

**Water mains replacement works in the vicinity of  
Stepney Green  
London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
(DMA Finsbury Park 58)**

**An Archaeological Watching Brief**



**November 2012**

# WATER MAINS REPLACEMENT WORKS IN THE VICINITY OF STEPNEY GREEN

London Borough of Tower Hamlets  
(DMA Finsbury Park 58)

An Archaeological Watching Brief

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## *Abstract*

*Between the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and 20<sup>th</sup> June 2012 an archaeological watching brief was conducted in the Thames Water District Metering Area Finsbury Park 58, which equates to an area around Stepney Green, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The monitored groundworks formed part of the ongoing Victorian Mains Replacement works programme being carried out by Optimise on behalf of Thames Water.*

*It was decided that the watching brief was necessary due to the potential for the survival of deposits associated with the early medieval development around St Dunstan's Church and Stepney Green, and the rapid post-medieval development of the general area. Furthermore, recent MOLA excavations have unearthed remains associated with the 16<sup>th</sup> century Worcester House in the area around Garden Street.*

*In the event no deposits relating to Worcester House were observed during the groundworks, nor any evidence for the early (Saxon – medieval) settlement in Stepney Green. Instead, the majority of trenching revealed thick deposits of made ground and higher-level disturbances by modern service cuts.*

*Archaeological finds included the partial remains of some late 17<sup>th</sup> century footings at the northern end of White Horse Lane (believed to have been part of 'The White Horse Inn'), and some 19<sup>th</sup> century footings along the south-eastern side of Assembly Passage. Made-ground deposits used to raise the ground in some areas before the 19<sup>th</sup> century development of the area were also noted in places, alongside some evidence for earlier deposits / land-surfaces (such as a pre-19<sup>th</sup> century land-surface / ploughsoil in Beaumont Square).*

*The truncated upper layers of natural deposits (silty-clay and gravels) were recorded in some places at relatively high levels - within 1.1m of the modern ground surface.*

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document forms a summary of the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken between the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and 20<sup>th</sup> June 2012 in the District Metering Area Finsbury Park 58. This encompasses an area around Stepney Green, London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

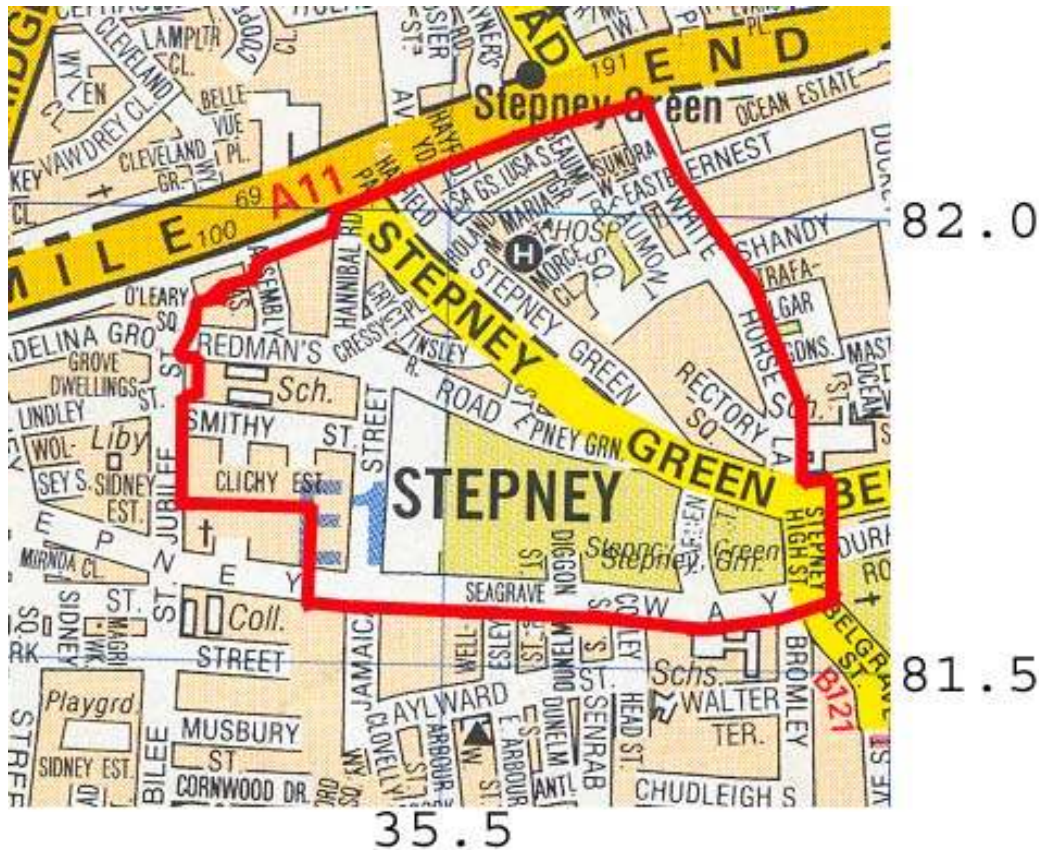


Fig.1: A-Z Location plan of DMA Area Finsbury Park 58

- 1.2 The fieldwork was commissioned by Optimise on behalf of Thames Water, and the watching brief was carried out after consultation and recommendation from Kim Stabler, English Heritage Advisor to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 1.3 The London Borough of Tower Hamlet's Unitary Development Plan contains policies relating to archaeological remains and sites with archaeological potential and has identified Areas of Archaeological Importance (AAIs) across the borough. The area of this DMA does not, however, fall into one of these AAIs. No Scheduled Ancient Monuments were affected by these works.

## 2. Site Location, Geology and Topography

- 2.1 The study area is bounded to the north by Mile End Road, to the east by White Horse Lane and Stepney High Street, to the south by Stepney Way as far as Jamaica Street, and on the west by Jubilee Street. This comprises a total of c.29hectares, (see figs.1 and 6 for a more detailed view).



- 2.2 The British Geological Survey Sheet for North London (No.256) shows that the main body of the survey area is situated over an island of Langley Silt within an expanse of Taplow River Terrace Gravels. These overlay London Clay.

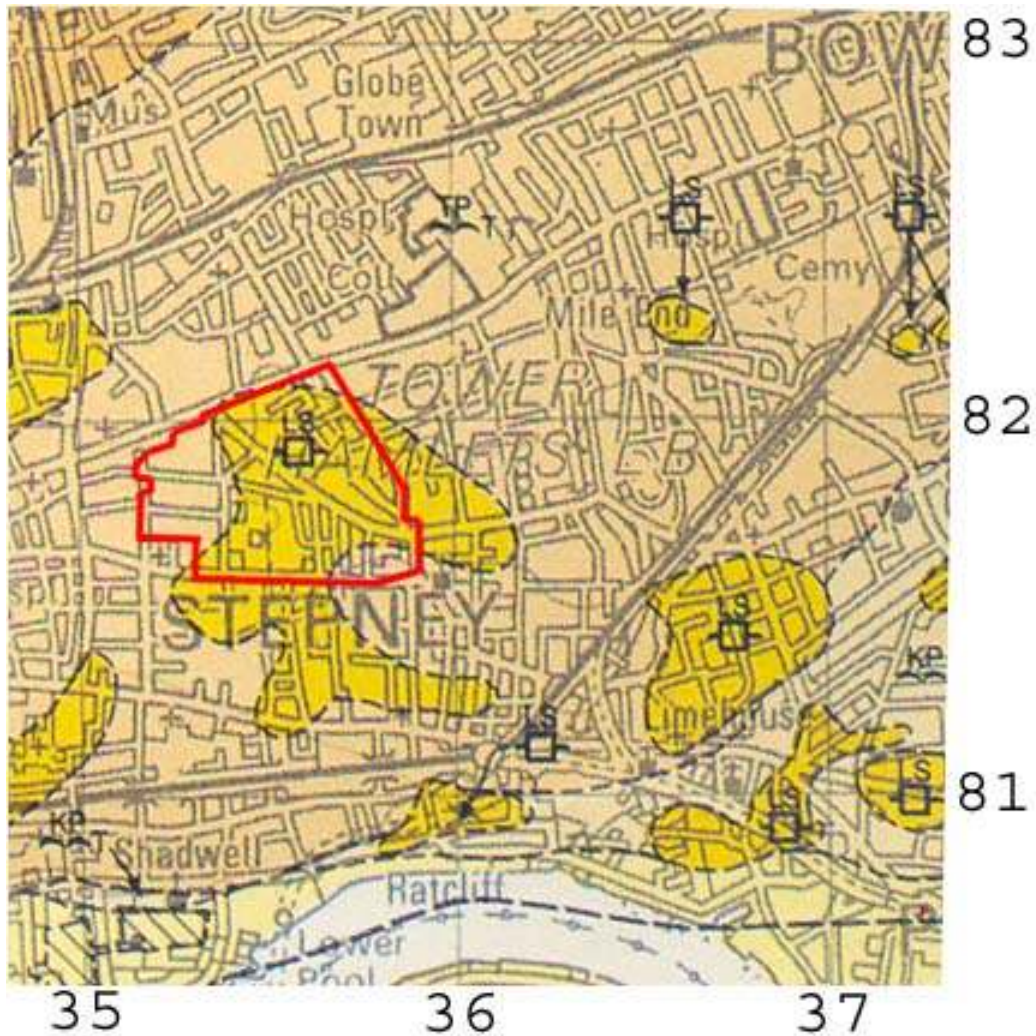


Fig.2: DMA Area in relation to British Geological Survey Sheet 256

- 2.3 The study area is relatively flat, with a gentle slope from the north-west to the south-east - from 11.2mOD on Mile End Road and Hannibal Road in the north-west to 10.1mOD on the junction of Stepney High Street and Belgrave Street in the south-east corner.



### **3. Archaeological and Historical Background**

#### **3.1 Prehistoric & Roman**

Little evidence has been found for prehistoric activity in the area of this DMA, aside from a few pieces of prehistoric pottery uncovered during the recent work at Stepney Green in advance of the Crossrail development. Furthermore, no evidence has been found for Roman activity or settlement.

#### **3.2 Saxon**

There is, however, evidence for Saxon activity and settlement in this area. The first reference to Stepney is in relation to the Bishop of London's men of 'Stybbanhythe' (meaning Stybba's landing place), dated to *c.*1000AD<sup>1</sup>. St Dunstan's Church, located just to the east of Stepney High Street, was originally a timber Saxon church and was rebuilt in stone in AD952 when it was re-dedicated to All Saints, and then in 1029 it was re-dedicated again back to St Dunstan and All Saints. It therefore seems likely that any Saxon / early medieval settlement would be concentrated in this area. An excavation in Stepney High Street (ILAU, 1979, site code: SHS79) revealed evidence of early occupation in the form of a Saxo-Norman pit.

#### **3.3 Medieval**

Further evidence, both documentary and archaeological, exists for medieval settlement and activity in this area. The manor of Stepney ('Stibanhede') was held by the Bishop of London from an early date, as recorded in the 1086 Domesday Book. Stepney was also the seat of a parliament called by Edward I in 1299<sup>2</sup>, and various injunctions from the late 13<sup>th</sup> century exist concerning the flooding of the Thames and negligent tenants and delinquents at Stepney. Archaeological evidence has also been found relating to this medieval settlement, including two late medieval pits recorded in the Stepney High Street excavation (see above).

#### **3.4 Post Medieval**

The early cartographic evidence (Rocque's mid-18<sup>th</sup> century map, fig.3) shows the early (probably medieval) settlement pattern of this area. Settlement is depicted along Stepney Green and Stepney High Street (around the area of St Dunstan's Church, where the earliest settlement was presumably concentrated), and Redman's Road. This settlement appears to take the form of 'ribbon development' along the main roads. Archaeological evidence for such medieval / early post-medieval settlement takes the form of 17<sup>th</sup> century clay and building debris layers uncovered during a 1992 MOLAS evaluation at 131 Mile End Road.

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<sup>1</sup> Baker, T.F.T, *A History of the County of Middlesex Vol.11*

<sup>2</sup> Thornbury, W, *Old and New London Vol.2*



Fig.3: *Extract from Rocque's Survey of the City of London Westminster and the Borough of Southwark and the country near 10 miles around London*

Cary's 1795 Map of London depicts a greater degree of ribbon development along Redman's Road and Mile End Road. The north-west corner of the DMA area shows a highly concentrated area of newly built properties labelled Assembly House and Rowland Row, which 50 years earlier (on Rocque) was open field.



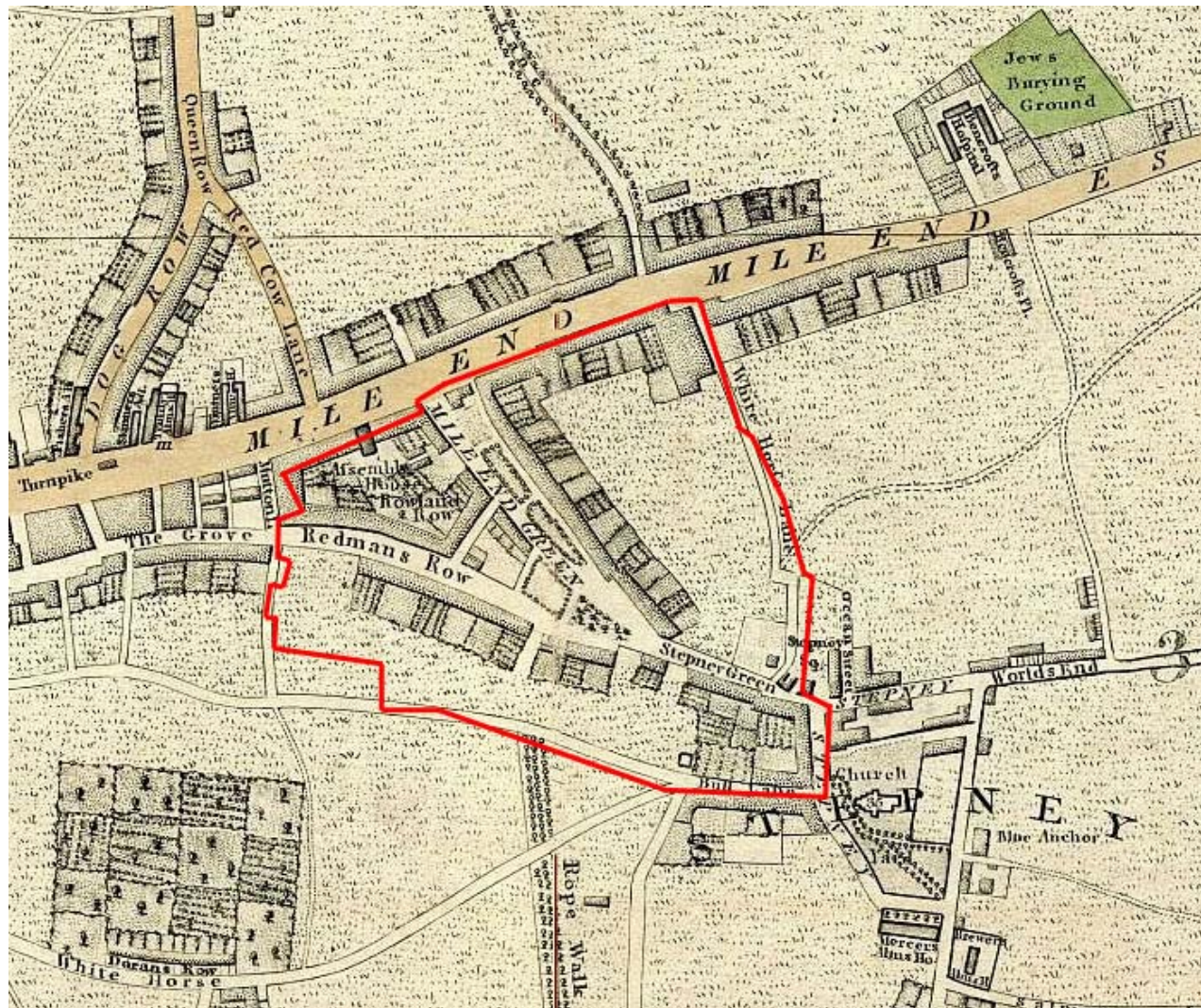


Fig.4: Cary's map of c.1795 with DMA Area highlighted

By the time of the First Edition 25inch OS Map (1870-75, fig.5) the whole area had been almost completely urbanised, and was actually more densely developed than it is at present. The original parish of Stepney had by now shrunk to an area immediately surrounding the Church of St Dunstan's, with 67 daughter parishes having been established in Whitechapel, Bethnal Green and Poplar, etc. Stepney was re-populated by poorer immigrants and large Jewish, Irish German and Chinese communities settled in the area. The area became infamous for its high levels of poverty, overcrowding and political dissent<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> Hibbert and Weinreb, *The London Encyclopedia*, pg.877





Fig.5: Extract from the First Edition 25-inch OS Map, 1870-75 with study area highlighted

Stepney suffered highly during the ‘Blitz’ with nearly a third of its total housing stock being lost. High levels of post-war redevelopment were therefore necessary as a result of this.

### 3.5 Worcester House

Worcester House was the manor house constructed by the Marquis of Worcester in 1597 and held by him until 1645, when he was forced to sell it. The house was then divided into individual dwellings in the 18<sup>th</sup> century and eventually demolished in 1858. Archaeological excavations by DGLA in 1985 and recent work undertaken by MOLA in advance of the Crossrail development have uncovered remains of this house.

The results of the recent MOLA excavations suggest that the house may have been earlier in date than was originally known (possibly 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century), and may have had a brick-lined moat. The western edge of this moat appears to have run along the approximate line of Garden Street, with a polygonal (possibly octagonal) tower approximately halfway down Garden Street. This may have formed the southern extent of the house, as no evidence for Worcester House was found in the trenches to the south of this. The northern extent of Worcester House (and the moat) is presumed to have been aligned along the existing line of Redman’s Road, with the remains of the gatehouse

tower (with an octagonal turret) having been uncovered just to the south of Redman's Road. The exact eastern extent of the House is unknown.

Some of these remains survived at relatively high levels beneath the modern ground-surface. The foundations of the gatehouse of Worcester House were uncovered at *c.*8mOD (1.78m beneath the present ground-surface); the southern range of Worcester House at *c.*8.58mOD (0.98m beneath the present ground-surface); the foundations of the polygonal south-western turret at *c.*7.33mOD (2.05m beneath ground-surface); and the wall in Garden Street (possibly the brick-lined western moat) at *c.*8.87mOD (0.47m beneath ground-surface).

## **4 Archaeological Research Questions**

The objective of the archaeological watching brief is to contribute to knowledge of the archaeology of the area through the recording of any remains exposed as a result of excavations in connection with the groundworks. The fieldwork presents an opportunity to address the following general and specific research questions:

- Is there any evidence for early settlement patterns in this area, particularly Saxon and medieval settlement around the area of St Dunstan's Church?
- Is there any evidence for the remains of the late 16<sup>th</sup>-century (or possibly earlier) Worcester House, particularly in King John Street and Redman's Road? Can this add to the knowledge gained about this by the recent MOLA excavations in advance of the Crossrail development?
- What evidence is there for post-medieval activity in the area?
- At what level do archaeological deposits survive in the highways across the area?

## **5 Methodology**

### **5.1 Fieldwork**

The fieldwork was carried out in accordance with current English Heritage guidelines (in particular, *Standards and Practice in Archaeological Fieldwork, Guidance Paper 3*) and to the standards of the Institute for Archaeologists (*Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs*). Overall management of the project was undertaken by a full member of the Institute.

Ground reduction works were undertaken by machine and finished off by hand, with new mains pipes being inserted as close as possible to the existing main. Contractor methods included open-cut trenching, directional drilling, and insertion.

Adequate time was given for investigation and recording of the observed trenches, although every effort was made not to disrupt the contractors' programme. The archaeological monitoring included an on-site photographic



and written record. As a minimum *pro forma* Trench Record sheets were completed for individual excavations or sections of open-cut trench; recording the nature of exposed deposits and details of any archaeological finds and features. Where suitable finds/samples were collected from deposits for dating purposes. Photographs, recording representative trench sections and general site location, were also taken.

Close liaison was maintained with the groundworks team to ensure a presence on site as and when necessary. The Client and Kim Stabler of English Heritage were kept advised of the progress of the fieldwork.

## **5.2 Post-excavation work**

The fieldwork was followed by off-site assessment and compilation of a report, and by ordering and deposition of the site archive.

Finds were treated in accordance with the appropriate guidelines, including the Museum of London's '*Standards for the Preparation of Finds to be permanently retained by the Museum of London*'. Finds and artefacts were retained and bagged with unique numbers related to the context record, although some material was discarded following assessment. Assessment was undertaken by appropriately qualified staff.

Copies of this report will be supplied to the Client, English Heritage and the local planning authority. A short summary of the fieldwork has been appended to this report using the OASIS Data Collection Form, and in paragraph form suitable for publication within the 'excavation round-up' of the *London Archaeologist*.

## 6 Results

The archaeological watching brief was undertaken during contractors' groundworks in the area illustrated in Fig.1, with the monitored areas of trenching depicted on Fig.6. The groundworks took place as part of the Thames Water Utilities Ltd scheme of Victorian water mains replacement. Archaeological monitoring was undertaken on areas of open-cut trenching, trial pits and in launch pit areas, access pits and exit points of other methods. A total of approximately 1050m of trenching was observed within the study area. The results of the archaeological watching brief are listed below (discussed in alphabetical order).



Fig.6: Plan of mains replacement groundworks monitored during the watching brief adapted from a base plan provided by Thames Water Engineers. Red shows monitored trenches, the green is the border of the DMA

## 6.1 Assembly Passage

On the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012 a 42m length of open-cut trenching was observed on the eastern side of Assembly Passage. The trench was 0.6m wide and up to 0.85m deep. Three 2m wide brick footings were exposed in the eastern section of the trench. They were constructed from purple-red stock bricks and bonded with grey mortar cement. They probably represent the foundations of former 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings that fronted Assembly Passage prior to the construction of the adjacent Pacific Court, as are depicted on the First Edition OS Map (fig.9). They were buried beneath grey-brown sandy gravels, which formed the fill of the entire trench below the existing concrete and cobble road surface.

Further brick footings were exposed in a 10m stretch of trench monitored on the 16<sup>th</sup> May, continuing north from that observed on the 9<sup>th</sup> May. The footings measured 6m north-south and were present 180mm below the existing kerb line, extending down to the base of the trench and beyond. The base of the trench consisted of yellow clay overlain by general service backfill similar to that observed on the 9<sup>th</sup> May.



*Fig.7: Brick footings exposed on Assembly Passage, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012. Facing north-north-east (1m scale)*



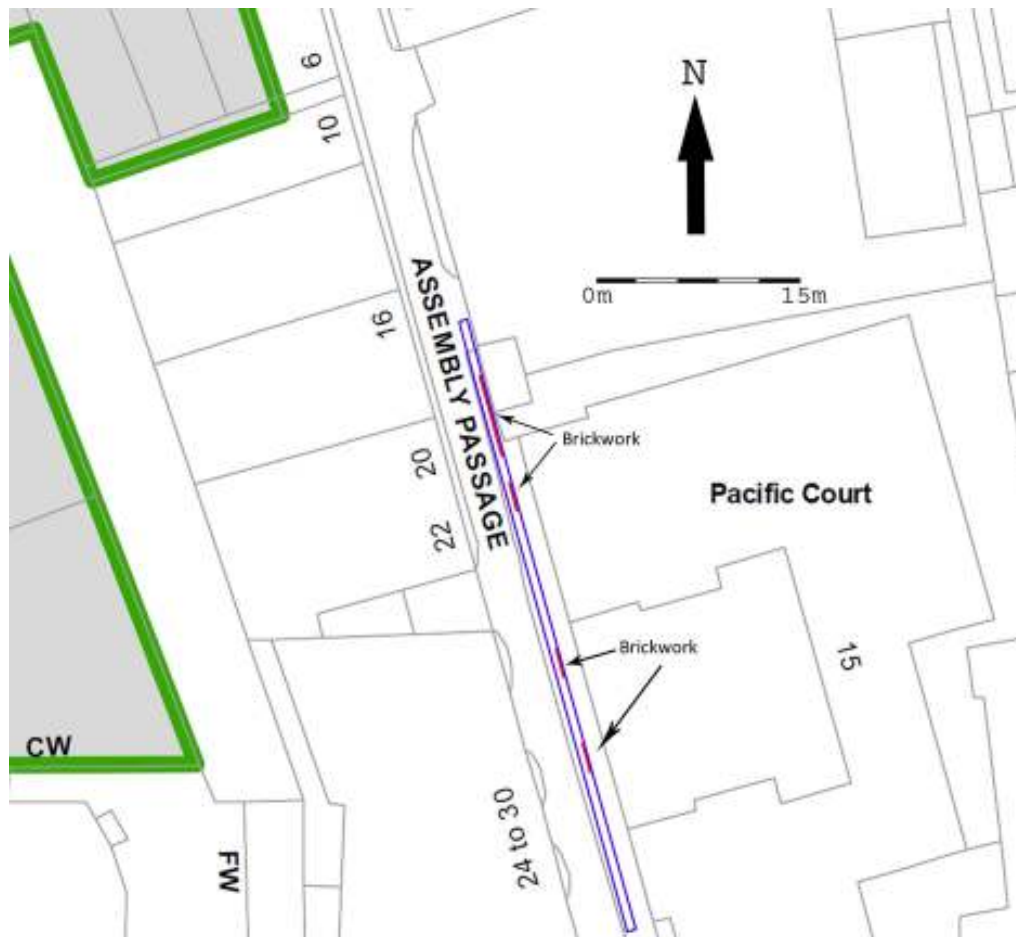


Fig.8: Location of brick footings along Assembly Passage



Fig.9: Approximate location of brick walls observed during trenching along Assembly Passage, in relation to the 1870-75 First Edition OS Map

The final 35m of trenching along Assembly Passage was monitored on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May and the 8<sup>th</sup> June. The trench was dug on the western side of the passage from opposite No.9A to the pavement facing onto Mile End Road. The entire length of the trench was filled with a homogenous brown-orange clay-silt containing gravels and crushed demolition material sealed beneath 0.4-0.5m of concrete bedding into which were laid granite setts and kerbstones. No further evidence of brick footings were seen on the western side of the passage suggesting that this side was relatively unchanged since it was first developed in the mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century.



*Fig.10: Trenching on the western side of Assembly Passage, northern end, near the junction with Mile End Road, 8<sup>th</sup> June 2012. Facing south-west*

## 6.2 Beaumont Square

A series of launch pits were excavated on the southern side of Beaumont Square on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2012. The pits extended from the junction with White Horse Lane and the westernmost pit was opposite the western end of Panama House Flats. The pits were a variety of shapes and sizes, between 2.8m - 3.5m long, 0.45m - 0.85m wide, and from 0.65m – 0.95m deep. They were all orientated with the long axis north-south. The majority of the pits were located directly over or just to one side of the existing trunk main and so the underlying stratigraphy was heavily disturbed. The pits were generally filled with a mix of brown-grey silty-clays and gravels, but the westernmost pit had a potentially undisturbed ‘made-ground’ deposit comprised of a dark-grey / black silt.

An extension of this western pit was observed on the 8<sup>th</sup> June - the pit measured 10.5m east-west to the southwest corner of Beaumont Square and turned a right-angle, north-south, for a further 3.5m. The fill of the trench was



similar as that observed on the 28<sup>th</sup> May. A very-dark grey / black clay-silt was overlain by a crushed tar bedding layer beneath a surface of rolled tarmac.

22m of open-cut trenching was inspected on the 20<sup>th</sup> June. The trench was located on the eastern side of Beaumont Square from the entrance to the London Independent Hospital to the northwest corner of the Square and the junction of Eastbury Terrace. The trench was cut 0.45m wide and up to 0.9m deep. The basal fill of the trench was solid sterile mid-brown clay, possibly a natural deposit. This was overlain with 500mm of dark-brown soil containing fragments of roof tile, which could be a buried land surface / ploughsoil. This would not be surprising considering that much of the area was open-fields until the mid 19<sup>th</sup>-century. The soil was sealed below a bed of tar-blackened gravel chippings and rolled tarmac, comprising the top 200mm of the trench and the existing road surface.



Fig.11: *Beaumont Square 20<sup>th</sup> June 2012. Facing east (1m scale)*

### **6.3 Cressy Place**

On the 11<sup>th</sup> April 2012 a visit was made to Cressy Place to view the trenching works. Approximately 40m of open-cut trenching was observed opposite Cressy House, aligned east-west on the northern side of the street. It was cut 0.45m wide and excavated to a depth of 1.1m. The uppermost, truncated, levels of natural clay were observed in places in the very base of the trench (1.1m below modern ground level). This was sealed by compacted dark-brown silty-clay containing occasional fragments of CBM, chalk and gravels, present from 400mm+ below the road surface. The uppermost 400mm of exposed stratigraphy consisted of the modern concrete road base and rolled tarmac surface.

A further 35m of trenching was observed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April as a continuation of the trench seen a week earlier. As before the trench was excavated 0.45m wide and approximately 1m deep. The exposed deposits consisted of a homogenous dark-grey clay-silt containing occasional CBM and gravels overlain by a crushed concrete road base and tarmac surface. No archaeologically significant deposits or features were observed.



Fig.12: *Section through trench works on Cressy Place, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2012, facing west (1m scale)*

#### **6.4 Hannibal Road**

An L-shaped trench was located on the southern end of Hannibal Road on the 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012, 3.5m of which was aligned east-west along the northern side of Redman's Road, and 16.5m aligned north-south along the western side of Hannibal Road. The trench was 0.6m wide but expanded as it rounded the corner to 1.6m. The trench was excavated to a depth of approximately 1.0-1.2m deep. The topmost 400-500mm of stratigraphy was made up of the tarmac road surface over a bed of concreted gravels or sand where existing services were present. Sealed below the modern road base was a mixture of made ground deposits - these included a largely sterile, black, silt deposit which contained rare inclusions of gravel and crushed CBM fragments. This deposit was largely confined to the Redman's road section of the trench. The Hannibal Road section of trench included a dark-grey / brown clay-silt containing pockets of crushed mortar and brick-dust. This probably

represented a made ground / demolition deposit created during the construction of the modern AMAC House flats.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012 a 28m stretch of open-cut trench was investigated on the eastern side of Hannibal Road, extended north-south from opposite AMAC House to opposite No.10 Hannibal Road. The stratigraphy comprised 600mm of thick, pliable dark-grey clay-silt. This was sealed below 400mm of concreted gravels and 90mm of rolled tarmac. This trench was re-visited on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March. A further 28m of trench had been opened and contained the same sterile grey clay-silt. No significant archaeological deposits were observed.



Fig.13: *Oblique shot of trench on east side of Hannibal Road outside Cressy House, facing north-east. 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012 (1m scale)*





Fig.14: *Hannibal Road, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2012. Section through trench facing west (1m scale)*

A final visit to Hannibal Road was made on the 20<sup>th</sup> March. 25m of trench, cut 0.5m wide and to a depth of 1.2m was monitored. A thick (500mm) deposit of grey-blue-black clay was recorded 760mm below modern ground level. This may have represented a weathered soil horizon, though the narrow confines of the trench made interpretation difficult. This deposit was overlain by a 300mm spread of crushed red brick within a grey-brown silty matrix. This was interpreted as a levelling layer prior to the construction of the modern roadbed of concrete, granite setts and rolled tarmac. This made up the top 460mm of recorded stratigraphy.

It should be noted that Hannibal Road does not appear on the earlier maps (on Cary's late-18<sup>th</sup> century map the area consists of a number of buildings), and it was cut through at a later date. This may explain the quantities of made-ground and levelling deposits observed in trenches along Hannibal Road, possibly deposited before the road was created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 6.5 Mile End Road

On the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2012 75m of open-cut trenching was observed on the southern side of Mile End Road, from the junction with White Horse Lane and extending south-west to the junction with Beaumont Grove. The trench was cut 0.6m wide and up to 1.0m deep. Severe rainfall and water ingress prevented detailed investigation of the fills, but they were observed from the side of the trench. The lower fills were light-brown silty clays and were overlain by concrete bedding and paving slabs.

A further 10.5m of trenching was observed on the 16<sup>th</sup> May, continuing from the end of the trench recorded on the 27<sup>th</sup> April. This measured 0.6m wide and 0.85m deep. No significantly different deposits from those seen before were

noted. Three more visits, on the 23<sup>rd</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> May and the 8<sup>th</sup> June 2012, saw similar trench sections being excavated on the southern side of Mile End Road, from Beaumont Grove to outside No.200. The total length of trenching observed on these visits amounted to 32.5m, and the width was between 0.55-0.6m wide and up to 0.85m deep. The same strong-brown silty-soil containing mortar and CBM fragments was seen in the base of the trenching, 350mm+ thick, overlain by bedding sand into which were lain individual paving slabs.

Mile End Road itself is an ancient road from London to the east, which moved to its present alignment after the foundation of Bow Bridge in 1110. It is depicted on all of the historic maps, on the same alignment as today and with approximately the same width. This may explain why no remains of buildings, etc, were found during trenching along this road.

## 6.6 Rectory Square

A total of 26.2m of trenching was monitored on the southern side of Rectory Square from the 27<sup>th</sup> April to the 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012, from half way down the street to outside the entrance to the Synagogue. The trench works measured between 0.80 - 1.50m wide, and up to 1.2m deep. 300mm below the ground, and present to the base of the trench and beyond, was a mixture of clay, silt and sand, representing made ground and service backfill around the existing service ducts. These deposits were sealed beneath a tar and concrete road base overlain by the rolled tarmac road surface. No archaeologically significant deposits were observed.



*Fig.15: Trench on the South side of Rectory Square, by the pavement outside the Synagogue, facing south-east. 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012 (1m scale)*



## 6.7 Redman's Road

On the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2011 50m of open-cut trenching was inspected on the northern side of the road extending east from the junction with Jubilee Street to outside No.19. The trench was cut 350-400mm wide and up to 800mm deep. No archaeologically significant deposits were observed. The exposed stratigraphy comprised mixed service backfill (a mid-dark brown silty-sand containing frequent gravels and occasional CBM fragments), overlain by a concrete road base and tarmac surface.



Fig. 16: Recording the groundworks on Redman's Road, 7<sup>th</sup> December 2011

A section of trench 24.5m long by 0.45m wide and at least 1m deep was viewed on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2012. It was located opposite No.52 Redman's Road and extended east to opposite No.60, by the roundabout with Jamaica Street. The compound around the trench was locked on this occasion and so detailed measurements were unobtainable. However, the existing water-main was present in the north section and numerous other service ducts were present throughout the trench creating great disturbance amongst the underlying

deposits. These were present from immediately below the concrete road base and tarmac road surface.

10m of open-cut trenching was monitored on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2012. It began at the junction with Jamaica Street and continued eastwards on the southern side of the road. The western 5m was 400mm wide, and the easternmost 5m was 800mm wide. From 800mm below the present ground level to the base of the trench at 1.3m a band of orange clay overlying mixed grey-brown gravels was observed, representing *in situ* natural deposits. These were present in the southern section only, as the northern section was within the cut of an existing gas main and as such contained nothing but backfilled aggregate around the pipe and thick concrete sealing the service cut. In the southern section the concrete layer and overlying concrete was 500mm thick.

A series of 9 connection pits, (A-I), were recorded on the 15<sup>th</sup> February on the southern side of Redman's Road - the first at the junction with Jamaica Road and the final pit 77m east by the entrance to Stepney Green open space. They varied in length from 1.6 - 4m, by 1.5m wide, and up to 1.35m deep. They all contained existing service cuts backfilled with gravels and MOT Type 1, with the occasional pocket of mid-brown silty-clay. In the easternmost pit, 'I', from 1.2m below ground level to the base of the pit at 1.3m, a weathered clayey natural deposit was present.



Fig.17: *Southern section in Pit 'I', Redman's Road, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012. Facing south (1m scale)*

A single pit was open on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February opposite No.103 Redman's Road on the southern side of the street. It measured 3.3m east-west by 1.35m north-south and was excavated to a depth of 1.33m. 930mm below the modern ground-surface was a grey silty-sand deposit, overlain with a made ground deposit containing CBM fragments and mortar patches (420mm thick). These buried deposits were overlain by 460mm of concrete, over which was 50mm of rolled tarmac.



Fig.18: Redman's Road, 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2012. South facing section of pit (1m scale)

## 6.8 Stepney Green

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2012 a short section of trench was observed on the northwest side of Stepney Green Gardens extending for 5m north-east from Stepney Green. 600mm below the modern ground-surface was a mixed deposit of brown-orange and grey-black silty-clays containing rare CBM fragments. This lay below a bed of concrete into which was set a previous cobbled road surface, sealed below the modern tarmac road surface. These two road surfaces amounted to the top 700mm of the trench. The trench was cut 600mm wide by 800mm deep.

Two pits, either side of the junction of Stepney Green and Hannibal Road, were inspected on the 10<sup>th</sup> February. Very dark-grey clay-silt, containing occasional gravels, was recorded from 500mm below the ground surface to the base of the excavations. This was interpreted as a made ground deposit. This deposit was disturbed in localised areas by modern service cuts backfilled with orange-brown builders sand. These two varying deposits were sealed below 440mm of concrete under 60mm of tarmac. No archaeologically significant deposits were observed on this occasion.

Between the 23<sup>rd</sup> February and the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2012 a series of 23 connection trenches and pits were recorded on both sides of the road and onto the pavement. The first 8 trenches were outside Nos.1-15 Stepney Green (on the east side) and the other 15 pits were outside No.2 Stepney Green to the junction with Cressy Place (on the west side). The trenches were fairly uniform - measuring 6m in length by 600mm wide and 650mm deep. The pits were also quite uniform at 1.5m long by 1.25m wide and up to 1.25m deep. The trenches exposed a thick concrete road base (540mm) below the existing tarmac surface. The concrete overlay grey-brown clay-silt containing occasional mortar and CBM fragments. This probably was ground upcast from the creation of the nearby terraces in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see fig.20). The connection pits directly overlay the existing mains pipe and so were confined within the construction cut for the pipe and as such contained little *in situ* stratigraphy. The majority of the fills observed were dark-grey / brown clay-silt backfills.



Fig.19: *Connection pits along west side of Stepney Green. Facing south-east. 29<sup>th</sup> February 2012*





Fig.20: Extract from the 1870-75 First Edition OS Map, showing the 19<sup>th</sup> century terraced house surrounding Cressy Place (on left)

Three connection pits were inspected on the 14<sup>th</sup> March outside ‘The Ship on the Green Public House’, on the junction of Stepney Green and Tinsley Road. This amounted to a total of 19.5m of trenching, cut between 0.4 - 2m wide and from 0.75 - 1.23m deep. No archaeologically significant deposits were seen and the stratigraphy differed little from that observed in other connection pits on Stepney Green.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> March a visit was made to Stepney Green and four connection pits were investigated along the pavement at the junction of Stepney Green and Redman’s Road. The only deposit observed was a brown silty-clay present from 600mm below the ground-surface, representing natural ground. In the easternmost pit opposite the clock tower on the Green was a yellow stock brick culvert 400mm below the ground surface and 300mm high. The bricks were datable to the early 20<sup>th</sup>-century, and were stamped ‘MARSTON BESPRES’. This refers to the Marston Brick Company based in Bedfordshire, which was a rival to the London Brick Company.



Fig.21: Brick culvert on Stepney Green, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2012. Facing south-west (50cm scale)



A trench spanning the width of Stepney Green opposite No.49 and c.50m to the west of Garden Street was monitored on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 2012. It measured 15m long, by 550mm wide and up to 1.2m in depth. The modern road surface of tarmac and bedding concrete was 500mm thick. Below this was a dark-brown / black sandy-silt containing occasional pebbles and CBM fragments. This was not an archaeologically significant deposit and no evidence for Worcester House was uncovered.

Further excavations in the vicinity of Garden Street did not reveal any evidence relating to Worcester House. One pit, measuring 3.8m in length (east-west) by 1m in width by 0.8m in depth was investigated on the southern side of Stepney Green, 10m west of the junction with Garden Street. This was located directly over the existing water main and so contained nothing but highly disturbed black silty-clay backfill around the pipework.

A further 7m stretch of trenching was observed on the 1<sup>st</sup> May on the southern side Stepney Green (running north-south across the pavement and road). This was positioned 1.8m to the east of the junction with Garden Street, and measured 0.55m in width by 0.7m in depth. The modern road-surface (tarmac and concrete) overlay services and service backfill, including the stone covering of an electricity duct. No archaeological deposits / sign of Worcester House was noted.



*Fig.22: Trench on Stepney Green, just east of Garden Street (behind the blue gates), looking south-west.*

On the 9<sup>th</sup> May a 25m stretch of trench was inspected on the southern pavement of Stepney Green, from the roundabout by White Horse Lane to the corner of Stepney High Street. It measured 0.7 – 1.0m in width and 1.0m in depth. The basal fills (380mm+ below ground level) were a very mixed dark-grey / black silt containing gravels and representing backfill around the existing water mains pipe. The existing services were overlain by yellow-brown builders sand onto which were laid the individual paving slabs of the pavement.



Fig.23: *Stepney Green trench facing west 9<sup>th</sup> May 2012 (60cm scale)*

## 6.9 Stepney High Street

A 40m open-cut trench was observed on the 16<sup>th</sup> June 2012. The trench measured 0.6m wide by 1.2m deep and was aligned north-south, 0.4m from the western kerb, extending from the junction with Stepney Green and finishing opposite the churchyard of St Dunstan and All Saints. Numerous services were seen crossing the trench east-west, and service backfill around a north-south main was observed in the eastern section. Where the ground was not disturbed by service cuts, the recorded stratigraphy comprised a compacted dark soil deposit, relatively sterile but with very occasional CBM fragments, patches of pebble gravels and pockets of mortar. This seems to have been a made ground deposit created as a road base for the High Street, although unfortunately no dating evidence was obtained. It was overlain by 600mm of concrete / granite setts and rolled tarmac which formed the modern ground surface. No archaeologically significant features or deposits were observed, despite the fact that this area is believed to have been the area of the earliest settlement / activity.





Fig.24: *Stepney High Street facing south-east, 16<sup>th</sup> May 2012. St Dunstan and All Saints in background. (1m scale)*



Fig.25: *West facing section in trench along Stepney High Street, facing north-west (1m scale)*

## 6.10 Stepney Way

A total of 16 insertion pits were recorded on the northern side of Stepney Way between the 30<sup>th</sup> November and 7<sup>th</sup> December 2011. The first was dug on the northern corner with Jamaica Street and they continued to the junction with Garden Street. The pits were of various sizes and shapes but were broadly square or rectangular. Measurements varied from 1.15 – 3.2m long (east-west), by 0.55 - 1.2m (north-south), and were dug to depths of between 0.8 - 1.2m. As insertion pits they were located over the existing main and so the underlying stratigraphy was heavily disturbed and truncated. When not sand or gravel service-cut backfill, deposits comprised dark silty-sand with frequent pebble inclusions (700mm thick), sealed below crushed stone and sand bedding material (220mm thick), over which was lain either poured concrete or individual concrete slabs (the top 50-100mm).

The exception was a large pit dug opposite the junction with Wellesley Street which was 3.8m long (east-west) by 1.25m wide (north-south), by 1.26m deep. The basal fill of this pit comprised 750mm of compacted, fairly dark-brownish-grey silty sand with occasional pebbles and very occasional CBM fragments, becoming cleaner at the lower levels. The lack of significant residual material and inclusions suggest that this deposit was imported to help raise the ground levels, potentially when Stepney Way was being laid out. It is unclear when this was, however the line of Stepney Way is depicted on Roque's mid-18<sup>th</sup> century map. One piece of pottery was recovered from this deposit (context 1 – see appendix II) – this was a fragment of a post-medieval Red Earthenware bowl, of late 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century date. It does not, therefore, help hugely in dating the deposit or when the road was laid out.



Fig.26: Large pit on Stepney Way opposite junction of Wellesley Street, facing south. 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011 (1m scale)



Fig.27: *Stepney Way, pit on the corner of Stepney Way and Digger Street. Facing north. 7<sup>th</sup> December 2011 (1m scale)*

### 6.11 White Horse Lane

White Horse Lane was first visited on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011. A total length of 24.5m of trenching had been excavated, aligned north-north-west to south-south-east, c. 19m from the junction with Mile End Road. The trench measured 450-550mm wide and up to 850mm deep. 3.5m from the north-north-west end of the trench was a section of wall, aligned west-south-west to east-north-east and present 340mm below the modern ground-surface. This wall survived to a depth of 550mm (8 courses), and was 470mm wide. It was solidly mortared. A corresponding west-south-west to east-north-east aligned wall was present 2.5m from the inside edge of this wall. It survived to a depth of 480mm (6 courses), and was 230mm wide, (a single stretcher). In the eastern section of the trench between the two wall-lines were two fragments of un-mortared brickwork between 690-730mm below ground level and interpreted as internal brick floors. The southern side of the southernmost section of wall was rendered suggesting an internal face. Brick samples taken from the wall and surface were dated to between 1450-1700AD, but were believed to be typical of the later period, eg. 17<sup>th</sup>-century onwards<sup>4</sup>. Were they cellars of former properties fronting onto the road before it was widened? The walls were

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix I: Ceramic Building Material analysis, pg. 35



buried beneath a dump of loose mortar, brick and silty-sand suggesting demolition backfill. The trench was sealed by 350mm of concrete and tarmac.

Examination of historic maps, in particular Rocque's mid-18<sup>th</sup> century map (fig.29) suggests that these brick walls may have been part of 'The White Horse Inn', which was positioned on the junction of White Horse Lane and Mile End Road. It is presumably from this pub that the road got its name. A large building is also depicted on Cary's late-18<sup>th</sup> century map (presumably still the pub), however it had disappeared by the time of the 1870-75 First Edition OS Map. Infact, a large open space is depicted in this area on the First Edition OS (in contrast with the terraced houses surrounding it), suggesting that the pub may only have recently been demolished at this date.

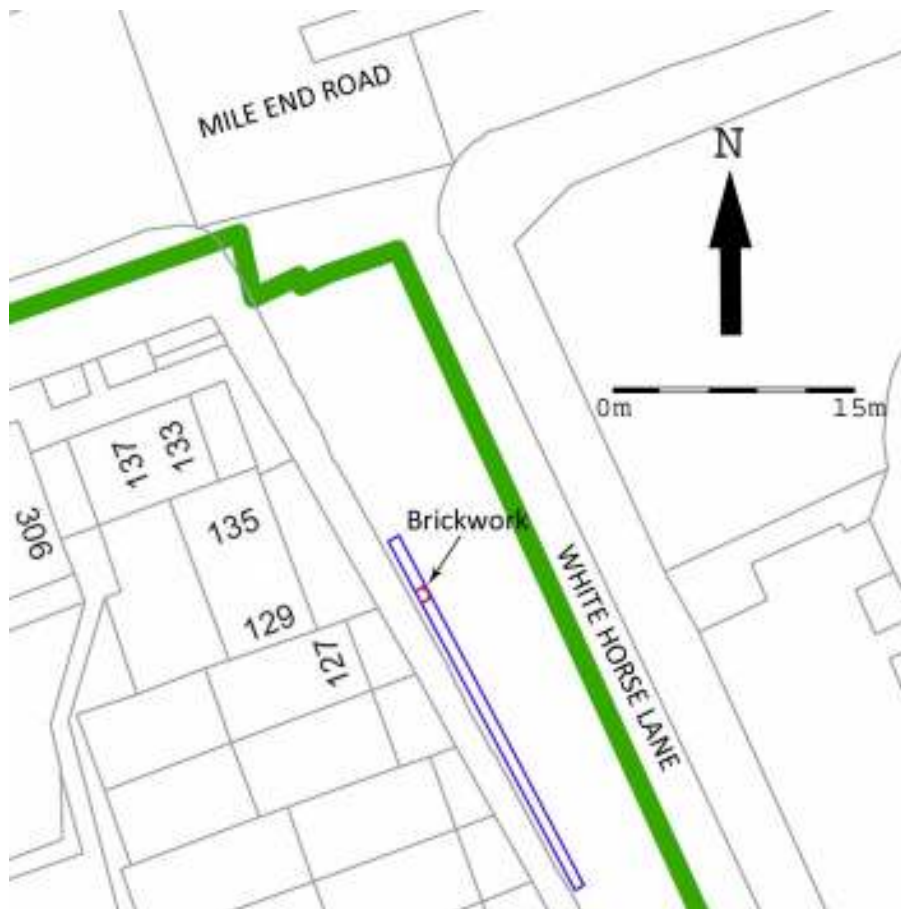


Fig.28: Location plan of brickwork found on White Horse Lane

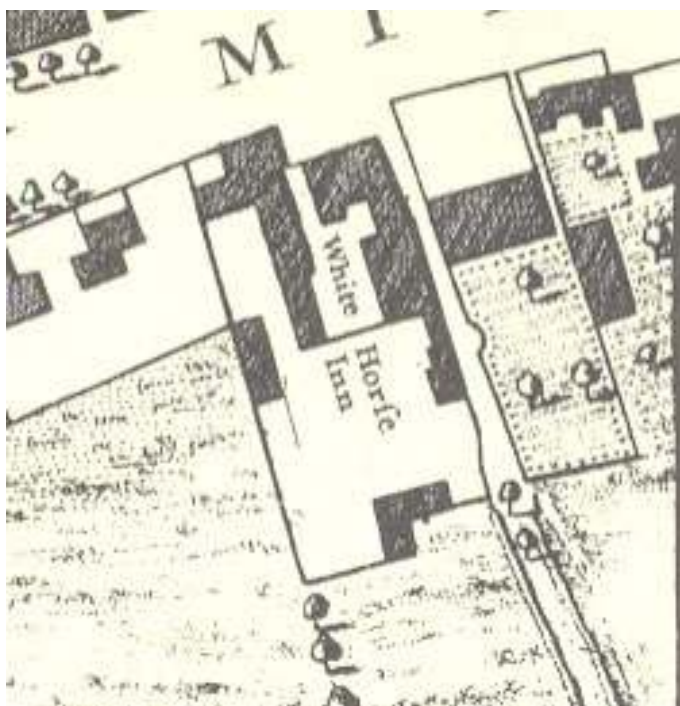


Fig.29: Extract from Rocque's 1746 Map, showing the location of the brickwork on White Horse Lane – the 'White Horse Inn'



Fig.30: Brickwork in eastern section of trench, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Facing west-north-west (0.8m scale)



Fig.31: *White Horse Lane, 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011. Facing south-east, with brickwork in foreground. (1m scale)*

10m of open-cut trenching was excavated on the 7<sup>th</sup> December 2011. No further evidence of brickwork or cellars was found on this occasion. The existing water main was present within the entire length of the eastern section of the trench, and other service cuts were present meaning that little *in situ* stratigraphy survived. 380mm+ below the modern ground-surface was a mid-brown loose silty-sand, buried beneath the concrete road base and tarmac road surface.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2012 a further 39m of open-cut trenching was inspected on the western side of the street. It began on the northern side of the junction with Ernest Street and ended outside No.95 White Horse Lane, and the cut was 600mm wide. At 1.10m below the ground surface pockets of orange-brown clay containing gravels were observed, thought to represent natural ground deposits. Overlying this clay was a mix of very-dark-grey silty-clay containing frequent CBM fragments, sub-angular gravels and russet-brown silt with fine gravels, observed from 450mm to 1.10m below ground level. These deposits were overlain by 450mm of concrete or former granite sett road surfaces, sealed beneath the modern tarmac ground surface.





Fig.32: *White Horse Lane, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2012. Facing north-east (1m scale)*

A monitoring visit on the 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012 recorded a 32m length of trench extending from the junction with Beaumont Square to the south-eastern end of Galway House. It was cut 0.4 - 0.6m wide and between 0.9 - 1.0m deep. 660mm below ground-level was the clean orange to light-brown gravel, interpreted as natural ground. This was sealed below mid-dark greyish brown silty-sand containing occasional scattered CBM and pebble inclusions, in turn overlain by concrete bedding and granite setts below modern tarmac.



Fig.33: *South-western facing section in trench on White Horse Lane, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012 (1m scale)*



Fig.34: Trench on western side of White Horse Lane, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012, facing south-east

Visits on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February and 14<sup>th</sup> March recorded 24.5m (39A - 25 White Horse Lane) and 25m (11 White Horse Lane to outside Rosary Court) of trenching. No archaeologically significant finds, features or deposits were observed during these excavations and the stratigraphy did not deviate from that seen in previous trenching further to the north-north-west.



Fig.35: Trench on west side of White Horse Lane, outside Rosary Court, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2012. Facing west (1m scale)

The last visit to White Horse Lane took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2012. 28m of open-cut trench, 0.6m wide and 1.2m deep, was recorded from south of Rectory Square to the junction of Stepney Green. The trench was heavily disturbed by previous service cuts and backfilled material (grey-brown compact silty-clay and brick rubble from 400mm below the modern ground-surface to the base of the trench). This was sealed beneath the concrete road base and rolled tarmac ground surface.

## **7 Conclusions**

In the event the watching brief revealed very little in the way of significant archaeological features or deposits. No evidence relating to Worcester House was unearthed in the trenches along Stepney Green, or anything in relation to the early (Saxon – medieval) settlement (particularly along Stepney High Street where such remains were thought to be most likely). This does not, however, mean that there are no earlier deposits as it is possible that early deposits may survive in certain locations at a greater depth than that reached during the present scheme of works.

The remains of two brick foundations were observed during these monitoring works. One of these – the 19<sup>th</sup> century wall footings exposed in Assembly Passage – reflects the relatively recent development of the area. The remains of the 17<sup>th</sup> century walls and brick floors in the northern part of White Horse Lane are of more interest, as these are believed to be part of the White Horse Inn depicted on Rocque's mid-18<sup>th</sup> century map.

Beyond the brick remains observed during the watching brief were large quantities of made-ground deposits, used to raise and level the ground in some areas before the 19<sup>th</sup> century large-scale expansion of the area. This was particularly noted in Hannibal Road and Stepney Green (around Cressy Place). The depth of such made ground deposits suggests a widespread raising of ground levels, rather than reduction, prior to the establishment of the existing road system.

Some evidence of earlier deposits / land-surfaces were also noted. For example, a possible buried surface / ploughsoil was observed in trenching in Beaumont Square, thought to date to before the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the area was open fields. The deposit observed in the pit on Stepney Way, at the junction with Wellesley Street, which was believed to have been used to raise the road-level, may be relatively early in date (based on historic maps which show the existence of Stepney Way since at least the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century), however the only piece of dating evidence (the pottery sherd) provides no further indication about this as is simply dated to the late 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Natural deposits were exposed in some trenches. This was generally a silty-clay deposit (with gravels in White Horse Lane and Redman's Road) – the Langley Silt deposit overlying River Terrace Taplow Gravels. It was exposed at an uppermost level of c.0.6m beneath the modern ground-surface (in Stepney Green), although it was more typically exposed at between 0.9m and 1.1m beneath ground-surface.



The features exposed during this watching brief were generally related to the mid-17<sup>th</sup> to mid-19<sup>th</sup> century development of the area, from an essentially peripheral rural settlement beyond the medieval City walls to part of a wider more prosperous London of expanding industry and urban sprawl.

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**Appendix I: Ceramic Building Material analysis for TXS11** *by Sue Pringle*

Location	Interpretation	Context CBM date	Period	Fabric	Form	Count	Weight	L	B	Th	Condition	Comments
Stepney Way	Brick fragment from made ground deposit	1450- 1700	PM	3033	Brick	1	139	c45+	c45+	c45+	A	Abraded brick 'cube'
White Horse Lane	Brick from Northern wall	1550- 1700	PM	3033 near 3032	Brick	2	752	-	-	-	M	Flakes in fabric of intermediate type- probably 17 <sup>th</sup> century
White Horse Lane	Brick from northern section of floor	1450- 1700	PM	3033 near 3039	Brick	1	1578	165+	115	60- 65	A, M	1 face abraded, the other mortared so not much detail visible
White Horse Lane	Brick from northern section of floor	1620- 1820	PM	?	Floor tile	1	436	124+	105+	32	A	Unglazed Flemish floor tile, nail hole in corner. Fabric ID not definite
White Horse Lane	Brick from Southern wall	1550- 1700	PM	3033 near 3032	Brick	6	2187	-	-	-	M	Large brick flakes, with light grey charcoal-flecked mortar. Fabric is typical of 17 <sup>th</sup> century between 3033 and 3032
White Horse Lane	Brick from Southern wall	1450- 1700	PM	3039	Brick	1	1053	100+	110	65	A, M	Unfrogged. Faces obscured by mortar (2 types?) but may have indented margin. Re-used?
White Horse Lane	Brick from Southern floor	1450- 1700	PM	3033	Brick	1	2141	200	100- 110	55- 65	M	Slightly irregular brick, creased sides. Top face obscured by mortar
White Horse Lane	Brick from Southern floor	1450- 1700	PM	3033	Brick	2	292	-	-	-	A, M	Flakes

## **Appendix II: Pottery from Stepney Green, Tower Hamlets, London (Site TXS11)**

*Paul Blinkhorn*

A single sherd of pottery weighing 5g occurred in context 1. It is a fragment of a bowl in post-medieval Red Earthenware (MoLAS fabric type PMR), and of late 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century date. Pottery of this type is very common in post-medieval deposits in the London area. It is somewhat abraded, and appears likely to be residual.

## Appendix III: OASIS data collection form

OASIS ID: compassa1-130084

### Project details

Project name	DMA Finsbury Park 58: Stepney Green: An Archaeological Watching Brief
Short description of the project	Between the 30th November 2011 and 20th June 2012 an archaeological watching brief was conducted in the Thames Water District Metering Area Finsbury Park 58, which equates to an area around Stepney Green, the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The monitored groundworks formed part of the ongoing Victorian Mains Replacement works programme being carried out by Optimise on behalf of Thames Water. It was decided that the watching brief was necessary due to the high potential for the survival of deposits associated with the rapid post-medieval development of the area and more specifically around the area of Garden Street off of Stepney Way, where recent Crossrail and MOLA excavations had unearthed remains associated with the 16th century Worcester House. In the event no deposits relating to Worcester House were observed during the groundworks and the majority of trenching revealed thick deposits of made ground and higher-level disturbances by modern service cuts. Archaeological observations were limited to the partial remains of some late 17th century footings at the northern end of White Horse Lane, and some 19th century footings along the south-eastern side of Assembly Passage. Elsewhere, the truncated upper layers of natural deposits were recorded at relatively high levels; within 1.1m of the modern ground surface.
Project dates	Start: 30-11-2011 End: 20-06-2012
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	TXS11 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	TOWE10 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Site status	None
Site status	None
Current Land use	Other 11 - Thoroughfare
Current Land use	Transport and Utilities 3 - Utilities
Current Land use	Other 11 - Thoroughfare
Current Land use	Transport and Utilities 3 - Utilities
Current Land use	Other 11 - Thoroughfare
Current Land use	Transport and Utilities 3 - Utilities
Monument type	BRICK WALL X 3 Post Medieval
Monument type	CULVERT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	NONE None



Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Water Act 1989 and subsequent code of practice

### Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS STEPNEY DMA Finsbury Park 58: Stepney Green
Postcode	E1 3DB
Study area	29.40 Hectares
Site coordinates	TQ 3512 8201 51 0 51 31 13 N 000 03 08 W Polygon
Site coordinates	TQ 3528 8175 51 0 51 31 04 N 000 03 00 W Polygon
Site coordinates	TQ 3561 8219 51 0 51 31 18 N 000 02 42 W Polygon
Site coordinates	TQ 3571 8174 51 0 51 31 03 N 000 02 37 W Polygon

### Project creators

Name of Organisation	Compass Archaeology
Project brief originator	English Heritage/Department of Environment
Project design originator	Compass Archaeology
Project director/manager	Geoff Potter
Project supervisor	Compass Archaeology
Type of sponsor/funding body	Water utility/company
Name of sponsor/funding body	Optimise

### Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London archive
Digital Contents	"other"
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography","Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London Archive
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Map","Plan","Report","Unpublished Text"

**Project  
bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Water mains replacement works in the vicinity of Stepney Green London Borough of Tower Hamlets (DMA Finsbury Park 58) An Archaeological Watching Brief
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Aaronson, J
Date	2012
Issuer or publisher	Compass Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	5-7 Southwark Street, SE1 1RQ
Description	Short report of the results of the watching brief. Includes archaeological and historical background, details of the methodology used, photographs and descriptions of monitored works, and brief conclusions reached.
Entered by	James Aaronson (james@compassarchaeology.co.uk)
Entered on	15 <sup>th</sup> August 2012

#### **Appendix IV: London Archaeologist summary**

Site Address: DMA Finbury Park 58: Stepney Green E1  
Project Type: Watching Brief  
Dates of Fieldwork: 30<sup>th</sup> November-20<sup>th</sup> June 2012  
Site Code: TXS11  
Site Supervisor: Compass Archaeology  
NGR: TQ 3552 8186 (centre point)  
Funding Body: Optimise

Between the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011 and 20<sup>th</sup> June 2012 an archaeological watching brief was conducted in the Thames Water District Metering Area Finsbury Park 58, which equates to an area around Stepney Green, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The monitored groundworks formed part of the ongoing Victorian Mains Replacement works programme being carried out by Optimise on behalf of Thames Water.

It was decided that the watching brief was necessary due to the potential for the survival of deposits associated with the early medieval development around St Dunstan's Church and Stepney Green, and the rapid post-medieval development of the general area. Furthermore, recent Crossrail and MOLA excavations have unearthed remains associated with the 16<sup>th</sup> century Worcester House in the area around Garden Street.

In the event no deposits relating to Worcester House were observed during the groundworks, nor any evidence for the early (Saxon – medieval) settlement in Stepney Green. Instead, the majority of trenching revealed thick deposits of made ground and higher-level disturbances by modern service cuts.

Archaeological finds included the partial remains of some late 17<sup>th</sup> century footings at the northern end of White Horse Lane (believed to have been part of 'The White Horse Inn'), and some 19<sup>th</sup> century footings along the south-eastern side of Assembly Passage. Made-ground deposits used to raise the ground in some areas before the 19<sup>th</sup> century development of the area were also noted in places, alongside some evidence for earlier deposits / land-surfaces (such as a pre-19<sup>th</sup> century land-surface / ploughsoil in Beaumont Square).

The truncated upper layers of natural deposits (silty-clay and gravels) were recorded in some places at relatively high levels - within 1.1m of the modern ground surface.