

Sites unseen

Following the publication of the 2019 Fieldwork Round-up with the Winter issue, we look at sites in London that we felt warranted a closer look and which show that fieldwork does not consist solely of holes in the ground.



Landmark Court, 15–31 Southwark Street, SE1 (LKO19)

Excavations by MOLA revealed a possible late 1st-century Roman brick-earthen floor overlaid by two ground-levelling deposits (the earliest of which contained pottery dated to AD 50–100), and another possible earth floor. A possible small rubbish pit, dated to AD 40–400, was cut into this dump.

Sealing these deposits was a brick-earthen slab interpreted as a Roman clay-and-timber building (provisionally dated to the early 2nd century AD) with the remains of an earth wall, clad in white painted plaster (seen here), along its northern edge. Infilling the partially demolished remains of this building was a layer of demolition debris, probably derived from a nearby Roman masonry building. Pottery recovered from this deposit is dated to AD 120–160. Sealing the Roman deposits was a layer of ‘dark earth’ and ‘garden soil’ which were cut by 18th- and 20th-century brick foundations.



629–631 Roman Road, E3 (RORI6)

In 2016, three structural test pits, excavated in advance of a shop construction on the Roman Road, uncovered a metallised surface, similar to that described in previous archaeological evaluations carried out at Parnell Road and Lefevre Road (Mills *Trans LAMAS* 35 (1984), 25–36). They had been interpreted as the London to Colchester Roman Road.

This later work by Touchstone Archaeology found evidence that suggested that the metallised feature found in phase I in 2016 was the northern extent of the Roman Road that ran east–west in accordance with the findings of 1984. Although no definitive edge was encountered, the road petered out towards the centre of the shop, where a deposit interpreted as road wash was recorded. Pottery recovered from trenches 4 and 7 gave a date from AD 43–270, matching the AD 50 date of the road’s construction.

The road is probably that of the Stratford to Great Dunmow route (Iter IX) of 25 miles, noted in the 2nd-century Antonine Itinerary. Fortunately, the construction of the shallow 19th-century foundations had not impacted on the road feature, but modern alterations to the building had caused significant disturbance elsewhere.

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Fulham Gasworks, Imperial Road, SW6 (IRL19)

Historic Building Recordings to Historic England’s level IV standard were undertaken by John Moore Heritage Services at Fulham Gasworks, formerly known as The Imperial Gas Company (1824–76) and later The Gas Light and Coke Company (1876–1970).

Along Sand’s End Lane, four listed buildings are due to be kept



and refurbished during the development. This will include, to the north, this Grade II* gasholder (known as ‘Gas Holder 2’), which was built in 1830 (LB 1261959). It is historically extremely important as it was created during the inception of the gas industry and is believed to be the oldest gasholder in the world, designed and/or built by two of the pioneering experts in gasholder design: Samuel Clegg and John Kirkham. When it was constructed with a capacity of 230,000 cubic feet, it was the largest gas holder in the world (modern gasholders on average hold 1,800,000 cu ft). It continued in use until 1944, when it became a relief tank. By 1972, it had been decommissioned.

Gas Holder 2 will be incorporated, largely intact, into an urban park landscape, part of a new housing development (Kings Road Park, Fulham). The Grade II office and laboratory will be turned into a restaurant and flats.



Top photo © MOLA; bottom photo © John Moore Heritage Services (JMHS)

Top photo © Touchstone Archaeology; bottom photo © JMHS



**Former
Stephen Street
Board School,
29 Cosway
Street, NW1
(CSY19)**

Archaeology South-East have recorded natural deposits in the south, which were overlain by made ground and levelling deposits associated with the demolition of

19th-century terraced housing which occupied the perimeter of the site, and the subsequent construction of the school house in 1899.

The building represents a typical example of a Victorian Board School structure, built in the Queen Anne Revival style, which was commonly used for such buildings. It originally contained 'laundry, cookery and school-keepers accommodation' – the laundry and cookery rooms were spaces where female students were taught skills considered appropriate for them in adult life suitable to their social class. The school-keeper accommodation also reflects the norms of the time, where such employees would be accommodated on site.

Evidence of the 19th-century terraced housing was recorded in the east of the site in the form of a cellar wall at least 3.30m high, which survived directly below the modern surface; the cellar itself had been backfilled during the 20th century.

The school building has now been demolished.



**Infirmary Hall, Westminster Abbey,
SW1P (INF19)**

Pre-Construct Archaeology recorded four different phases, spanning from the medieval period to the beginning of the 20th century, during archaeological monitoring of works to lay a new floor within the Hall. The foundations of the southern, eastern and western walls of the Infirmary Hall were revealed, as well as possible medieval surfaces and postholes. The remains of a 16th-century doorway (shown here) were observed in the western wall, which was later blocked in late Victorian times.

The patchy remains of a bedding deposit/ foundation for an 18th-century timber floor were also revealed, together with a 19th-century brick footing for a partition wall across the northern part of the area of investigation.

Any plans for publishing the Westminster Abbey sites have been delayed due to Covid.

**767–785
Commercial
Road, Mile
End, E14
(CMI19)**

Pre-Construct Archaeology conducted an Historic England Level 2/3 record of No 785 Commercial Road before its demolition and façade retention, plus an Historic England Level 4 record of Nos 777–783 Commercial Road before its restoration. A group of industrial and office buildings were recorded, before their restoration and conversion into offices, of the Grade II listed 1869 sailmakers' and chandlers' warehouse and associated 1894 office range. Together they formed No 777, plus the integrated office and a galleried engineers' workshop of 1896 (Nos 779–783).

The buildings were largely constructed for Caird and Rayner (coppersmiths, engineers and contractors to British and foreign admiralities) to manufacture evaporation and de-salination plant for the marine industry. It first acquired and adapted the 1869 sailmakers' and chandlers' warehouse, built by William Cubitt & Company, into a coppersmiths, machine shop and brass finishing shop. In 1893–4, they added an adjoining office range (No 777) fronting on to Commercial Road, which was designed by Marshall. In 1896, plans were submitted for a new two-storey steel-framed galleried engineering workshop and the three-storey office building at Nos 779–783 designed by Marshall and Bradley.

The workshop was built with an innovative internal rolled-steel frame, which marked the transition from iron- to steel-framed buildings in Britain. The site was enlarged again in 1902–3 and a new steel-framed three-bay galleried engineering workshop was built at No 785, using a full steel frame with continuous single piece rolled steel stanchions rather than the shorter composite stanchions.

The Sailmakers' Warehouse is to be restored and converted for offices, and other areas are to be demolished for communal living and residential flats.



Courtauld Institute of Art, 150 Strand, WC2R (OUR19)

Excavation by MOLA within two rooms located in the north wing of the Grade I Listed Somerset House, and a watching brief on drainage works, revealed natural terrace gravels overlain by truncated natural brickearth. This was cut by a series of Middle Saxon rubbish pits of 8th- or 9th-century date (a Saxon cesspit is shown here), which contained large quantities of animal bone as well as ceramic loom weights, a spindle whorl, a bone pin and part of a bone comb.

The mortared chalk wall foundations of a medieval building, which would have fronted on to the Strand, were recorded, contemporary with a very large 14th-century chalk-lined cesspit found nearby, which was preserved to over 4m in depth. The primary fills contained a large number of ceramic jugs, bowls and dishes of 14th- and 15th-century date. It also held metal objects, including a belt buckle and a spur, and appears to have remained

open as late as the early 16th century.

The pit was retained when the original Somerset House was constructed over this plot in the mid-16th century, but by the early 17th century, it had been converted into use as a cellar.

