

142 BERMONDSEY STREET

London Borough of Southwark, SE1 3TX

An Archaeological Watching Brief



July 2013

142 Bermondsey Street
London Borough of Southwark, SE1 3TX

An Archaeological Watching Brief

Site Code: BMY13
NGR: TQ 33248 79617

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July 2013

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Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of a geotechnical trial pit at 142 Bermondsey Street, prior to the redevelopment of the site. The fieldwork was undertaken by Compass Archaeology between the 26th and 28th June 2013. This uncovered no archaeological finds, features, or deposits.

The modern concrete foundations of two walls were observed, stretching down to at least c0.8m beneath the present floor-surface, and continuing beyond the limit of excavation. Another substantial dump of concrete and brick rubble was observed, plus concrete towards the base of the pit. The general fill in the pit was a loose mid-brown silty deposit, with numerous brick rubble and concrete chunks.

This was, therefore, all modern disturbance relating to the construction of the buildings on the site. It is possible that earlier archaeological deposits may survive at deeper levels, as this trial pit was only excavated to a maximum of 1.02m beneath present floor-surface (1.63mOD), and the majority of archaeological deposits found in this area have been uncovered at deeper levels.

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1 Introduction

1.1 This document forms a summary of the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken between the 26th and 28th June 2013 on the site of 142 Bermondsey Street, Southwark, SE1 3TX. The work involved excavating one trial pit, c1m by 1m in plan, for geotechnical investigations before the redevelopment of the site. This work was undertaken as a condition of planning consent (Planning Ref: 12/AP/2197).



Fig.1: Site location plan

1.2 The groundworks were commissioned by Hampson Williams Architects. The watching brief was carried out after recommendations by Christopher Constable, Senior Archaeological Officer for Southwark Council, who monitored the progress of the fieldwork.

2. Location, geology, and topography

- 2.1 The site is centred at NGR TQ 33248 79617, positioned at the junction of Bermondsey Street and Lamb Walk. The eastern part of the site consists of a two-storey building fronting onto Bermondsey Street (No.142 Bermondsey Street), plus a single-storey commercial building to the west fronting onto Lamb Walk. The geotechnical trial pit was positioned in the south-eastern corner of the single-storey commercial building, fronting onto Lamb Walk.
- 2.2 The levels across the site are relatively level, at approximately 2.5mOD. The level directly on the floor directly adjacent to the trial pit was 2.65mOD.
- 2.3 The geological survey (BGS, 1998) indicates that the site lies on recent alluvium, overlying Lambeth Beds (fig.2). Gravel eyots (Kempton Park Terrace Gravels) are found around this area, although the site itself appears to be positioned between these. The top of the natural geology has been encountered at between – 2.44 to – 2.15mOD in the vicinity of the site.



Fig.2: Geological survey map, with site marked

3. Archaeological and historical background

3.1 Prehistoric

Although there is plentiful evidence for prehistoric activity in the Southwark area, this is concentrated on the gravel eyots (such as the Bermondsey Eyot to the south of the site, and Horsleydown Eyot to the north of the site). This site is positioned between these eyots, in an apparent channel (fig.3).

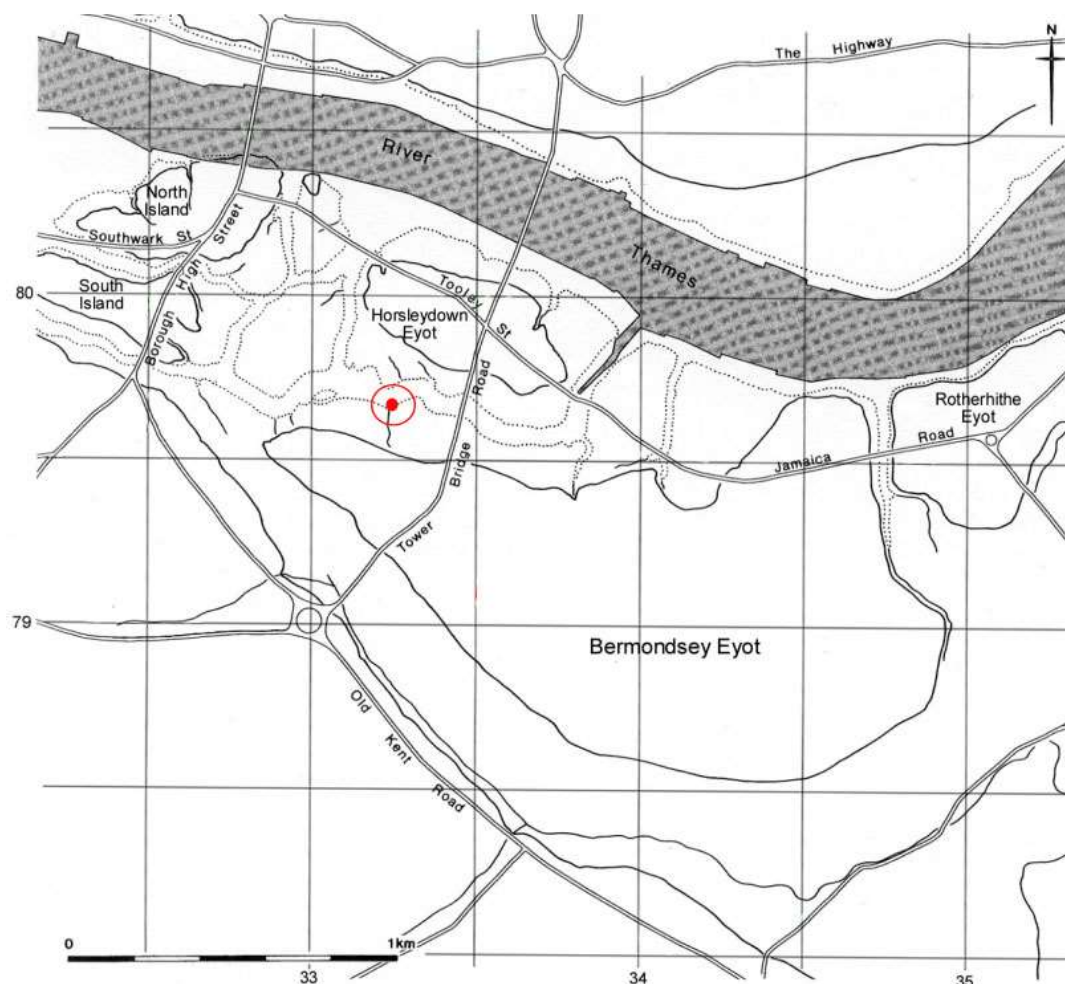


Fig.3: Plan showing the location of the site between gravel eyots

Little evidence for prehistoric activity has been uncovered in the immediate vicinity of the site, with the only evidence being Bronze Age peat, probably part of an east-west channel, found during work at 171 Bermondsey Street, (at -0.28mOD). This supports the suggestion that the site was positioned in a channel between gravel eyots during the prehistoric period, and was not, therefore, utilised or occupied.

3.2 Roman

Similarly, the site was positioned between gravel eyots during the Roman period, such that negligible evidence for Roman activity has been found in the

immediate vicinity of the site, apart from a Roman drainage ditch at the west end of Lamb Walk and the junction with Morocco Street. Instead, the focus of Roman settlement was to the north-west of the site, around London Bridge and Borough.

3.3 Saxon

No archaeological evidence for Saxon activity has been uncovered in the immediate vicinity of the site, probably because it was still positioned between eyots. Southwark is mentioned as ‘Suthringa geworche’ in the Saxon Burghal Hidage meaning ‘Fortification of the men of Surrey’. There is also an entry in the Domesday Book for ‘Bermondsey’, however settlement here is thought to have been focused to the south-east of this site.

3.4 Medieval

Development in this area appears to have begun in the medieval period, with episodic reclamation of the land from marshland since the late 12th century. Substantial evidence for such medieval activity has been found in the immediate vicinity of the site. For example, medieval land reclamation deposits were uncovered at 100-104 Bermondsey Street; late medieval chalk building foundations and earlier 14th-15th century medieval dumping at 173 Bermondsey Street; and medieval ditches at 171 Bermondsey Street. These latter structures and deposits were encountered at c0.59mOD, some 2m below current ground level.

The development of Bermondsey Street itself is believed to have taken place during the medieval period, when it was constructed as a causeway across marshy land. It developed alongside the construction of Bermondsey Priory in 1082 (which later became Bermondsey Abbey in 1399) to the south-east of the site – it is believed that Bermondsey Street was the route connecting London Bridge to the Abbey.

3.5 Post-Medieval

Development around Bermondsey Street and the immediate vicinity of the site continued throughout the early post-medieval period. This is reflected in the archaeological record, with 15th – 17th century yard deposits and 17th century brick and timber structures found at 156-170 Bermondsey Street; 18th century wells and earlier post-medieval dumping at 171 Bermondsey Street (1.45mOD); and 17th – 18th century buildings and floors at 6-8 Morocco Street.

Cartographic evidence also shows that this site was heavily developed throughout the post-medieval period. Buildings are depicted on the site by the time of Morgan’s 1682 Map (fig.4), where the junction of Lamb Walk and Bermondsey Street is already in existence, with buildings over the whole site footprint. Some changes to the buildings on the site are depicted on Horwood’s

1799 Map (fig.5), with a building fronting Bermondsey Street shown but with a yard to the rear (fronting Lamb Walk). The First Edition 1872-5 OS Map (fig.6) shows further changes to the buildings on the site, with the main building fronting Bermondsey Street, a small yard to the rear of this, and another building behind this fronting onto Lamb Walk. By the time of the 1895 OS Map (fig.7), buildings had been built over the whole footprint of the site, with only small changes made to these buildings since then. These buildings have in turn been occupied by pastry cooks, engineers, horse nose-bag makers and printers, as noted in Post office Directories between 1882-1960.



Fig.4: Morgan's 1682 Map, with site marked

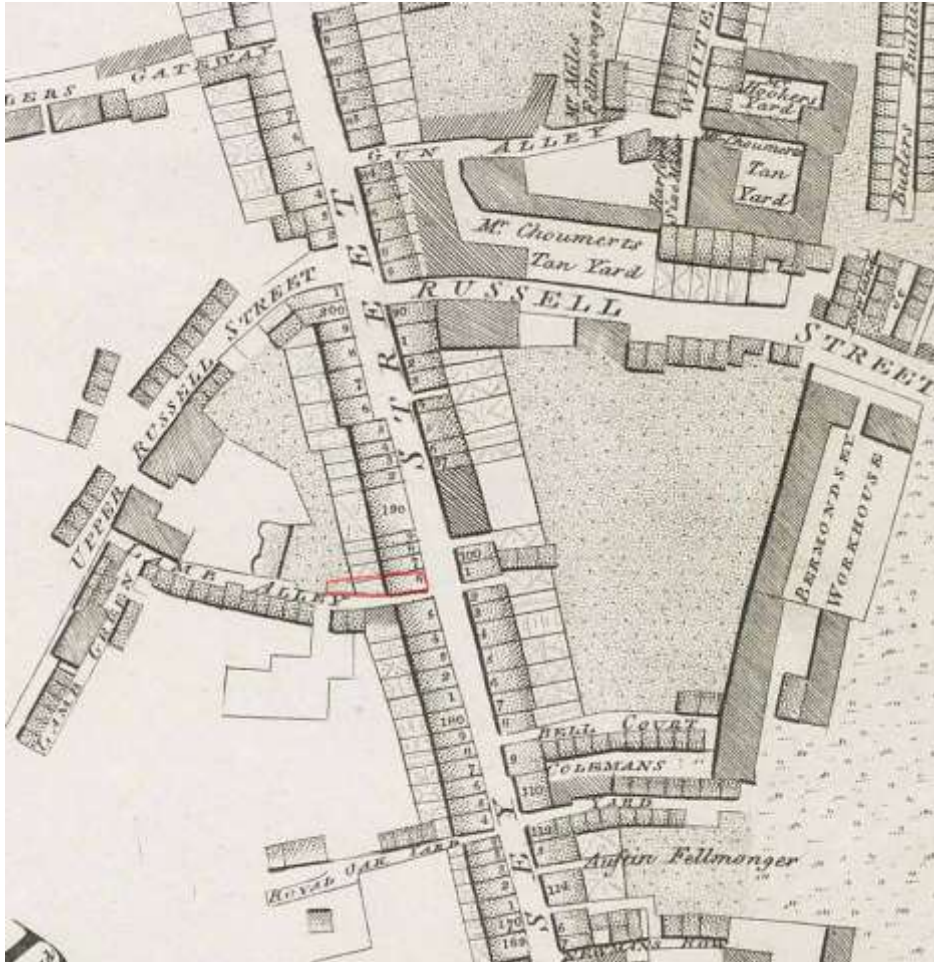


Fig.5:
Horwood's
1799 Map,
with site
marked



Fig.6: 1872-5 First Edition 25inch OS Map



Fig.7: 1895 OS Map, with site marked

4. Archaeological research questions

The fieldwork represented an opportunity to address the following general research questions:

- Is there any evidence for the medieval reclamation of the area and the early development of medieval Bermondsey Street?
- Is there any evidence for the earlier post-medieval development of the area, such as early post-medieval building foundations and yard deposits etc? What does this suggest about the nature of the activity in this area at this date?
- Is there any evidence for the later post-medieval activity in this area? Does this correspond to any of the cartographic evidence of the area?
- At what level do natural / geological deposits and archaeological deposits survive across the area?
- Can the archaeological works inform on the site-specific research questions of local archaeological sites and archaeological priority areas?

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.

Excavation of the trial pit was undertaken by hand, using a hand-held breaker to break out the concrete, etc.

Adequate time was given for investigation and recording of the trial pit. The archaeological monitoring included an on-site photographic, drawn, and written record. A *pro forma* Trench Record sheet was completed for the pit, each shaft, recording the nature of exposed deposits. Photographs, recording representative trench sections and general site locations, were also taken. Levels were derived from an OS bench mark located on the corner of Morocco Street and Leathermarket Street (value: 3mOD).

Close liaison was maintained with the groundworks team to ensure a presence on site as and when necessary. Both the Client and Chris Constable, Southwark Council, 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.

Copies of this report will be supplied to the Client and the London Borough of Southwark Archaeology Department. 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

- 6.1 The trial pit was located in the south-eastern corner of the single-storey commercial building (see fig.8), and measured 1.05m by 1.05m in plan (0.75m by 0.75m at its base), and was excavated to a maximum depth of 1.02m (1.63mOD).

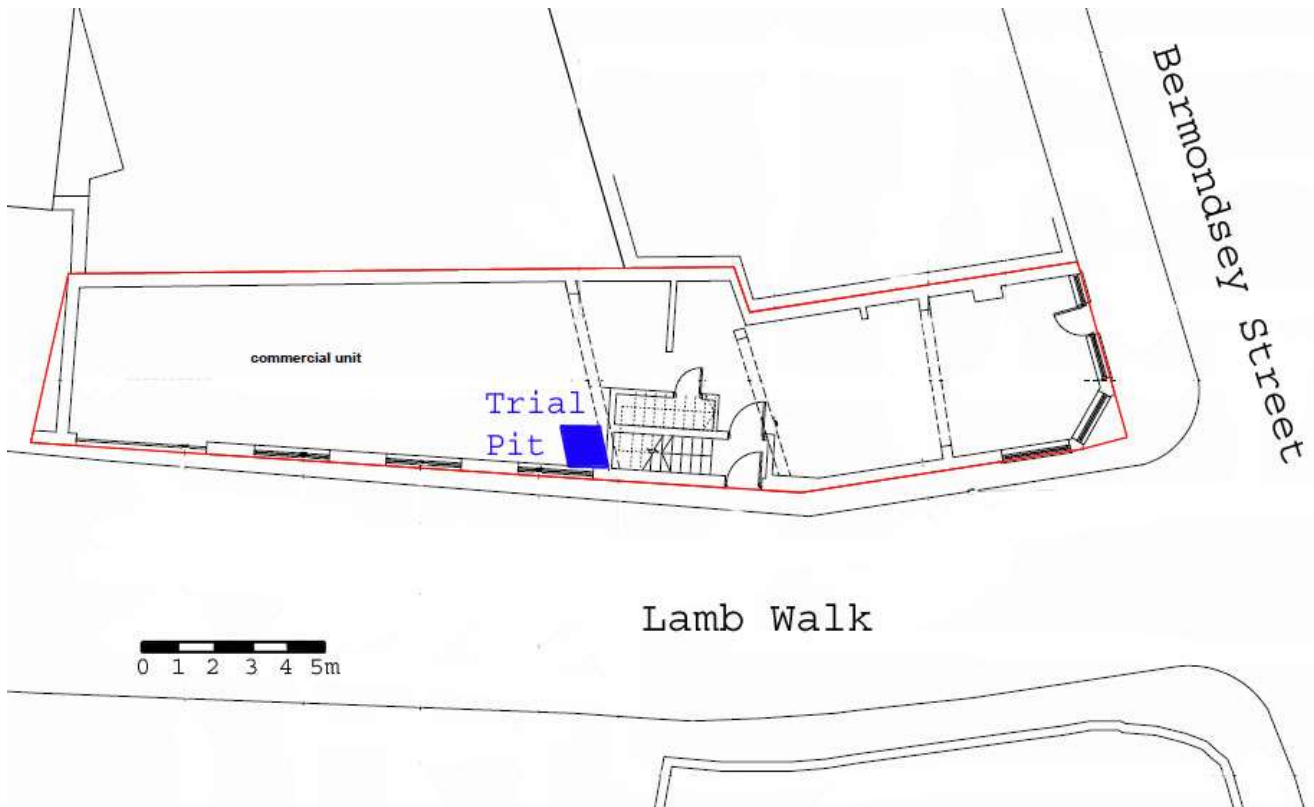


Fig.8: Location of trial pit

- 6.2 No archaeological finds, features, or deposits, were observed in this trial pit. The uppermost part of the pit consisted of 20mm of the current floor-surface, overlying 0.25m of concrete base. The fill was a general loose mid-brown silty deposit, with numerous whole and part bricks (frogged yellow stock bricks and engineering bricks) and pieces of concrete in.
- 6.3 The concrete foundations of the wall along the southern side of the commercial unit (fronting Lamb Walk) were observed in the southern section of the trial pit to a depth of 0.88m beneath the present floor-surface (1.77mOD), and were continuing beyond the limit of excavation.
- 6.4 The concrete foundations of the wall along the eastern side of the trial pit (between the building at the front and the single-storey commercial building) were observed at a diagonal angle, such that it projected 0.5m out of the eastern section at the northern end. This followed the line of the wall projecting out above it. These foundations were under 0.13m of concrete, and were observed for 0.62m in depth (1.9mOD), and continuing beyond the limit of excavation.

- 6.5** There was a substantial dump of brick and concrete rubble in the north-western part of the trial pit. There was also a dump of solid concrete towards the base of the pit, at c0.9m beneath the floor-surface (1.75mOD).
- 6.6** The features within this trial pit are therefore simply modern features, related to the construction of the buildings in the late 19th – early 20th century. It is possible that archaeological features may survive at levels beneath those exposed in this trial pit, as archaeological work in the area has generally found archaeological features at deeper levels than excavated here.



Fig.9: Photo of the trial pit, looking south-east. The concrete foundations of both the southern and eastern walls can be seen



Fig.10: Photo of the trial pit, looking south-west. The concrete foundations of the southern wall, plus the overlying concrete and general brick-rubble fill, can be seen



Fig.11: Photo of the trial pit from above, showing the concrete foundations of the walls and the brick and concrete dump in the north-western corner (front left of photo)



Fig.12: General photo of the pit, looking south-east

7. Conclusions

This watching brief uncovered no archaeological finds, features, or deposits. The modern concrete foundations of two walls were observed, stretching down to at least c0.8m beneath the present floor-surface, and continuing beyond the limit of excavation. Another substantial dump of concrete and brick rubble was observed, plus concrete towards the base of the pit. The general fill in the pit was a loose mid-brown silty deposit, with numerous brick rubble and concrete chunks.

This was, therefore, all modern disturbance relating to the construction of the buildings on the site. It is possible that earlier archaeological deposits may survive at deeper levels, as this trial pit was only excavated to a maximum of 1.02m beneath present floor-surface (1.63mOD), and the majority of archaeological deposits found in this area have been uncovered at deeper levels.

8. Bibliography

General Sources

Greater London Historic Environment Record

London Archaeological Archive and Resource Centre (LAARC) database

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Map and Pictorial Sources

British Geological Survey 1998 *South London. England & Wales Sheet 270. Solid & Drift Geology*. 1:50 000

Ordnance Survey Maps. Various dates and scales

Appendix I: OASIS data collection form

OASIS ID: [compassa1-154134](#)

Project details

Project name	142 Bermondsey Street
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during the excavation of a geotechnical trial pit at 142 Bermondsey Street, prior to the redevelopment of the site. This uncovered no archaeological finds, features, or deposits. The modern concrete foundations of two walls were observed, stretching down to at least c0.8m beneath the present floor-surface, and continuing beyond the limit of excavation. Another substantial dump of concrete and brick rubble was observed, plus concrete towards the base of the pit. The general fill in the pit was a loose mid-brown silty deposit, with numerous brick rubble and concrete chunks. This was, therefore, all modern disturbance relating to the construction of the buildings on the site. It is possible that earlier archaeological deposits may survive at deeper levels, as this trial pit was only excavated to a maximum of 1.02m beneath present floor-surface (1.63mOD), and the majority of archaeological deposits found in this area have been uncovered at deeper levels.
Project dates	Start: 26-06-2013 End: 28-06-2013
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	BMY13 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON SOUTHWARK SOUTHWARK 142 Bermondsey Street
Postcode	SE1 3TX
Study area	1.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 33248 79617 51 0 51 29 57 N 000 04 48 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	Compass Archaeology
Project brief originator	London Borough of Southwark

Project design originator	Compass Archaeology
Project director/manager	Geoff Potter
Project supervisor	Emma Jeffery
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Hampson Williams Architects

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	No
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London Archive
Paper Contents	"other"
Paper Media available	"Correspondence", "Miscellaneous Material", "Photograph", "Plan", "Report", "Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	142 Bermondsey Street, London Borough of Southwark: An Archaeological Watching Brief
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Jeffery, E
Date	2013
Issuer or publisher	Compass Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	5-7 Southwark Street, London, SE1 1RQ
Description	Short report detailing the results of the watching brief. Includes a plan, photographs, plus discussion of the background to the site.
Entered by	Emma Jeffery (emma@compassarchaeology.co.uk)
Entered on	15 August 2013

Appendix II: London Archaeologist summary

Site Address: 142 Bermondsey Street, London, SE1 3TX
Project Type: Watching Brief on geotechnical trial pit
Dates of Fieldwork: 26th June – 28th June 2013
Site Code: BMY13
Site Supervisor: Emma Jeffery
NGR: TQ 33248 79617
Funding Body: Owner

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