts.

The first context was the turf and topsoil [**016**](west: 12.08m aOD to east: 12.20m aOD) which covered the whole trench to a depth of between 8-11cm. Below the turf was a modern made ground deposit [**017**] a dark brown to black sandy silt, containing 10-15% modern CBM and frequent small to large flint pebbles, as well as modern pottery, bone, glass, metal and clay pipes. This was a mixed deposit with lenses of different material. The context covered the western part of the trench to a depth of between 1.57m to 1.66m.

At the eastern end of this section, mostly below the berm, was a large brick built sewer [**018**](top 10.37m aOD). To the west of the drain and below context **016** was a deposit of mid brown sandy silt [**019**](west: 10.41m aOD to east: 10.37m aOD), containing moderate modern CBM, as well as modern pottery, metal and clay pipes. The context covered the western part of the trench to a depth of between 1.11m to 1.15m. The natural gravel [**020**] lay below context **019** and cutting into the gravel at the western end of the trench was a sewage pipe (top 8.96m aOD).

Contexts **016**, **017** and **019** extended across berm and into the eastern part of the trench, though here **017** contained a large dump of modern CBM. Below **017** was a concrete floor [**021**] (top 10.37m aOD) with an adjoining thick brick wall (top 10.26m aOD). The concrete floor was traced for about 15m and was still continuing. At this point the trench was abandoned.

When the concrete floor was broken through, a deposit of dark greyish sandy silt [022] (top 10.10m aOD), containing 10% oyster shells and 18th century CBM and clay pipes. The maximum depth was about 52cm. The natural sand and gravel [020] (top 9.59m aOD) lay below.

Trench 3

We excavated Trench 3 in the south-eastern corner of the estate in area 10. The trench was aligned roughly east to west, but was only excavated to a length of about 15m, as secure compound lay across the western area of the trenches proposed position. The reduction was agreed with the Archaeological Advisor at English Heritage.

The first context was the turf and topsoil [023](west: 9.92m aOD to east: 9.74m aOD) which covered the whole trench to a depth of between 7-10cm. Below the turf was a modern made ground deposit [024] a medium to dark brown sandy silt, containing frequent modern CBM, as well as modern pottery, glass and metal. This was a mixed deposit with lenses of different material and covered the trench to a depth of between 46cm to 55cm.

The next context was a demolition deposit [025](west: 9.29m aOD to east: 9.17m aOD) a dark brown sandy silt, containing frequent 18th century CBM, as well as modern pottery, bone, glass, metal and 19th century clay pipes. It covered the trench to a depth of between 68cm to 73cm. Odd fragments of 18th century walls were contained within context 025, but sitting on the underlying brickearth.

Natural brickearth lay below context 025. This was a light olive brown, slightly sandy silt [028] (west: 8.55m aOD to east: 8.41m aOD). Unlike context 008 in trench 1, the brickearth in trench 3 only had the very occasional flint pebble.

A circular, brick built cess pit(?) [027] was cut into the brickearth. The diameter was 1.12m, with walls 23cm thick. The fill was a dark brown sandy silt [026], containing occasional modern CBM, as well as 18th century clay pipes. It was excavated to a depth of 1.29m.

The natural gravel lay below [029](west: 7.95m aOD to east: 7.58m aOD) the brickearth.

Watching brief report on Area A (fig. 5)

This area of the site was set aside for a raised platform connecting two tower blocks, Hatton House and Shearsmith House. Before works began on the project, a series of trenches were excavated to locate live services which were known to be in the area. Three trenches (numbered 4 to 6) were excavated to the natural and were monitored and recorded for archaeological remains. The remaining trenches found numerous services and were not excavated below the made ground and were not recorded.

Trench 4

No services were located in Trench 4 and an opportunity was taken to expand this into a small area to examine the stratigraphy of the area. The trench was about 8m square, reducing to an area of about 5m square.

The first context was the turf and topsoil [030](north 11.73m aOD to south: 11.77m aOD) which covered the whole trench to a depth of between 8-10cm. Below the turf was a modern made ground deposit [031] (north 11.65m aOD to south: 11.67m aOD) a medium to dark brown sandy silt, containing frequent modern CBM, as well as modern pottery, glass and metal. It covered the trench to a depth of between 52cm to 65cm.

The next context was a demolition deposit [032](north 11.13m aOD to south: 11.02m aOD) a dark brown sandy silt, containing frequent 19th century CBM, as well as modern pottery, bone, glass, metal and 19th century clay pipes. It covered the trench to a depth of between 62cm to 93cm. Included in this context were the remains of a 19th century structure, consisting of a brick floor, part of a plastered wall and two other walls.

Below the debris was a friable, dark brown to black sandy silt [033](north 10.20m aOD to south: 10.40m aOD) containing occasional small fragments 19th century brick fragments and white mortar. This context covered the trench to a depth of about 90cm.

The natural brickearth [034] lay below context 033. This was a light olive brown, slightly sandy silt (north 9.29m aOD to south: 9.52m aOD) containing occasional small flint pebbles. We dug through the brickearth for up to 1m to make sure that it did not cover any early Prehistoric activity. As soon as we started to excavate the brickearth, water started to seep in and soon covered the base of the trench.

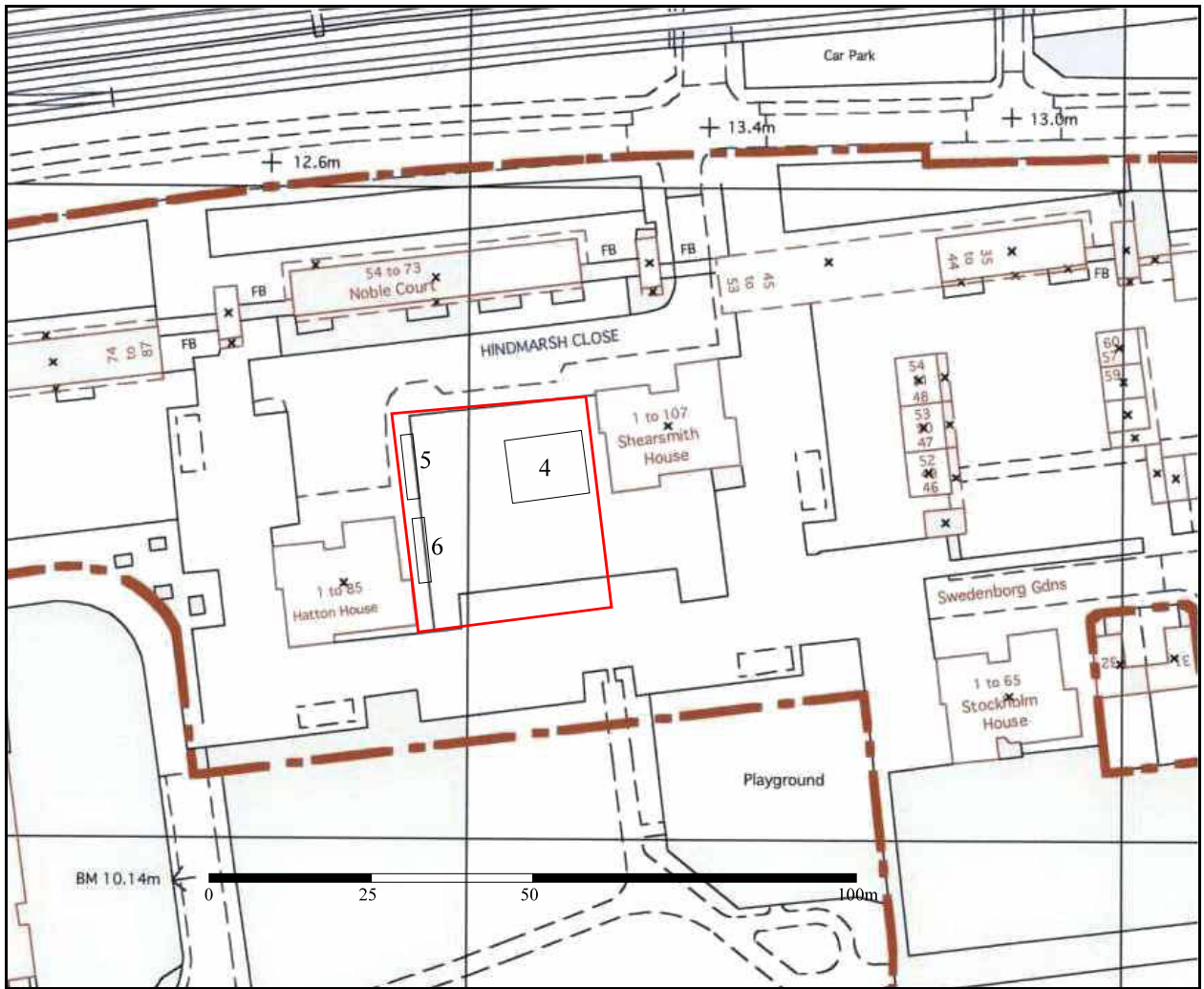


Fig. 5 Area A, showing trench locations

Trench 5

A modern tarmac surface and a layer of concrete [035] (north 9.55m aOD to south: 9.30m aOD) covered the whole of the area to a depth of about 20cm. Below this was a demolition deposit [036] (north 9.35m aOD to south: 9.10m aOD) a dark brown sandy silt, containing frequent 19th century CBM, as well as pottery, bone, glass, Oyster shells and metal fragments. It covered the trench to a depth of about 1.20m. Included in this context were the remains of two 19th century structures, a brick pit and a brick well or sump.

The natural brickearth [037] lay below context 036. This was a light olive brown, slightly sandy silt (north 8.15m aOD to south: 7.90m aOD) containing occasional small-medium flint pebbles. We dug through the brickearth for up to 40cm to make sure that it did not cover any early Prehistoric activity. As soon as we started to excavate the brickearth, water started to seep in and soon covered the base of the trench.

Trench 6

A modern tarmac surface and a layer of concrete [038] (north 9.30m aOD to south: 9.29m aOD) covered the whole of the area to a depth of about 20cm. Below this was a demolition deposit [039] (north 9.10m aOD to south: 9.09m aOD) a reddish to dark brown sandy silt, containing frequent 19th century CBM, as well as pottery, bone, glass and metal fragments. It covered the trench to a depth of about 1.20m. Included in this context were several lenses of different material as well as several live services at the southern end of the trench.

The natural brickearth [040] lay below context 039. This was a light olive brown, slightly sandy silt (north 7.90m aOD to south: 7.89m aOD) containing occasional small-medium flint pebbles. We dug through the brickearth for up to 30cm to make sure that it did not cover any early Prehistoric activity. As soon as we started to excavate the brickearth, water started to seep in and soon covered the base of the trench.

Assessment and interpretation

The evidence from the SAS preliminary research indicated that there was Roman and Post-Medieval archaeology and/or activity in the surrounding area.

The evaluation only revealed turf and topsoil, made ground, demolition deposits, as well as the remains of 18th and 19th century occupation. These remains covered the natural brickearth and gravels.

Trench 1: there was evidence of the 18th and 19th century buildings that once occupied the area, with the 19th century ones destroying the 18th century ones. The 19th century buildings were pulled down when St. Georges Estate was built.

Trench 2: there was no evidence of any 18th and 19th century buildings. What structures remained all appeared to be of 20th century origin. The only remains of earlier occupation was the 18th century rubbish deposit.

Trench 3: there was a lot of modern destruction, which removed the evidence of all of the 19th century buildings, but leaving only slight remains of 18th century structures.

Trench 4: there was evidence of 19th century buildings. The 19th century buildings were pulled down when St. Georges Estate was built.

Trench 5: there was evidence of 19th century buildings. The 19th century buildings were pulled down when St. Georges Estate was built.

Trench 6: there was evidence of 19th century debris from the 19th century buildings which were pulled down when St. Georges Estate was built.

There was no evidence for any Roman archaeology (other than 1 sherd of pottery from trench 1) and the only Post-Medieval remains were from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries. The main finds were 18th to 20th century CBM and pottery, as well as 18th and 19th century clay pipes, 20th century glass, bone and miscellaneous fragments of iron were also recovered.

Archaeological Potential

Following the evaluation our revised view is that this site has no potential for archaeological remains of any period earlier than the 18th centuries. Although there is historic evidence for 17th century occupation in this area of Tower Hamlets, no evidence was found during the evaluation. The construction of the St. Georges Estate caused deep destruction to earlier deposits, leaving only fragmentary remains of these periods.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our findings set out above lead us to conclude that the proposed development will not threaten to destroy any archaeological remains of national, regional or local importance, deserving further investigation or preservation.

We suggest that no further archaeological monitoring or intervention is needed and that the archaeological condition in the planning consent has been fulfilled. The decision to discharge the archaeological condition, however, rests with the local planning authority on the advice of the Archaeological Officer at English Heritage

Publications and dissemination

The evidence so far is not worthy of publication but a note on the evaluation will be placed in the *London Archaeologist's* round-up and a copy of the report lodged in the local library when the final work and report have been completed.

Archive

The resulting archive, including all of the finds, will be donated by the developer and deposited with the Museum of London when the final report has been completed.

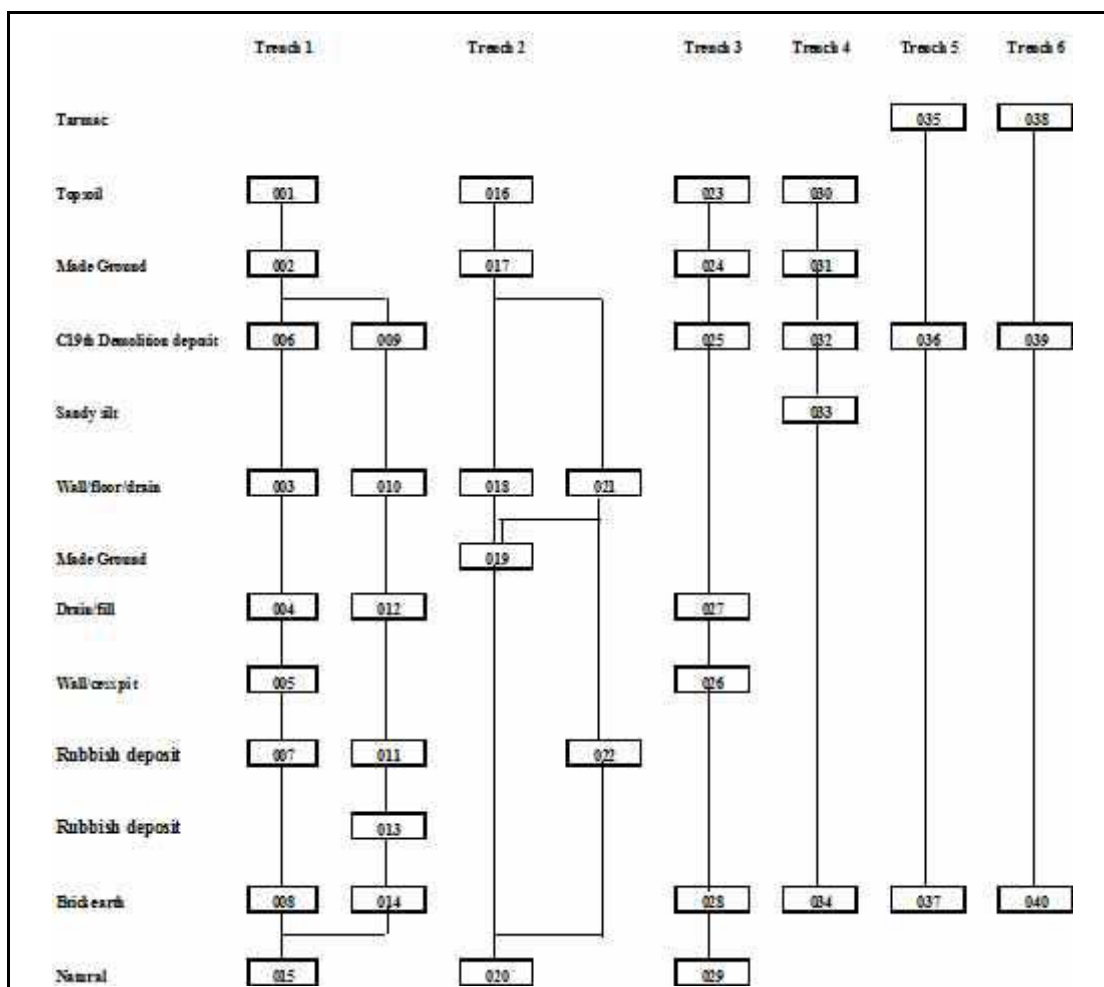


Fig. 6

Context matrix



Plate 1 Trench 1: southern part

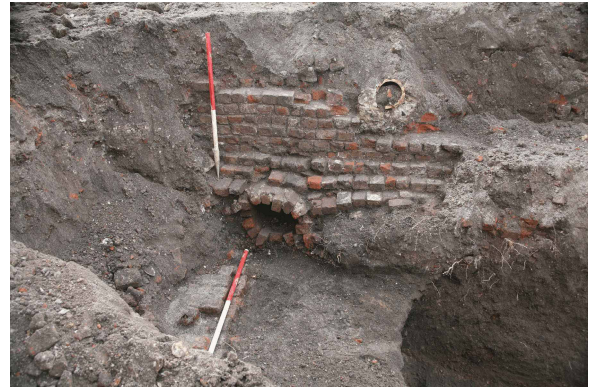


Plate 2 Trench 1: northern part



Plate 3 Trench 2: southern part



Plate 4 Trench 2: northern part



Plate 5 Context 022 below concrete



Plate 6 Trench 3 north section



Plate 7 Trench 4: north section



Plate 8 Trench 4: east section



Plate 9 Trench 5: east section



Plate 10 Trench 6: looking south

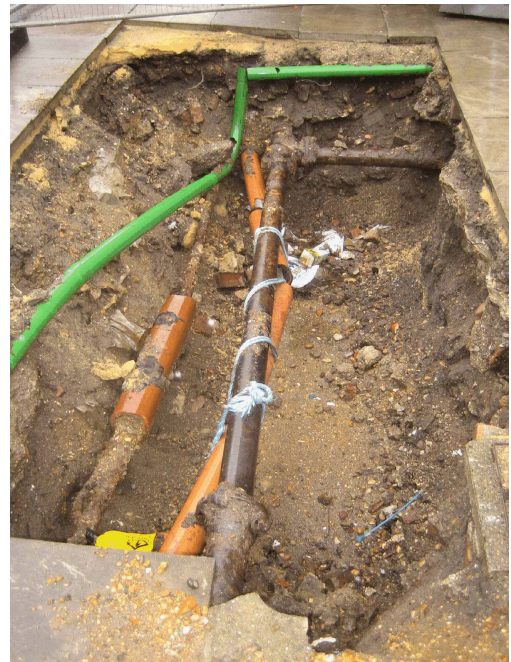


Plate 11 Misc service trench



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