

**389-393 LONDON ROAD**

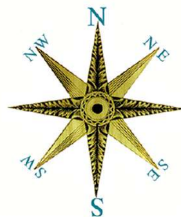
**MITCHAM CR4**

**LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON**

**AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL POST-EXCAVATION ASSESSMENT AND  
PHOTOGRAPHIC STANDING BUILDING SURVEY**

December 2006

**C O M P A S S**



**ARCHAEOLOGY**

389-393 LONDON ROAD

MITCHAM CR4

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON

AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL POST-EXCAVATION ASSESSMENT AND  
PHOTOGRAPHIC STANDING BUILDING SURVEY

SITE CODE: LMY 06

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View looking northwest during excavations in Trench 2



The front elevation of number 389 London Road

## ***Abstract***

*Archaeological investigation of land at 389-393 London Road, Mitcham, took place between September and November 2006. This work was carried out as part of the planning process prior to residential redevelopment.*

*The area has potential for a range of archaeological finds, including Roman and Saxon remains: of particular importance is the presence of a major 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century Anglo-Saxon cemetery a short distance to the west. In more recent times the area appears to have formed open farmland and orchards until the late 1880's.*

*Three preliminary trial trenches were investigated. The trenches measured 4m by 1.8m, 10m by 1.8m and 17m by 1.8m in plan and were located within areas of proposed development. In all trenches the overlying made ground and subsoil was removed to the depth of the natural River Terrace sand and gravels. Two of the trenches contained no significant archaeological features or deposits. The third trench contained three linear cut features, one of which produced pottery sherds dating to the 11<sup>th</sup> century.*

*Further work was carried out on site following this discovery. The third trench was extended within the redevelopment footprint to allow excavation and recording of these features that would otherwise be adversely affected by piling for the proposed development. Two linear ditch features of medieval and earlier post-medieval date, a series of small drainage ditches and a mid 1800's watercourse were revealed.*

*It is proposed that the results of the investigation will be published as a short article, with accompanying photographs and illustrations, in the Merton Historical Society Bulletin.*



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*Figure 1 reproduced from the Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map with permission of the HMSO. ©Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Compass Archaeology Ltd., London SE1 1RQ, licence no. AL 100031317*

*Figures 2 & 3 based on a predevelopment Site Survey (McGinley Surveys/Churchill Hui, Drg N° 3628-06 Rev A)*

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## **1. Introduction**

**1.1** This report details the results of an archaeological investigation undertaken by Compass Archaeology on land at 389-393 London Road, Mitcham (Fig 1). The plot itself is rectangular, with overall dimensions of about 46m by 38m (1750 sq. meters), and is bounded by London Road to the west and Mitcham Park to the south.

The land was previously occupied by late 19<sup>th</sup> century three properties, house numbers 389 (detached), 391 and 393 (semi-detached).

**1.2** Archaeological assessment was required as part of the planning process prior to residential redevelopment of the site (London Borough of Merton Planning Application Ref: 04/P2012). Planning permission was granted on appeal (Appeal Ref: APP/T5720/A/05/1185992; Dec. 2005).

It was considered that the site had potential for prehistoric, Roman and Saxon finds. There have been a number of prehistoric and Roman finds, although Saxon remains are of particular importance and include a major 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century cemetery a short distance to the west. Historic maps indicate that the site formed open farmland and orchards in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, and until the late 1880s.

**1.3** The archaeological fieldwork consisted of three phases of work: a photographic standing building survey, an initial archaeological evaluation which identified significant remains in the centre of the site, followed by further excavation in this area to determine the extent of the remains and record these prior to piling and groundworks.

The photographic standing building survey was carried out prior to the archaeological evaluation which took place from Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> to Friday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2006. The excavation took over a period of two weeks between 29<sup>th</sup> October and 8<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

**1.4** The on-site records and finds are currently held by Compass Archaeology Ltd. The site code is LMY 06

## **2. Acknowledgements**

The archaeological investigation was commissioned and funded by Collier Contracts Ltd., the developers of the site. Further assistance was given during the fieldwork by the Site Manager, Chris Quinn.

Diane Walls (English Heritage Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service) monitored the project on behalf of the London Borough of Merton.

## **3. Site Background**

### **3.1 Location and Topography**

The site is located relatively flat ground on the southeast side of London Road and is approximately centred at National Grid Reference TQ 2730 6819 (Fig 1). The



predevelopment ground surface was at about 19.98m OD in the northwest of the site, which held steady across the majority of the site, rising slightly to 20.2m OD in the back garden area at the southeast.

Once the buildings had been demolished and concrete foundations had been grubbed out, the site was cleared to a level of *c* 19.3m OD prior to the main excavation

### **3.2 Geology**

It is understood that the site stands on a natural ground surface of River Terrace sands and gravels, which is recorded by a geotechnical study as little as 600mm below the present ground surface.

### **3.3 Archaeology and History**

The historical background to the site and its archaeological potential has been comprehensively discussed in a previous desk-based assessment (MoLAS, February 2005). There was considered to be some possibility of prehistoric or Roman finds, although nothing to indicate substantial *in situ* remains. The presence of a major 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> century Saxon cemetery, plus other contemporary finds in the vicinity, is much more significant. There is no indication of burials on this site but associated finds are possible, including evidence for settlement.

**3.4** It is likely that in the medieval period the site was open, although probably in use as farmland. Certainly this use is indicated by 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century maps, and in the 1848 Tithe Apportionment the land falls within a larger plot recorded as 'Meadow: Now arable...'.  
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## **4. Background to the archaeological investigation**

### **4.1 Archaeology and planning**

It is proposed to construct a block of twenty-eight flats on the site: the new build footprint is outlined on Figure 1 below. An archaeological evaluation of the development site and a photographic survey of the existing buildings were recommended by English Heritage as part of the Local Authority planning process, to form a condition of planning consent.

Drawings at 1:100 were supplied by the Client to show the predevelopment site layout and the proposed construction and external works.

### **4.2 Objectives**

The evaluation was undertaken to establish the archaeological potential of the site, and to assess how this might be affected by the proposed redevelopment. The fieldwork therefore sought to determine the extent, depth, character, significance and condition of any extant remains. This would provide a basis on which decisions could be taken as to the need for further archaeological action, if any.

## **4.3 Methodology**

**4.3.1** Prior to the start of fieldwork a *Written Scheme of Investigation* was produced by the Compass Archaeology Ltd. (*Compass Archaeology*, September 2006), and approved by English Heritage.

The specification proposed an initial programme of three trial trenches measuring 4m by 1.8m, 10m by 1.8m and 17m by 1.8m plan (a total area of c 70 sq. metres). The trenches were located to give a representative sample of the proposed redevelopment (Fig 2). The east and northeast of the site was excluded, as it is to remain as a back garden with additional parking facilities.

The trenches were opened by a JCB mechanical excavator working under archaeological supervision. Recent deposits and undifferentiated overburden were removed, and thereafter the exposed deposits and features were investigated and recorded by the on-site archaeologists, and finds dating and environmental evidence recovered.

**4.3.2** Evaluation within Trench 2 revealed three linear cut features, one of which produced two abraded sherds of 11<sup>th</sup> century pottery. Following discussions an extended excavation trench was opened up to fully investigate the adjacent parts of the proposed redevelopment footprint. The enlarged evaluation trench measured 17m by 13m (Fig 3), although an area approximately 7m by 2m in the southwest of the site was unexcavated.

Prior to the start of the additional fieldwork that was required, a second *Written Scheme of Investigation* (*Compass Archaeology*, October 2006) was approved by English Heritage. This provided for the additional archaeological works.

**4.3.3** The deposits and features exposed during the investigation were recorded on *pro forma* context sheets [1] to [51] and by drawn plans and sections, supplemented by 35mm and digital photography. Some of the most recent deposits were not separately numbered but are designated [+].

**4.3.4** Levels taken during the investigation were derived from an OSBM located on the railway abutment on the southeast side of London Road, value 22.14m OD. The trench positions were located on the 1:100 Topographical Survey, an excerpt from which forms the basis for Figures 2 and 3. This plan was in turn related as a 'best fit' to the Ordnance Survey 1:1250 grid.

## **5. The archaeological investigation**

### **5.1 Summary of the findings**

As previously noted, the initial field evaluation comprised a total of three trenches. Two of these trenches, Nos. 1 and 3, did not produce any significant archaeological finds and thus are summarised first in the following text (5.2 & 5.3).

The remaining trench, No. 2, revealed a broadly similar sequence of later post-medieval activity and reworked soil horizons. However, these deposits overlay

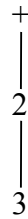
significant cut features that warranted further and more extensive investigation. The evaluation and extended trench areas are therefore described together at the conclusion of this section (5.4).

## 5.2 Evaluation Trench 1 (Figs 4-6)

### 5.2.1 Deposits and features by context

Context no.	Description	Interpretation	Finds (no. of items)	Approx. date
+	Sandy silt containing demolition rubble	Made ground / leveling layer	–	Recent
2	Brown clayey silt with occasional building rubble	Reworked cultivation subsoil	–	19 <sup>th</sup> century
3	Coarse yellow sand with gravel patches throughout	Natural River Terrace sand and gravel	–	–

### 5.2.2 Matrix to show stratigraphic relationship of contexts in Trench 1



### 5.2.3 Trench summary

Trench 1 was aligned roughly northwest-southeast and was located in the northern corner of the site, opposite the existing site entrance. The trench was dug from a relatively flat surface of 19.65m OD.

The lowest deposit recorded was a yellow coarse sand containing occasional gravel patches. This represented the top of the natural River Terrace sand and gravels [3] as recorded by a previous geological survey. This deposit was recorded at 19.17m OD at the northwest end of the trench, rising slightly to 19.12m OD at the southeast end of the trench.

The River Terrace sand was sealed – and presumably truncated – by a reworked silty subsoil [2] approximately 0.25m thick. This was a fairly clean deposit, with finds limited to occasional fragments of ceramic building material at the upper level, and probably represents the period when the land was open and in use for agricultural purposes.

The subsoil was sealed and apparently truncated by an overlying made ground layer [+] 0.20m thick consisting of a mixed sandy silt with frequent building rubble and other modern inclusions. This layer no doubt represents the development of the site for residential purposes in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

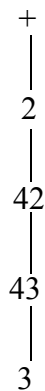
There were no archaeological features in Trench 1. The trench was eventually incorporated into Trench 2 when it was expanded to facilitate further work

### 5.3 Evaluation Trench 3 (Figs 7-11)

#### 5.3.1 Deposits and features by context

Context no.	Description	Interpretation	Finds	Approx. date
+	Sandy silt containing demolition rubble	Made ground / leveling layer. Also seen in T1	<5> glass photograph	Late 19 <sup>th</sup> century
2	Mid brown sandy silt with occasional building rubble Layer 0.4m thick	Truncated subsoil cultivation layer	–	Post - medieval
42	Dark brown clayey silt with frequent CBM and post – medieval pottery Layer 0.45m thick	Fill of post-medieval pit	Pot (sample) Brick & bone (sample)	Later post -medieval
43	Cut feature, steep sides (c 70°), concave base 5.5m length (min) 1.8m wide (min) 3.2m deep	Probable post-medieval rubbish pit	–	Post - medieval

#### 5.3.2 Matrix to show stratigraphic relationship of contexts



### 5.3.3 Trench summary

The sequence of deposits overlying the natural was broadly similar to that in Trench 1, although in this case there was a large 19<sup>th</sup> century cut feature at the east end of the trench. Once again there were no significant remains or finds.

The natural River Terrace sand and gravel was exposed at 19.04m OD at the west end of the trench, sloping slightly to 19.14m OD at the east. Cutting the natural at the east end of the trench was a deep pit feature [43]. The feature's western extremity is visible within the trench, but its northern, southern and eastern extremities go beyond the limit of excavation in this trench. In cross-section the cut was up to 5.5m wide, with sides that sloped in at *c* 70° to a generally flat base and a depth of 3.2m.

The feature contained a dark brown clayey silt fill with modern, probably 19<sup>th</sup> century, inclusions and finds such as unfrosted red and yellow stock bricks and many sherds of post-medieval pottery. This feature can be interpreted as a late post-medieval rubbish pit or as a gravel/sand extraction pit subsequently backfilled with rubbish and is not considered to be of archaeological significance.

The natural River Terrace sand and gravel was sealed by a reworked subsoil [2] cultivation layer similar to that seen in Trench 1, approximately 0.4m thick, again representing agricultural activity. This deposit was overlain by a fairly recent made ground layer [+] with the present ground surface at about 20.02m OD. The made ground produced one notable find in the form of a small 19<sup>th</sup> century framed photograph on glass (Fig 34; Appendix V).

## 5.4 Evaluation and extended area Trench 2 (Figs 12-22)

### 5.4.1 Deposits and features by context

Context no.	Description	Interpretation/ comment	Finds ( <i>no. of items</i> )	Approx. date
+	Mixed loose brick and mortar rubble, grey to buff sand/silt & gravel	Demolition leveling. Not present at northern end of trial trench	<1> Pb.weight <2> Cu all. rim <4> Pb. sheet	V. recent
2	Mid brown sandy silt with occasional building rubble	Truncated subsoil cultivation layer	–	Post - medieval
3	Yellow coarse sand with gravel patches	Natural River Terrace sand and gravel	–	–
4	Moderately compact dark brown sandy silt with occ. flint chunks. Layer 0.2m thick	Fill within cut [5]	Pot (1)	Mid 12 <sup>th</sup> – 13 <sup>th</sup> century
5	Cut feature running northwest – southeast.	Section through linear ditch	–	“
6	Dark brown sandy silt with frequent flint chunks	Fill within [7]	Pot (13) Bone (1)	13 <sup>th</sup> century

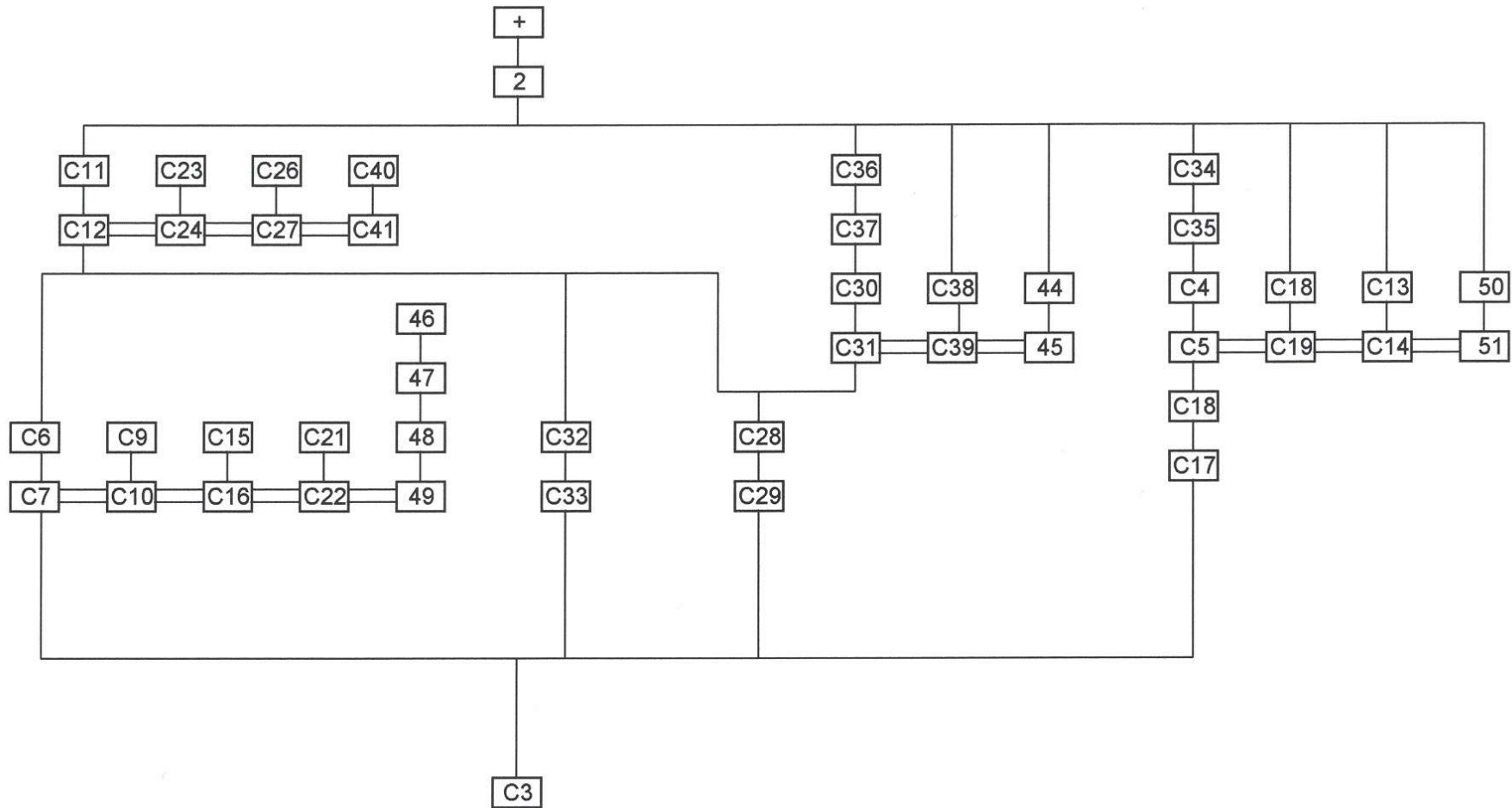


<b>Context no.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation/ comment</b>	<b>Finds (no. of items)</b>	<b>Approx. date</b>
7	Cut feature running northwest – southeast.	Section through linear ditch.	–	Mid 12 <sup>th</sup> to 13 <sup>th</sup> century
8	Dark yellow coarse sand with occasional flint chunks.	Fill within [7]	–	–
9	Dark brown sandy silt with orange iron panning throughout.	Fill within [10]	Pot (8)	Mid 12 <sup>th</sup> century
10	Cut feature running northwest – southeast.	Section through linear ditch. Same as [7]	–	Mid 12 <sup>th</sup> to 13 <sup>th</sup> century
11	Moderately compact dark brown silty sand.	Fill within [12]	–	Post - medieval
12	Cut feature running north – south.	Section through probable agricultural field drain	–	Post - medieval
13	Compact dark brown sandy silt with frequent flint chunks.	Fill within [14]	Pot (1) Peg tile (3)	Post - medieval
14	Cut feature running northwest – southeast.	Section through linear ditch. Same as [5]	–	Post - medieval
15	Dark brown sandy silt with orange iron panning throughout.	Fill within [16]	–	–
16	Cut features running northwest – southeast.	Section through linear ditch. Same as [7]	–	–
17	Rectangular shaped cut feature.	Possible pit feature – heavily truncated by later activity.	<3>Pb. disc	Unknown
18	Compact light brown sandy silt.	Fill within [17]	–	Unknown
19	Cut feature running northwest – southeast.	Section through linear ditch. Same as [5]	–	–
20	Compact dark brown silty sand.	Fill within [19]	Pot (1) Brick (4) Peg tile (5)	11 <sup>th</sup> century+
21	Dark brown silty sand with occasional flint chunks	Upper fill within [22]	Flue tile (1)	–
22	Cut feature running northwest – southeast.	Section through linear ditch. Same as [7]	–	Late 11 <sup>th</sup> to 13 <sup>th</sup> C

<b>Context no.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation/ comment</b>	<b>Finds (no. of items)</b>	<b>Approx. date</b>
23	Moderately compact dark brown sandy silt.	Fill within [24]	–	Post - medieval
24	Cut feature running north – south.	Section through probable agricultural field drain. Same as [12]	–	Post - medieval
25	Mid brown silty sand with chalk flecks an orange iron panning throughout.	Fill within [22]	Pot (4)	12 <sup>th</sup> century
26	Moderately compact dark brown sandy silt.	Fill within [27]	–	Post - medieval
27	Cut feature running north – south.	Section through probable agricultural field drain. Same as [12]	–	Post - medieval
28	Moderately compact mid brown sandy silt.	Fill within [29]	–	Post - medieval
29	Cut feature running east – west.	Section through probable agricultural field drain.	–	Post – medieval
30	Loose black sandy silt.	Fill within [31]	–	Post - medieval
31	Cut feature curving slightly from southeast – northwest.	Section through probable agricultural field drain	–	Post - medieval
32	Compact light brown silty sand.	Fill within [33]	–	Post - medieval
33	Cut feature running from east – west	Section through probable agricultural field drain	–	Post - medieval
34	Modern backfill layer	Backfill layer of [35]	–	V. recent
35	Modern cut feature	Construction cut	–	V. recent
36	Loose mid brown sandy silt	Backfill of post – medieval watercourse	–	Post - medieval
37	Cut feature running northwest - southeast	Post-medieval watercourse	–	Post - medieval
38	Loose black sandy silt	Fill within [39]	–	Post - medieval
39	Cut feature curving from southeast - northwest	Section through agricultural field drain. Same as [31]	–	Post - medieval

<b>Context no.</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Interpretation/ comment</b>	<b>Finds (no. of items)</b>	<b>Approx. date</b>
40	Moderately compact dark brown silty sand	Fill within [41]	–	Post - medieval
41	Cut feature running north – south.	Section through agricultural field drain. Same as [12]	–	Post - medieval
44	Loose black sandy silt	Fill within [45]	–	Post - medieval
45	Cut feature curving from southeast – northwest.	Section through agricultural field drain. Same as [31]	–	Post - medieval
46	Moderately compact dark brown silty sand with white chalk flecks throughout	Fill within [49]	Pot (1)	11 <sup>th</sup> century
47	Moderately compact mid brown silty sand with orange iron panning throughout	Fill within [49]	Pot (1)	11 <sup>th</sup> century
48	Loose dark brown sandy silt	Fill within [49]	–	–
49	Cut feature running northwest – southeast.	Section through linear ditch. Same as [7]	–	–
50	Moderately compact brown sandy silt	Fill within [51]	–	Post - medieval
51	Cut feature running northwest - southeast	Section through linear ditch. Same as [5]	–	Post - medieval

5.4.2 Matrix to show stratigraphic relationship of contexts



### 5.4.3 Trench summary

Trench 2 was initially dug as a trial trench c 10m by 1.8m in plan (Fig 2). The trench was aligned approximately northeast-southwest and was dug from a fairly level surface of 19.9m OD

The overlying made ground and subsoil layer, some 0.8m thick in total, was excavated down to the level of the natural River Terrace sand and gravel. This deposit became visible at approximately 18.7m OD at the northeast of the trench, sloping slightly to 19.01m OD at the southwest end. Three linear features were exposed, each cutting into the River Terrace layer (Fig 12). Two of the three features were excavated to reveal shallow ditch-like cuts approximately 0.3m deep but containing no dating evidence. The third feature was surprisingly deep when excavated, 1.1m depth from the top of the natural River Terrace layer, and contained two sherds of late Saxon/early medieval pottery. Based on these finds the trench was extended to the west to create a rectangular area of excavation some 17m by 13m in plan (Fig 3).

The extended area was reduced to the level of the natural River Terrace deposit to determine the extent of the features revealed in the initial trial trench. The following description combines the findings from both phases of work within a single narrative.

The extension of the trial trench revealed two large northwest – southeast running linear ditches, both extending beyond the northwest and southeast limits of excavation (Fig 14). Both ditches were excavated through a series of 1.5m length sections dug across the width of the ditch at regular intervals. Separate cut and fill numbers were assigned to each section to facilitate the recording process, and a total of four sections were excavated along the length of the ditch. A series of agricultural field drains, a shallow pit and a mid 1800's watercourse were also uncovered in the extended area.

The northern ditch [5] was exposed cutting the natural River Terrace [3] deposit at c 18.94m OD and held fairly level across the length of the site. A total of four sections were excavated across the width of the ditch. Section 1 was dug at the northwest end of the trench (Fig 17). In the cross-section the cut was up to 1.4m wide by 0.38m deep with sided that sloped in at about 70° onto a fairly flat base. The base itself fell slightly to the southeast by some 0.20m from 18.62m OD in the northwest to 18.82m OD at the southeast end of the ditch. The ditch was filled by a compact dark brown sandy silt [4].

A further three sections were excavated along the length of the ditch. Section 2 was excavated mid way along the ditch. The cut was labelled [19] and was filled by [20]. Section 3 was located a further 4m southeast and assigned cut and fill numbers [14] and [13] respectively. The final section was recorded at the extreme southeast of the ditch at the limit of excavation and was labelled [51] and [50] to designate the cut and fill numbers. In all cases the cross section and fills were broadly similar as those in Section 1.

Three sherds of pottery were recovered from the fill of the northern ditch. These finds were sent to the pottery specialist Mr Paul Blinkhorn for analysis, the full results of which can be seen in the *Appendices*, and which are summarised in this narrative. Two sherds of medieval pottery dating from the mid 11<sup>th</sup> to the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century were recovered from



fills [4] and [20] respectively. A third sherd dating from the mid 16<sup>th</sup> century was recovered from fill [13]. This suggests that the ditch was backfilled in the early post-medieval period, and that the medieval sherds from the feature are residual.

This ditch also appears to cut an earlier feature [17], which appeared quite extensive in plan. However, investigations revealed this to be a quite shallow feature filled by a dark yellow silty sand [18]. Due to the lack of material finds and the nature of the fill, it is likely that this feature is in fact a natural geological formation and not archaeologically significant.

The southern ditch [7] runs parallel to the northern ditch [5], approximately 2.25m apart. The ditch was exposed cutting the natural River Terrace deposit [3] at 19.02m OD at the southeast and holds steady at this level across the length of the feature. A total of five sections were excavated across the width of the ditch along its length.

The initial section was excavated while at the trial trench phase prior to extension of the trench. In cross-section the cut [49] was up to 2.75m wide by 1.1m deep with stepped sides sloping initially at *c* 45° at the top before sloping sharply at *c* 75° towards the base, which was slightly rounded (Fig 20). Taking into account that the ditch has been truncated by later agricultural and modern activity, it is assumed that the cut was substantially larger originally, by up to a further 1m in width by 0.5m in depth.

Subsequent to the extension of the trial trench, further sections were excavated along the length of the ditch to determine its dimensions and to recover dating evidence. This process began in the northwest of the trench, as with the northern ditch [5].

In this cross-section the ditch was slightly narrower at 2.3m wide. More surprising was the depth of the ditch at this point, measuring a maximum of 0.4m deep at 18.65m OD, shallower by more than 0.7m than at the southeast end (Fig 21). The ditch was filled by a primary fill [6], a dark brown sandy silt, and a side fill [8], which probably represents slump material from the initial digging of the ditch. Fill [6] was moderately dark brown sandy silt that contained 12 sherds of 13<sup>th</sup> century pottery. Two further sections excavated 5m and 10m southeast of the previous section revealed a near identical cross-section. Cut [10] measured 2.1m in width by 0.3m deep and was filled by [9], a dark brown sandy silt that contained a further 8 sherds of medieval pottery, dated to the mid 12<sup>th</sup> century. Cut [16] measured 2.1m wide by 0.4m deep in cross section, and was filled by [15], again a compact dark brown sandy silt. It can be surmised that the ditch was backfilled as a single event, and thus fills [6], [9] and [15] are all one and the same. This can also be said for fills [22] and [46] in the two further sections excavated at the southeast end of the ditch, detailed below.

Section cut [22] was excavated 3m southeast of cut [16] to join up with the section excavated in the trial trench in order to ascertain at which point the ditch begins to become deeper (Fig 3). As can be seen from the overall trench plan the ditch begins its slope approximately 2m from the southeast limit of excavation, sloping gently at first from 18.77m OD to the maximum depth recorded at 17.77m OD. The fills recorded from both sections, though differently numbered, are directly comparable, *i.e.* the upper and lower fills [21] and [25] from section cut [22] are the same as fills [46] and [47] from section cut [49].

The upper fill [46] was a mid brown silty sand with flecks of chalk throughout and a maximum thickness of 0.62m and contained a single sherd of late 11<sup>th</sup> century pottery. This layer sealed a similar layer [47], differing slightly in colour and containing orange iron panning throughout and also containing a single sherd of late 11<sup>th</sup> century pottery. This layer was up to 0.4m in thickness. The lower fill [48] was a dark black organic silt layer and probably represents a silting up of the ditch while still open and in use.

In conclusion, the southern ditch was likely to have been backfilled around the 13<sup>th</sup> century, based on the finds recovered throughout the ditch fill.

The other features uncovered in the extended area of Trench 2 are considered to be of less significance and are likely to be of post-medieval date. As can be seen from the overall trench plan, a series of thin features transect the site and cut the two main ditches. These features are of a likely post-medieval date and probably functioned as agricultural field drains, and are summarised below.

The largest drain [12] ran from the northwest limit of excavation in a north-south direction and cuts the large southern ditch [7]. In cross-section it measured 0.4m wide by 0.3m deep and ran for a length of approximately 18m. The drain was filled by [11], a moderately compact dark brown silty sand. Again a number of sections were excavated along the length of the feature, each being given a separate cut and fill number. The fill and dimensions of the drain remained constant along its length, therefore section cuts [24], [27] and [41] and their respective fills [23], [28] and [40] can be directly related to the cut [12] and its fill [11]. The drain terminated 3m from the southeast limit of excavation and was probably backfilled at the one time, based on the similarity of the backfill layer across the length of the feature.

The above drain also cuts two smaller field drains [29] and [33], located to the west and east of drain [12] respectively. The significance of these drains within the wider historical context of the site is quite limited and it is therefore not necessary to discuss them in any further detail. This also applies to a fourth field drain [31] and its fill [30] that was initially visible in the trial trench before its extension. Two further sections were excavated along its length to determine whether its dimensions and fill were constant throughout. Therefore section cuts [39], [45] and their respective fills [38] and [44] represent the same cut feature and subsequent backfilling process as cut [31] and fill [30].

A further linear cut feature [37] located adjacent to the southwest limit of excavation is that of a mid 1800's watercourse. This feature appears on the Tithe OS map of 1867, but not on the 1848 map, and is not considered archaeologically significant due to its modern nature.

## **6. Assessment of the results of the archaeological investigation**

The investigation has provided an opportunity to address several research questions, based on the archaeological potential of the site as set out in the *Written Scheme of Investigation* and in section 3.3 above. This included possible evidence for prehistoric, Roman and Saxon activity, as well as the apparently open agricultural land use of later periods.

The responses to these questions are outlined below:

### **6.1 Prehistoric activity**

There was no evidence from the investigation of any prehistoric activity, nor were there any residual finds relating to these periods.

### **6.2 Roman**

A single abraded fragment of Roman tile was recovered from the upper fill [21] of the large southern ditch [7]. This is assumed to be a residual find, as evidence suggests that the ditch was backfilled in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. There was no other evidence of Roman activity on the site. Roman remains have been found during excavations in the vicinity of the site, and the residual tile fragment backs up evidence for Roman activity in the immediate area.

### **6.3 Saxon and medieval**

There was some evidence for medieval activity on the site. The principal discoveries were a variety of pot sherds dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries found within the fill of the southern of the two large northwest – southeast running ditches.

The ditch itself ran the entire length of the trench, some 17m, and it can be reasonably assumed that it continues beyond the northwest and southeast boundaries of excavation. In profile the cut had dimensions of between 2.1m and 2.35m wide by 0.4m deep across the majority of its length before becoming slightly wider and significantly deeper at the southeast end. Here the base of the ditch slopes dramatically to a depth of 1.1m by 2.75m wide: original dimensions would have been greater still if not for truncation of the overlying subsoil.

It is probable that the ditch served as a boundary of some type. The pottery assemblage recovered from the backfill has been identified as sherds from locally produced jars and jugs of use in a domestic context. The condition of the sherds suggests that they were used in the immediate vicinity of the ditch, which may suggest that the ditch served as a settlement boundary, if not an agricultural field boundary ditch.

Finally, the pottery assemblage suggests that the ditch was filled in during the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

### **6.4 Post-medieval**

There is significant evidence for post-medieval activity on the site, the most obvious being the backfilled watercourse [37], part of which appears in the south of the site. The

feature first appears in the 25-inch OS map of 1867. The route and nature of the watercourse has been previously documented.

The series of agricultural field drains failed to produce any datable finds, though they are assumed to be of post-medieval date and probably relate to a period when the site was in use as open agricultural land.

Of more significance is the second of the two large northwest – southeast running ditches. The northern ditch, like the southern medieval ditch described above in 6.3, crossed Trench 2 from northwest to southeast, a distance of some 17m, and although truncated by reworking of the soil was still up to 1.4m wide by 0.40m deep: the original dimensions would probably have been greater still.

The pottery assemblage from the northern ditch was much smaller than that of the southern ditch. Two small sherds of late 12<sup>th</sup> century and some large sherds of later post-medieval pot were recovered from the fill of the ditch. The condition of the medieval sherds along with the post-medieval pottery suggests that the ditch was backfilled in the early post-medieval period. Again it can be assumed that the ditch functioned as an agricultural or settlement boundary.

The full results of the assessment of the pottery assemblages from both ditches can be seen in the *Appendices* below.

## **7. Conclusion**

### **7.1 Consideration of the methodology**

The archaeological investigation had two principal objectives:

- First, to establish the archaeological potential of the site and to indicate how this how this would be affected by the proposed redevelopment. Trial trenching provided a representative sample across the site and the significance of the exposed deposits and remains determined.
- Secondly, further fieldwork was undertaken within one part of the proposed redevelopment to fully record the medieval and post-medieval features that had been exposed, and to recover finds dating and environmental evidence.

It is considered that the investigation has proved successful in both the above aims, and that it has made a proper record of the threatened archaeological remains by fieldwork, subsequent analysis and preservation of artefacts.

### **7.2 Recommendations**

It is proposed that the results of the investigation be published as a short article, plus accompanying photographs and illustration, within the Merton Historical Society quarterly Bulletin. This proposal has been discussed with the Society, and funding/ timescale would allow for production of an article that would appear in the Bulletin during 2007.

## Appendix I The pottery assemblage

*Paul Blinkhorn*

The pottery assemblage comprised 29 sherds with a total weight of 706g. The bulk of the assemblage consisted of medieval wares spanning the later 11<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, along with a single large sherd of early post-medieval ware.

The assemblage was recorded using the codes and chronology of the provisional type series of the Surrey County Archaeological Unit (Jones 1998, 211-238):

S2, *Shelly wares*, late 11<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> century. 6 sherds, 28g.

Q2, *Grey-brown sandy wares*, 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century. 13 sherds, 225g.

OQ, *Orange Sandy Wares*, mid 12<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> century. 5 sherds, 42g.

WW, *Whitewares*, 13<sup>th</sup> – 15<sup>th</sup> century. 4 sherds, 95g.

RW, *Post-medieval Redwares*, mid-16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century. 1 sherd, 316g.

The pottery occurrence by number and weight of sherds per context by fabric type is shown in Table 1. Each date should be regarded as a *terminus post quem*.

Context	S2		Q2		OQ		WW		RW		Date
	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	No	Wt	
C4					1	2					M12thC
C6			5	64	3	32	4	95			13thC
C9	3	9	4	147	1	8					M12thC
C13									1	316	M16thC
C20	1	10									L11thC
C25			4	14							12thC
C46	1	6									L11thC
C47	1	3									L11thC
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>316</b>	

**Table 1: Pottery occurrence by number and weight (in g) of sherds per context by fabric type**

The bulk of the assemblage came from the excavated segments of the two large northwest – southeast ditches, *ie*, C6 and C9 from the southern ditch, and C4, C13 and C20 from the northern.

The assemblages from C6 and C9 are fairly typical of sites in the region. They comprise entirely local wares, and are bodysherds from jars or jugs. The Whiteware sherds from C6 are all from the base of the same glazed jug, and one of the Orange sandy ware sherds is from the body of a jug with green glaze over white slip. A single Grey-brown sandy ware jar rimsherd was noted. It had an everted and beaded profile which is typical of the tradition (*eg*, Poulton 1998, Fig. 5.22, no. 96). A less common find from the same context in the same fabric was a sherd from the neck of a jug with incised wavy line decoration. The assemblage from C9 was of a similar composition, but lacked any Whitewares. It did produce another Orange sandy ware jug sherd which was glazed green

over a white slip, and also a large Grey/brown sandy ware bodysherd with applied strip decoration. The curvature and thickness of the sherd indicates that it came from a large storage vessel. Overall, the assemblage suggests that the ditch was filled in during the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and the range of wares and vessel types indicates that the assemblage is wholly domestic in nature, with the fairly large sherd size and good condition suggesting that the material was used in the immediate vicinity of the ditch.

The assemblage from the northern ditch was much smaller. It comprised two small sherds of medieval pottery which suggest a mid – late 12<sup>th</sup> century date for the backfill, but it also produced a single large sherd from a post-medieval Redware bowl. The fact that the two medieval sherds from this ditch are small and somewhat abraded, coupled with the large size of the Redware sherd suggests very strongly that the eastern ditch was backfilled in the early post-medieval period, and that the medieval sherds from that feature are residual. This is perhaps also supported by the fact that the small sherd of glazed Orange sandy ware from C4 joins one of the sherds in the same fabric in C6, which further indicates a secondary level of deposition for the medieval pottery in the northern ditch.

## **Appendix II. Ceramic Building Material**

### **Introduction**

A small quantity of ceramic building material was recovered from three contexts [2, 13 & 20]. These are briefly described as follows:

#### *(i) Roman flue tile*

A single fragment of Roman box-flue tile was recovered from context [21]. The external surface has combed keying as illustrated below (Fig 23), whilst the body is up to 21mm thick and weighs 118 gms. The tile is similar to others of fabric group 2815 and was probably manufactured between *c* AD 50 and 160; a likely source is Brockley Hill and neighbouring kiln sites in Hertfordshire.

Context [21] is the upper surviving fill of a medieval ditch [7, *etc*]; the flue tile is therefore residual, and unlikely to have originated from this site. Scattered finds of Roman ceramic building material in later contexts are recorded on a number of sites across Mitcham, for example at Tramway Path to the south (TRA98) and in Church Road to the northwest (*eg*, CUM02).

#### *(ii) Plain (peg) tile*

Eight fragments of plain tile were recovered from contexts [13] and [20], both representing areas of fill within the single post-medieval ditch [5, 14, *etc.*]. These were mostly in a similar fabric and are probably of earlier post-medieval origin. Two fragments were more heavily abraded and may be of medieval date.

## *(ii) Brick*

The post-medieval ditch context [20] produced four small and heavily abraded fragments of brick. Two of these were in a hard pink to orange fabric, the former in particular indicative of material introduced into the London area after the Great Fire of 1666 and continuing through to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The other two fragments were in a pale yellow fabric with some darker inclusions, probably derived from a brickbat. This material appears in the London area in the later 17<sup>th</sup> century and may be a Dutch import, although again continuing in use and indigenous manufacture to the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Potential and Significance of the Material**

The ceramic building material was almost entirely confined to fills of the post-medieval ditch that ran across the northern part of the site [context 5, *etc.*]. The assemblage does not contradict other dating evidence for this feature: however, it does suggest a slightly later date for backfilling than the single post-medieval pottery find, perhaps in the later 17<sup>th</sup> century.

It is not considered that any further work is required on the ceramic building material, and with the exception of the Roman flue tile it is not proposed to retain the assemblage.

## **Appendix III Assessment of the Metalwork**

*Hilary Major*

Four metal objects were examined, comprising the rim from a copper alloy plate and two pieces of lead scrap, and a lead weight. All the objects are likely to be post-medieval.

### **Catalogue**

#### ***Copper alloy***

Context	SF	Description
+	2	Rim from a cast plate. Quite thin metal in fairly good condition. Diameter not measurable. Probably post-medieval.

#### ***Lead***

Context	SF	Description
+	1	Weight. Slightly lop-sided truncated cone with a low ridge round the upper edge. Central integral suspension loop, pierced transversely. In very good condition, probably post-medieval. Wt. 208g (7.03oz), Diam. 42-31mm, ht. 14mm, ht. with loop 19mm ( <i>see Fig 24</i> ).
+	4	A piece of rough-cast sheet, roughly semi-circular, distorted. In good condition. Wt. 8g. Diam. <i>c</i> 24mm.
17	3	Roughly oval cast disc, irregular thickness. There is a slight dome in the centre of one face. Wt. 17g. <i>c</i> 20x 16x 6mm.

#### **Appendix IV The photographic standing building survey (*Figs 25-33*)**

The houses numbered 389 – 393 London Road, Mitcham were built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and mark the first phase of the development of the Mitcham Park Estate (see Montague, E N, 1994 *Lower Mitcham*, p 94 [typescript in Merton local studies library]). The buildings were not listed and many of the significant interior features, such as fireplaces and doors, had been previously removed or lost.

A sample of the photographic record is given below. This principally illustrates the front and rear elevations of the houses together with some images of the surviving interior features, namely the staircases of buildings 389 and 393.

#### **Appendix V The 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph (*SF <5>*; *Fig 34*)**

A small 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph on glass and with brass frame was found during metal detecting of the upper soil horizon [+] in evaluation Trench 3.

The photograph is of a young woman and stylistically probably dates to the 1860s. It appears to be a collodion positive on glass (otherwise known as an ambrotype), which was developed from the wet collodion process *c* 1852 and widely used thereafter for portrait photography in preference to the daguerreotype. The image was basically a negative but appeared positive against a black background; this was most commonly applied (as here) as varnish to the back of the plate.

Overall the photograph measures 71mm by 84mm by up to 5mm thick, and comprises the glass plate, a plain glass protective cover, a gilt brass decorative surround held between these and the brass frame. There is no evidence for a support or stand, and the photograph was probably originally contained in a leather case.



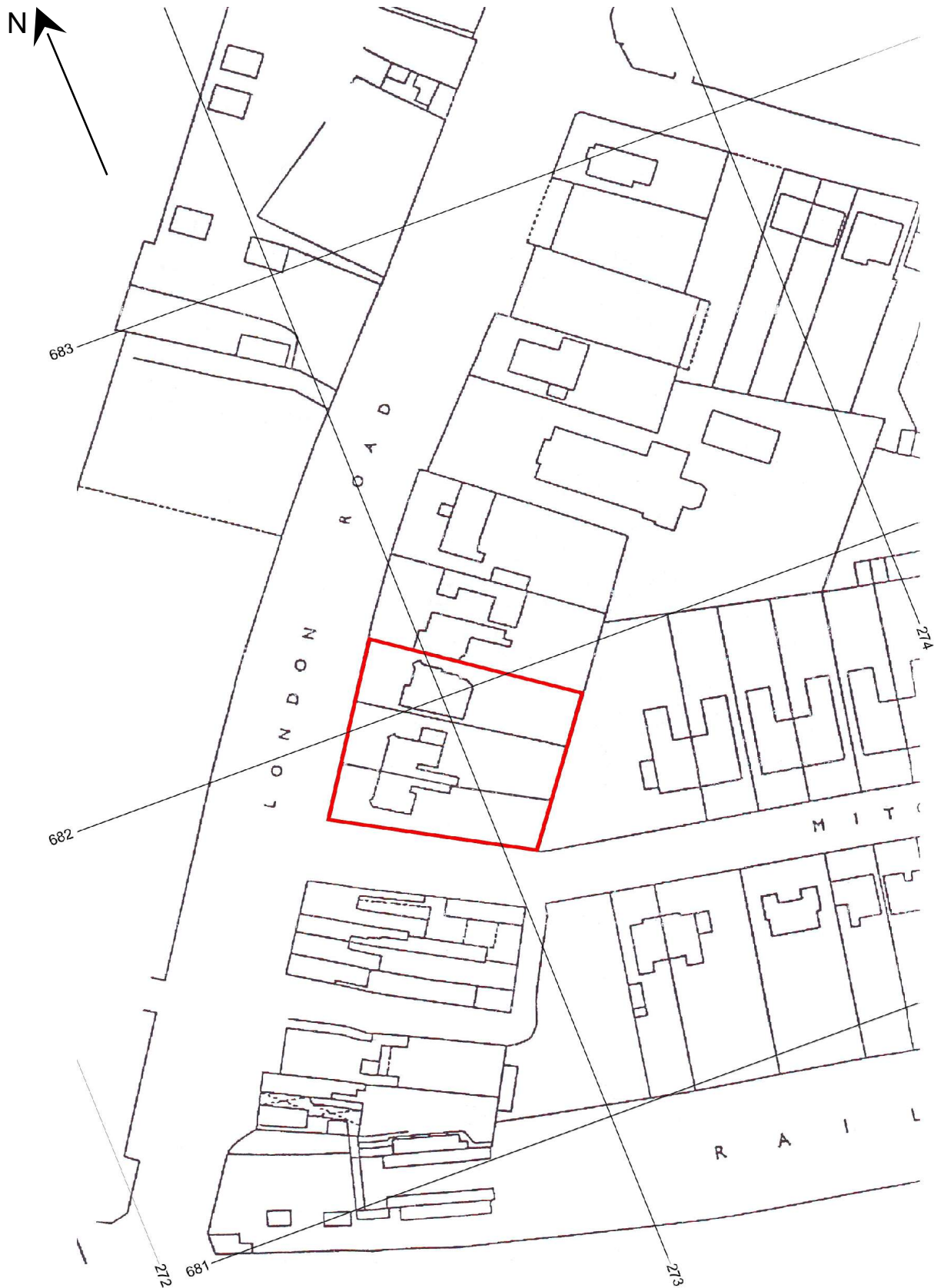


Fig 1 The site outline in relation to the 2003 Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map



Fig 2 The location of evaluation trenches 1-3 in relation to the predevelopment site survey



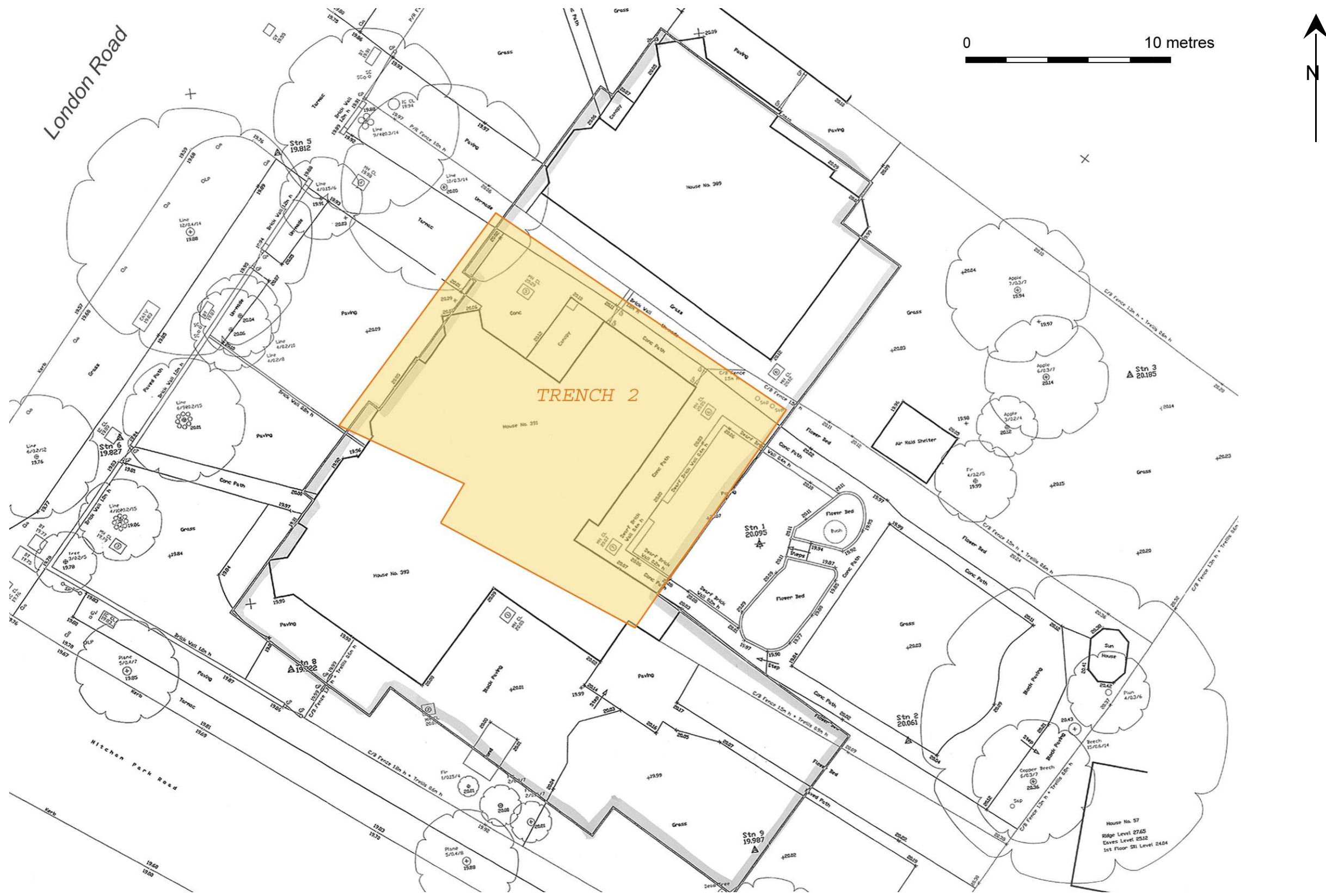


Fig 3 Evaluation Trench 2 and its extended area within proposed redevelopment footprint



Fig 4 Evaluation Trench 1, view looking northwest after surface cleaning (0.5m scale)

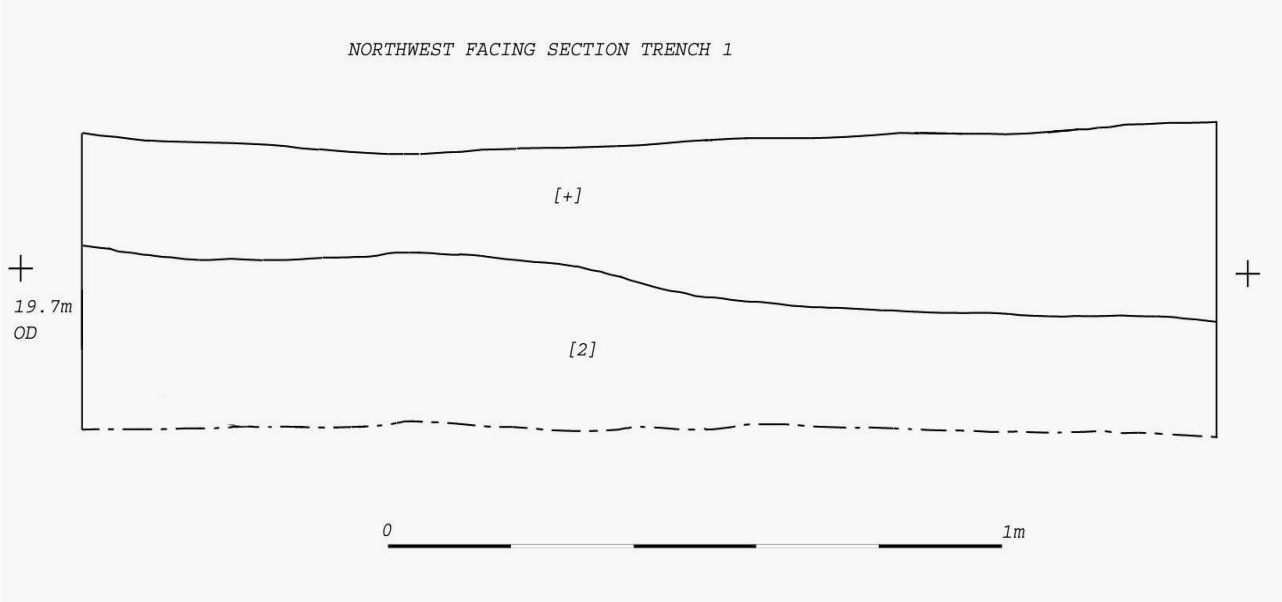


Fig 5 Part of the northwest facing section of Trench 1





Fig 6 View of the deposits shown in Figure 5 (*0.5m scale*)

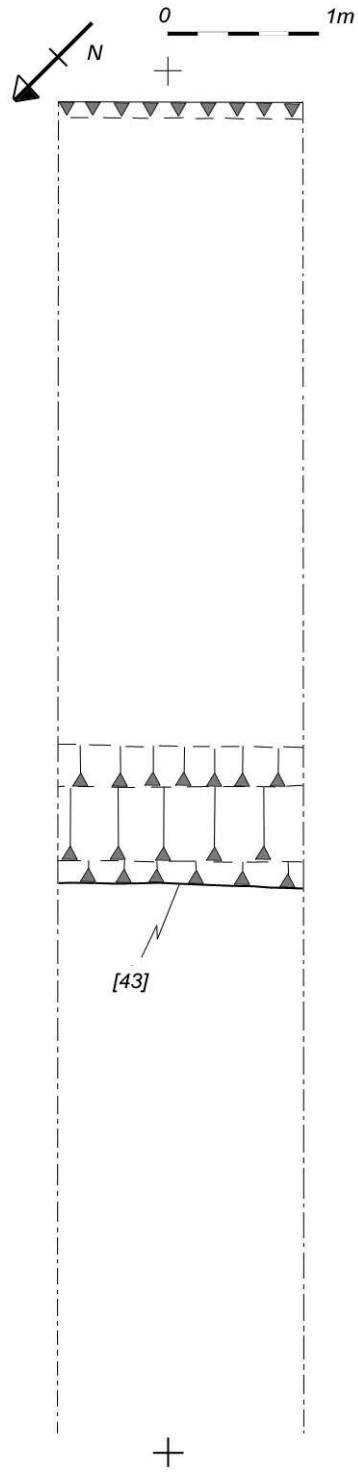


Fig 7 Plan of rear of evaluation Trench 3 showing cut [43]





Fig 8 Evaluation trench 3, view looking southeast after surface cleaning (*0.5m scale*)



NORTH FACING SECTION TRENCH 3

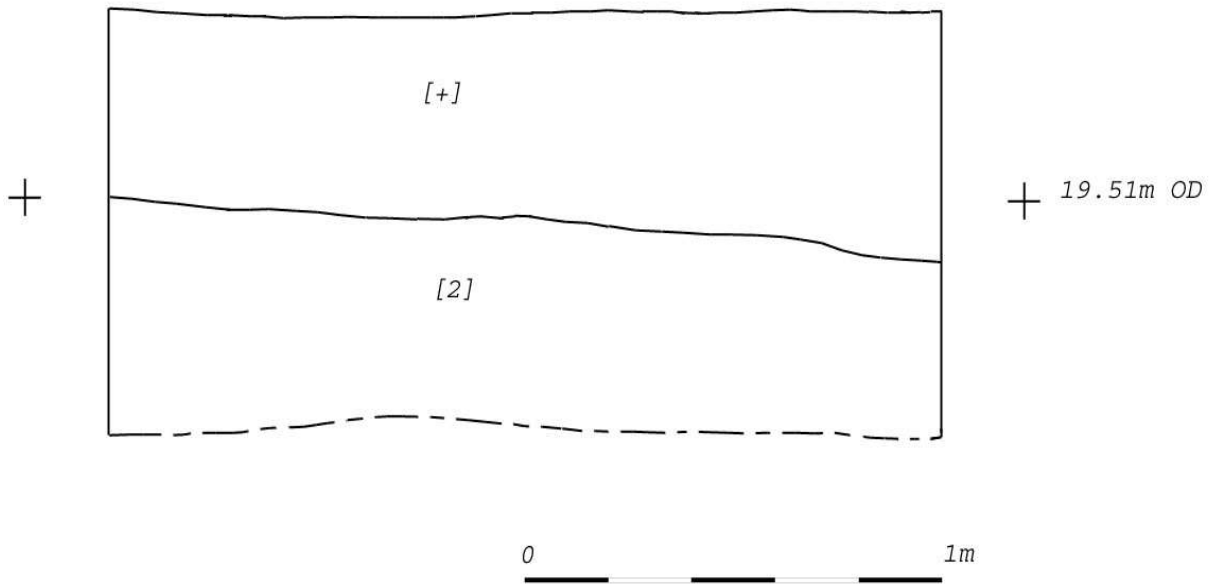


Fig 9 View of deposits contained within Trench 3



Fig 10 View of deposits shown as shown in Fig 9 (0.5m scale)





Fig 11 View of cross-section of post-medieval pit [43] as shown in plan in fig 7

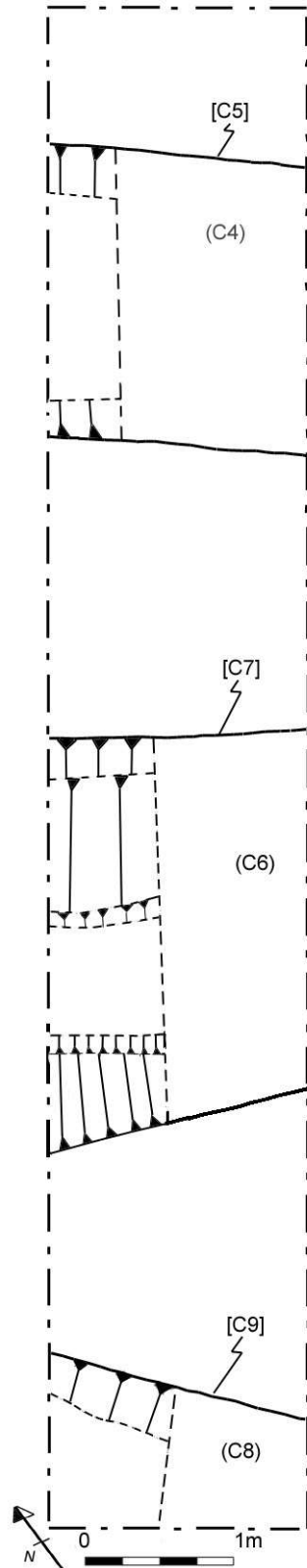


Fig 12 View in plan of cut features uncovered in Evaluation Trench 2





Fig 13 View of cut features in Evaluation Trench 2 as detailed in fig 12 (*0.5m scale*)



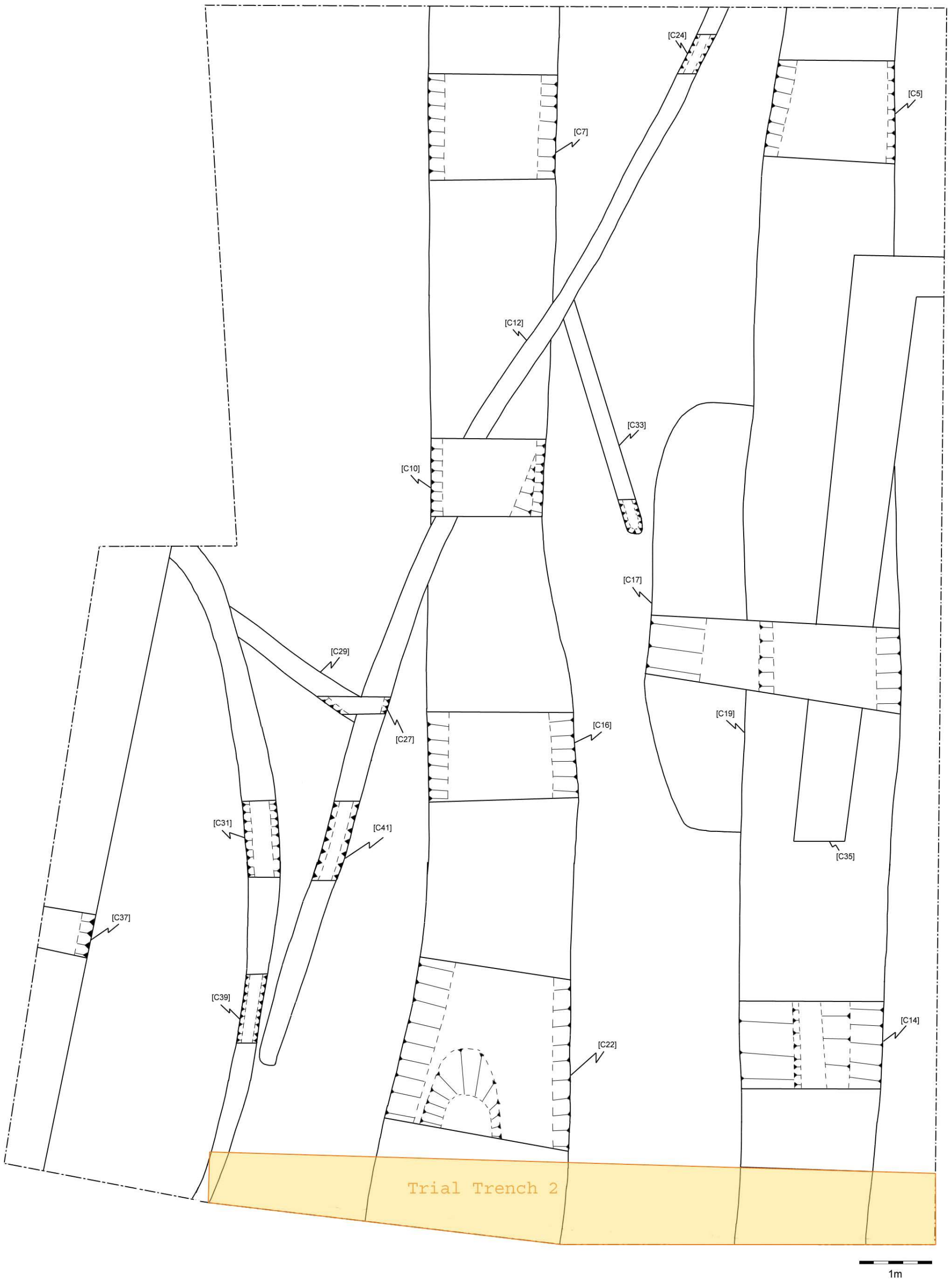


Fig 14 View of cut features in the extended area of Trench 2





Fig 15 Pre-excavation view of features in the extended area of Trench 2



Fig 16 View of deposits in the northern ditch [5]



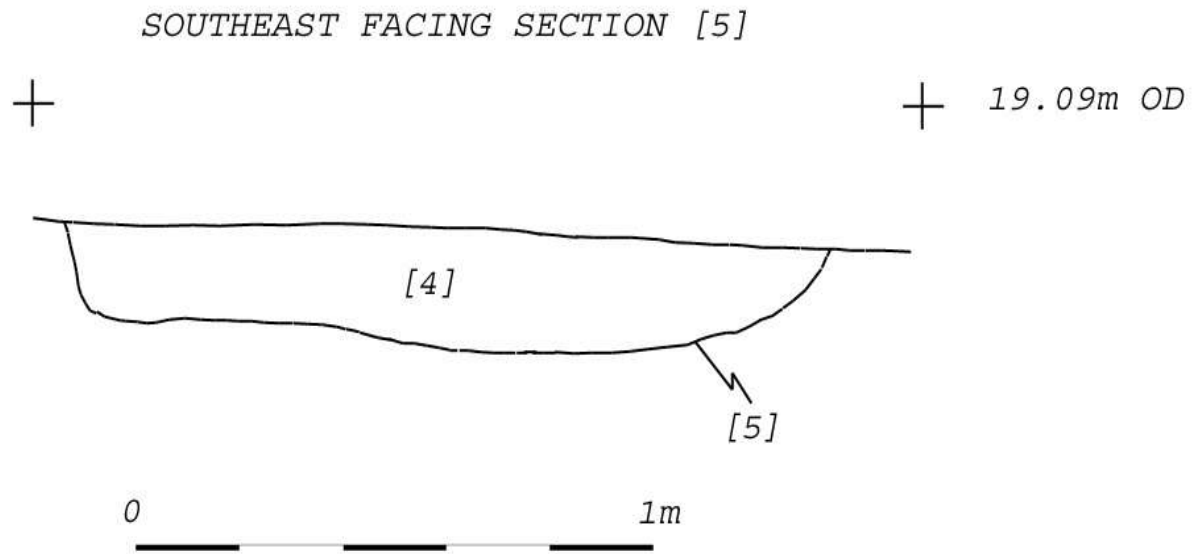


Fig 17 Southeast facing section of ditch [5]



Fig 18 View of northwest facing section of southern ditch [16]

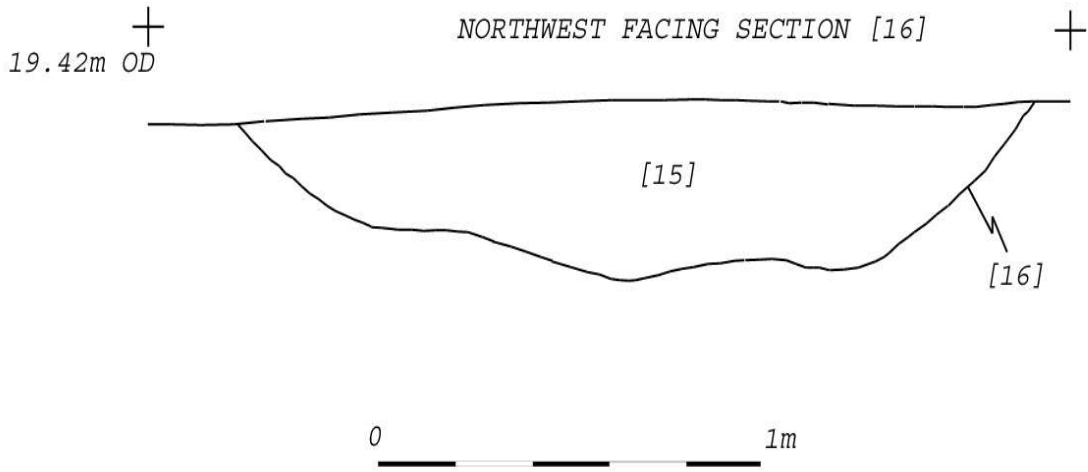


Fig 19 View of deposits in northwest facing ditch [16]



Fig 20 View of deposits in southern ditch [49]



SOUTH - EAST FACING SECTION

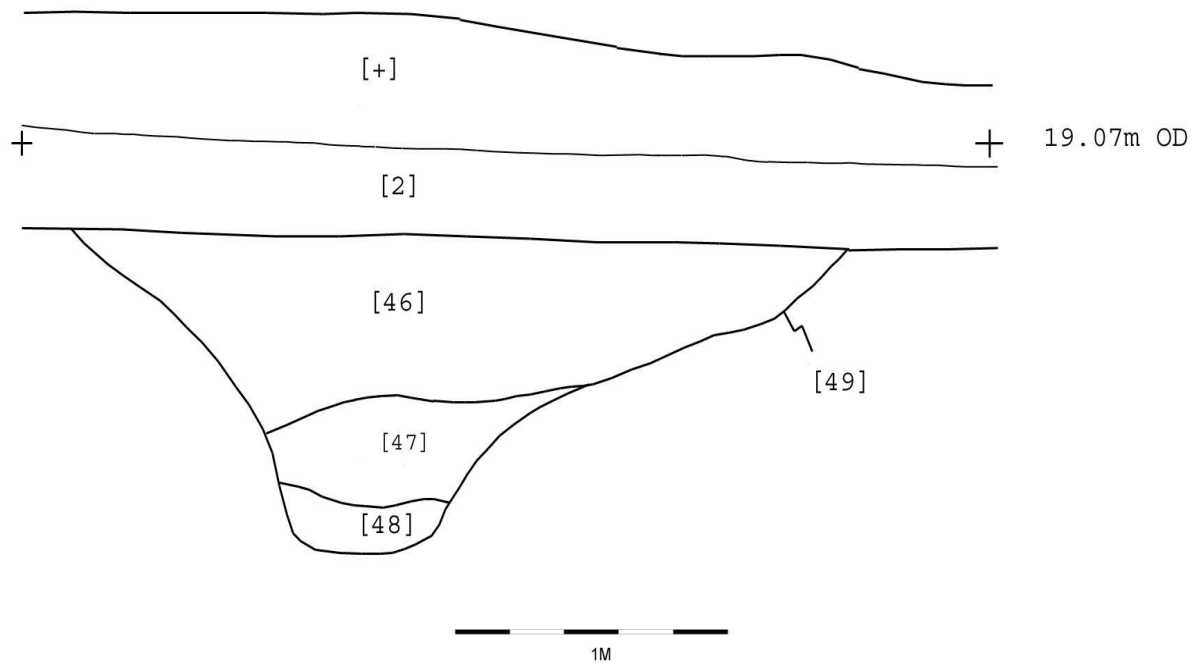


Fig 21 View of deposits in [49] as detailed in fig 20



Fig 22 Post-excavation shot of Trench 2 looking northwest





Fig 23 Fragment of Roman combed flue tile from context [21] (*see Appendix II*)

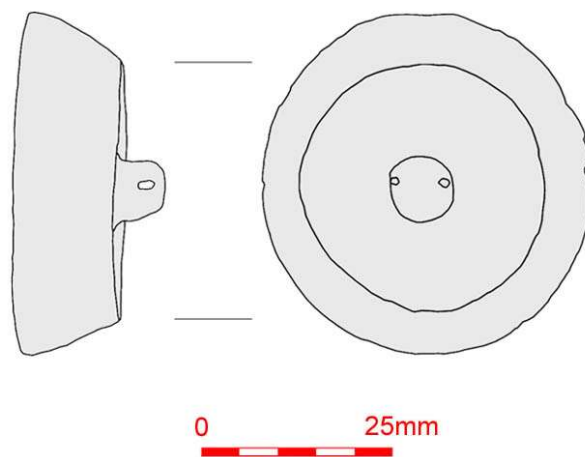


Fig 24 Illustration of lead weight <1> from machine clearance (*see Appendix III*)



Fig 25 View of front elevation of number 389



Fig 26 View of rear elevation of number 389





Fig 27 View of staircase design in number 389 taken from first floor



Fig 28 View of staircase design in number 389 looking toward ground floor





Fig 29 View of front elevation of number 391



Fig 30 View of front elevation of number 393



Fig 31 View of staircase design in number 393 taken from first floor



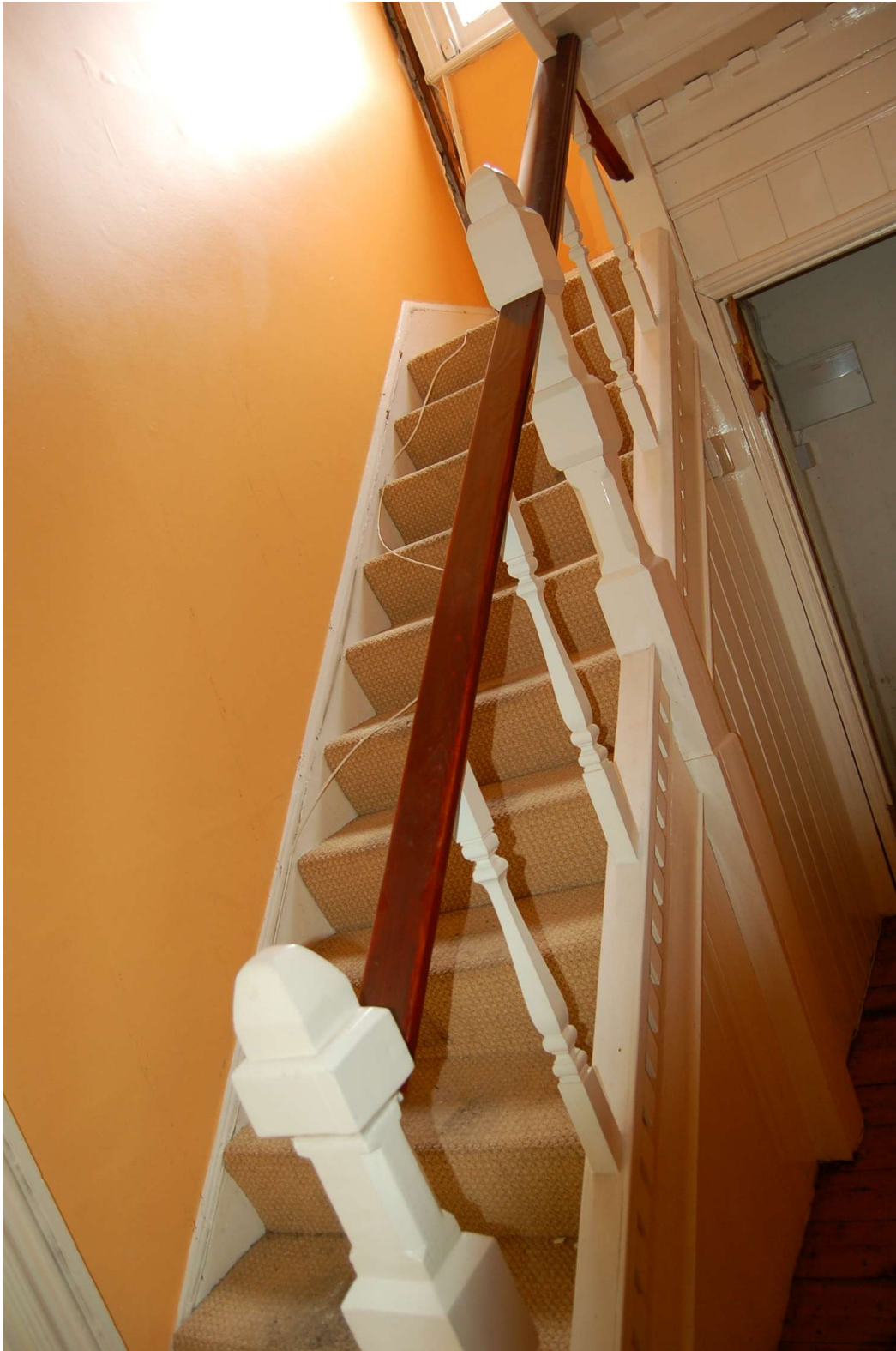


Fig 32 View of staircase in number 393 taken from ground floor



Fig 33 View of rear elevations of numbers 393 and 391



Fig 34 19<sup>th</sup> century photograph on glass and in a part-gilded brass frame <5>, found during metal detecting of the upper soil horizon [+]. Shown actual size (see *Appendix V*)

## **Appendix VI London Archaeologist summary**

389-393 London Road, Mitcham CR4. TQ 2730 6819. CA (Colin Reid). Evaluation & excavation. Sept.-Nov. 2006. Collier Contracts Ltd. LMY 06

### ***Summary***

Three trial trenches were investigated in areas of proposed redevelopment, followed by further excavation. The removal of fairly recent reworked soil horizons revealed two large parallel ditches running northwest to southeast and about 2.5m apart. These are approximately dated by backfilling to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, although both features also produced some residual 11<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> century pottery. Other features included some smaller and probably post-medieval drainage ditches and a mid 19<sup>th</sup> century watercourse.

Archaeological features were generally truncated at the level of the underlying natural River Terrace sand and gravels.