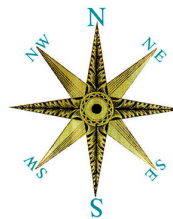


**THAMES WATER ENGINEERING WORKS OPPOSITE
Nº. 2 STATION ROAD
SOUTH WIMBLEDON, SW19 2LP
LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

January 2009



COMPASS



ARCHAEOLOGY

**THAMES WATER ENGINEERING WORKS OPPOSITE
Nº. 2 STATION ROAD
SOUTH WIMBLEDON, SW19 2LP
LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON
AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL WATCHING BRIEF**

SITE CODE: TZE 08

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January 2009

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Abstract

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken during Thames Water repair works on a 42" trunk main in the carriageway opposite No. 2 Station Road, South Wimbledon, London Borough of Merton. The document forms a response to recommendations made by the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS), English Heritage, for a watching brief to take place during the excavation of a single trench dug as part of the maintenance works. The work took place from 24th to 27th November 2008.

The site lies within the precinct of the medieval Merton Priory, a short distance to the west of the associated Scheduled Ancient Monument, and just to the northwest of the projected line of on the Roman Stane Street. It is also within the Archaeological Priority Area of the post-medieval Merton Place. The works were located on the south side of Station Road, immediately southeast of the junction with Abbey Road and outside Leigh Garage. Excavation took place close to the kerb line from a present surface level of about 14.9m OD, and were approximately located at TQ 26265 69890. A single trench c 3.2m x 2.8m in plan was excavated to a depth of 3.24m below the existing road surface.

No significant archaeological features or finds were exposed. Initial excavation revealed a probable previous road surface, chiefly represented by a deposit of compacted red and yellow stock brick rubble immediately below the present road makeup layers. Below this deposit of rubble was a mottled grey and black clay deposit, merging into reworked alluvium: to the south both deposits were cut by a surface water drain. Beneath this drain the trunk water main backfill was clearly visible, itself cutting into the reworked alluvium and natural deposits to the north. The natural consisted of yellow brown silty clay – apparently undisturbed alluvium – rather than the Terrace Gravels that are shown to underlie modern made ground on the Geological Survey.

The trench lay in close proximity to a recorded wall and other masonry features, possibly related to Merton Priory or to the later southern boundary of Merton Place. However, there was no evidence of walling or masonry within the trench. The area was heavily truncated by the existing water main, and to the north reworked deposits were replaced below a depth of c 1.5m by sterile alluvium with no archaeological finds or features.

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1. Introduction

This report describes the results of an archaeological watching brief undertaken in Station Road, South Wimbledon, from 24th to 27th November 2008. The site was located along the southern kerb of the carriageway opposite No. 2 Station Road and immediately southeast of the junction with Abbey Road. The watching brief took place during repair works to a 42" trunk main.

2. Acknowledgements

The archaeological watching brief was commissioned by Claudia Innes of the Ecology and Heritage Team, Thames Water Utilities Ltd., whilst the on-site works were undertaken by Morrison Utility Services. In view of the archaeological potential a watching brief was recommended by English Heritage, Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS).

3. Site Location and Geology

3.1 The site lies in the carriageway on the south side of Station Road, at a present surface level of about 14.9m OD and approximately located at TQ 26265 69890.

3.2 The natural ground surface in this area is recorded as a River Terrace Deposit (Kempton Park Gravel) by the British Geological Survey (Sheet 270). In fact a clean, sterile clay or alluvium was exposed to the limit of excavation, disturbed and mixed at the upper horizon with overlying backfill but clearly not the gravels indicated by the Geological Survey. Previous archaeological excavation on land bordered by High Street Colliers Wood, to the northeast of the study site, exposed natural sand and gravels between 10.00m and 10.60m OD (CCC97). Other closer investigations just to the east of the Wandle (for example on the Abbey Mills site) also show a considerable depth of alluvium overlying the Terrace Gravels.



Fig 1: Eastward view from High Path with the site and (to the right) Leigh Garage in the background.



Fig 2: The site location, Borough-defined Areas of Archaeological Priority and Merton Priory Scheduled Ancient Monument, in relation to the Ordnance Survey 1:10 000 map.

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4. Archaeological and Historical Background

The site lies within, and in close proximity to, areas of archaeological priority as defined by the London Borough of Merton Unitary Development Plan, and just to the west of a Scheduled Ancient Monument defined by English Heritage. Figure 2 shows the site location in relation to these areas, the details of which are reproduced below:

4.1 APA 18: Merton Place

“Built around 1700, between the village of Merton and the River Wandle – possibly on the site of an earlier, medieval, moated structure. The house is noted as being the only house owned by Admiral Nelson who converted the moat into a garden feature and called it ‘The Nile’. It was demolished by 1823. The nineteenth-century estate included parts of the medieval Merton Grange lands, and the former site of Merton Priory’s dovehouse.” (Merton UDP and Supplementary Planning Note: Archaeology, 2003).

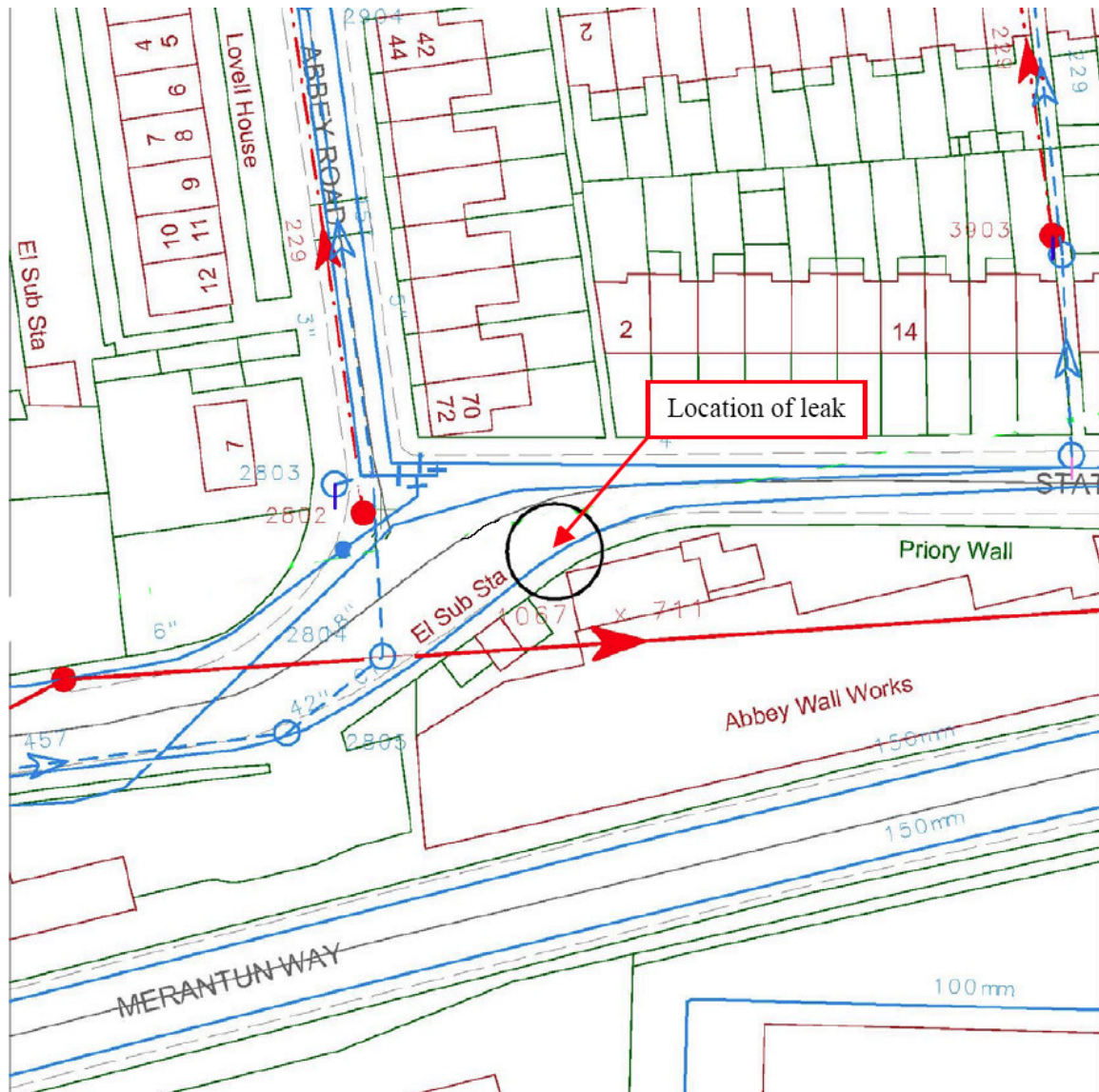


Fig 3: Site location plan provided by Thames Water Utilities.

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APA 13: Stane Street

“The line of an important Roman road, crossing the Borough between Colliers Wood and Pylford Bridge. The route of the road is preserved in part by modern streets (High Street Colliers Wood, and parts of London Road, Morden – both parts of the A24), although it appears to have taken a more direct route across Wandle Valley than the present A24 (which runs to the north through Merton).” (Merton UDP and Supplementary Planning Note: Archaeology, 2003).

4.2 Scheduled Ancient Monument: Merton Priory

“The Scheduled area covers the church and domestic buildings of the Augustinian Priory of St. Mary, founded in 1114 and demolished in 1540. It also covers an area subsequently used for calico printing after demolition of the Priory, including the old

Liberty Print Works. Extensive archaeological investigations were undertaken on part of this site, prior to the development of the adjoining hypermarket and Merantun Way in the late 1980s.” (Merton UDP and Supplementary Planning Note: Archaeology, 2003).

Further detail on these areas of archaeological interest is provided below along with an outline of the local historic development, and consequently an assessment of the potential for archaeological remains.

4.3 Prehistoric

Relatively little prehistoric evidence has been recorded in this area, and it is likely that early activity consisted of nomadic hunting with little permanent settlement. A limited number of prehistoric ‘findspots’ are recorded, largely stone tools discovered in the 19th century. Approximately 500m to the east of the study site, at Kings College Sports Ground, excavations in 1989 produced Neolithic to Bronze Age pottery, along with Bronze Age ditches and a possible Iron Age enclosure.

4.4 Roman

The most significant aspect of Roman occupation in the vicinity is the alignment of the major thoroughfare known as Stane Street. The road alignment and the immediate hinterland are identified as an Archaeological Priority Area by the Borough UDP (see 4.1 and Figure 2 above). The closest evidence for the road itself was found during excavations on land bordered by High Street Colliers Wood, Christchurch Road and The Pickle in 1998, some 400m to the northeast (CCC97). The road was exposed as layers of gravel, flint and sand, its upper level at 10.47m to 10.71m OD and with a ditch containing 1st to 3rd century pottery. It formed a more or less flat surface approximately 16m in width with raised banks, and although different from typical ‘cambered’ construction this may indicate a causeway through low-lying areas close to the river.

These excavations exposed the only local evidence for Stane Street, but in conjunction with the general alignment can be used to project the road line across the site of Merton Priory and on southwest towards Morden. Excavations of the Priory site (notably between 1986-2002) produced no evidence for the actual road, but large quantities of residual Roman material were recovered including pottery and building material. These finds suggest that some form of settlement associated with the road in this area, but no firm evidence for structural remains has been found to date.

4.5 Saxon

The first documentary evidence for Merton appears in the 7th century, and indicates some level of settlement. The place name is thought to derive from ‘the farm by the pond’ or ‘Maera’s homestead.’ The Domesday Survey of 1086 lists *Meretone*, but archaeological evidence for the period is slim – sarcophagi recorded on Station Road in the 1970s are now thought to be medieval in date, probably contemporary with Merton Priory. However, the Priory excavations produced a number of residual Saxon finds including antler artefacts and chaff tempered pottery.

4.6 Medieval

The most significant aspect of this period is the 12th century Merton Priory, excavated at various stages from the early 1920s through to the major MoL projects from the mid 1980s to 2002. The Priory was founded in 1114 by Gilbert the Norman, Sheriff of Surrey, and flourished until the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII in 1538.

The 1920s excavations by Colonel F Bidder revealed the location and ground plan of the Church and Chapter House. The latter was fully excavated between the 1970s and 1983, along with a section of cloister walk and part of the infirmary. The MoL excavations of 1980s and early 1990s concentrated on the church, cemeteries, cloister range and infirmary, while the most recent excavations revealed the monastic mill, fishpond, roads and other buildings.



Fig 4: View of the ‘Norman-Jacobean’ gateway on the south side of Station Road: it was rebuilt in its current location during the construction of the A24.

The full extent of the Priory precinct is unknown although parts of possibly associated walls still stand. Sections of wall within the precinct and on the south side of Station Road are also listed as a Building of Historical Interest Grade II, as defined by English Heritage and the Borough UDP. In addition, the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey 25” map (surveyed 1866) clearly shows ‘Arches’ to the immediate southwest of the study site. An extract of this map, reproduced in Heales (1898 – *The Records of Merton Priory*) annotate these as ‘*recesses in wall*’ suggesting some kind of blind arcade. The precinct wall itself appears to have run further west and south along the line of Abbey Road and High Path, and it is unlikely that the arches belong to this particular structure. Whether they are contemporary with the Priory is unclear: Station Road

itself may have originated as a medieval track approaching the priory, with its own lining wall. However, there is no secure date for the remains and they may be significantly later, possibly associated with the 18th century Merton Estate (see below). The ‘Gateway’ also shown on the 1866 map to the east of the present site is annotated in Heales as ‘*Doorway in 17th Century Wall*’ (Figure 4).

4.7 Post-medieval

Following the dissolution of the monasteries the Priory site passed through many hands, the buildings largely destroyed, and by the 17th century was commonly known as Merton Abbey. It appears that the present site remained open until the expansion of the area in the early/mid 19th century. However, much of the land including along the banks of the River Wandle flourished as industrial premises from the 17th century onwards. Textiles, and specifically calico-printing, became the established industry from the 1720s.

Prior to 19th century development the site lay within the Merton Place estate (see 4.1 above). This was probably established around 1700 and from *c* 1750 held a house known as Moat House Farm. The estate’s most notable association is to Admiral Horatio Nelson, who owned the property from 1801 until his death in 1805 at Trafalgar: it then passed to Emma Hamilton who retained it until her own death in 1815. The house and grounds remained unused until 1823 when the property was torn down and much of the land sold off in parcels.

Most of the area remained open until well in to the 19th century, and while industry brought some development this was concentrated east of the study site – as can be seen on the Tithe Map of 1844 (not illustrated). This map does show High Path to the west, but terminating short of its current eastern end and turning southeast. It was not until the latter half of the 19th century that the study area began to develop, with the arrival in the 1860s of a branch of the Tooting, Merton and Wimbledon Railway. The track ran immediately south of the site and can be seen on the Ordnance Survey Map of 1866, with an accompanying development to the surrounding area and the first appearance of Station Road. To the north/northwest of the site, in Nelson’s Fields, development increased rapidly into the 20th century, but to the south the land remained undeveloped, as shown by the OS Edition of 1913.

4.8 Modern

The branch line to Merton Abbey Station suffered severely from lessening demand and in 1926 passenger services were suspended, although goods trains continued to operate until 1975 when the line was closed. In the early 1990s the route of the former railway was used in the construction of Merantun Way (A24), designed to relieve traffic congestion on Merton High Street.

The site is currently bounded by residential properties to the north and commercial premises to the south adjacent to Merantun Way.

5. Objectives of the Watching Brief

This fieldwork presented an opportunity to address several research questions:

- Is there any evidence for prehistoric activity on the site?
- Is there any evidence for Roman activity on the site – specifically activity in relation to Stane Street, activity adjacent or associated with the road or further settlement evidence?
- Is there any evidence for post-Roman activity?
- Is there any evidence for medieval activity – specifically in relation to nearby Merton Abbey from the 12th – 16th centuries?
- Is there any evidence for post-medieval activity – possibly in relation to the Nelson estate in the early 19th century?
- Is there any evidence for the masonry wall (including arches or recesses) that is recorded here in the 19th century, and can this be dated to either the medieval or post-medieval period?

6. The Archaeological Programme

6.1 Background

The field and post-excavation work was carried out in accordance with English Heritage guidelines (in particular, *Standards and Practices in Archaeological Fieldwork, Guidance Paper 3*).

Works also conformed to the standards of the Institute of Field Archaeologists (Standard and Guidance for Archaeological Watching Briefs). Overall management of the project was undertaken by a full Member of the Institute.

6.2 Fieldwork

6.2.1 Attendance

The archaeological watching brief took place during the contractors' groundworks and involved one archaeologist on site to monitor the groundworks and to investigate and record any archaeological remains. English Heritage were advised beforehand of the on-site start date.

6.2.2 Methodology

A Written Scheme of Investigation for an Archaeological Watching Brief was agreed prior to commencement of the fieldwork. The groundworks were monitored and recorded in accordance with procedures set out in the Museum of London recording manual, by agreement the recording and drawing sheets used being directly

compatible with those developed by the Museum. The fieldwork was supplemented as appropriate by photography, and individual elements were recorded on drawings and by *pro-forma* trench record sheets.

6.3 Post-Excavation Work

The fieldwork was followed by off-site assessment and compilation of this report.

6.3.1 Finds and samples

No finds or samples were retained from the watching brief.

6.3.2 Report procedure

Copies of this report will be supplied to the Client, English Heritage, and the local studies library. The level of reporting was determined by the results of the fieldwork. A short summary of the fieldwork is appended using the OASIS Data Collection Form, and in paragraph form suitable for publication within the 'excavation round-up' of the *London Archaeologist*.

6.3.3 The site archive

The records from the archaeological project will be ordered in line with Museum of London *Guidelines for the Preparation of Archaeological Archives* and will be deposited in the Museum of London Archaeological Archive.



Fig 5: View looking east along the south side of Station Road, with the groundworks in the foreground.

7. The Archaeological Watching Brief

The Thames Water groundworks were monitored by an archaeologist from the 24th to 27th November 2008. The level of recording was determined by the nature of the exposed deposits beneath the recent road makeup layers. As these deposits were quite straightforward, and negative for any archaeological material, a simplified recording method was employed. During monitoring exposed deposits were recorded under a set of required elements on a 'Trench Record Sheet', and supplemented with a location plan and photography. The standard recorded elements constituted length, width and depth of excavations (in metres), location, orientation, brief description and dimensions of exposed deposits, and methods/conditions. Detailed photographs were taken with an appropriately sized scale, and in general covered a section and overall trench shots as well as several wider location views.



Fig 6: An oblique view of the south-facing section showing the possible earlier road surface beneath the tarmac and the underlying silty alluvial deposit.



Fig 7: The west-facing section showing the storm water drain and associated sandy fill, cut into the backfill of the larger and much deeper trunk main (scale 1m).



Fig 8: The trench after initially exposing the water main, seen here to the right of the picture.

The trench measured *c* 3.2m x 2.8m in plan, on an approximate northeast-southwest alignment running into the southern pavement. To the north, tarmac overlay a thin deposit of sand and shingle while to the south, tarmac overlay a sand bedding. Directly below this sandy deposit was the backfill for a ceramic storm water drain that lay at a depth of about 0.85m, and which cut into the upper fills of the 42'' trunk main. Immediately to the north of this the present road make-up overlay a possible previous road surface, which was observed at a depth of 0.22m and which now acted as the base for the road above. This deposit consisted mainly of red and yellow stock brick with inclusions of chalk and gravel, and presumably dates to the late 19th century.

Beneath the road makeup and rubble deposits lay a dark green grey silty clay alluvium, disturbed and with ceramic building material, stone and gravel inclusions. This became cleaner and lighter with depth, merging to a weathered but fairly homogeneous and sterile horizon and then – at a depth of about 1.5m – to a natural dark yellow clay.



Fig 9: A post-excavation picture showing the exposed 42'' trunk main (*1m scale*).

The natural deposit of firm sterile clay may also represent an alluvial deposit. It was observed continuing to the base of the trench, at *c* 3.24m below the existing road

surface. Despite its proximity to the trench, no evidence was found during the watching brief for the continuation of the historic wall or for the possibly associated arches or recesses that appear on the 1866 OS map. However, any remains may well have been cleared from this area during the excavations for the trunk water main, which occupied all but the northern part of the trench to a depth well below the natural ground surface.

8. Assessment of the Results of the Watching Brief

The archaeological evaluation provided an opportunity to address site-specific objectives as defined within the preliminary Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI). The responses to these are outlined below:

- *Is there any evidence for prehistoric activity on the site?*

Throughout the watching brief no evidence or finds material relating to prehistoric activity was uncovered.

- *Is there any evidence for Roman activity on the site – specifically activity in relation to Stane Street, activity adjacent or associated with the road or further settlement evidence?*

There was no evidence for Roman activity, either *in situ* features or residual finds.

- *Is there any evidence for post-Roman activity?*
- *Is there any evidence for medieval activity – specifically in relation to nearby Merton Abbey from the 12th – 16th centuries?*

There was no evidence for any post-Roman to earlier post-medieval activity, and certainly no finds or remains related to the Priory.

- *Is there any evidence for post-medieval activity – possibly in relation to the Nelson estate in the early 19th century?*
- *Is there any evidence for the masonry wall (including arches or recesses) that is recorded here in the 19th century, and can this be dated to either the medieval or post-medieval period?*

There was no evidence for former masonry structures, or for deposits or features (other than natural alluvium) predating the construction of Station Road in the mid 19th century.

9. Conclusion

No significant archaeological deposits were found during groundworks for the repair works on the 42" trunk main on Station Road, London Borough of Merton. Despite the proximity to prominent archaeological sites, and also the specific record of masonry features, there were no *in situ* or disturbed remains. This may simply reflect the nature of the excavated trench, which was relatively small as well as largely truncated by the cut for the trunk main and infilled with the associated and subsequent service backfills.

10. References

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Merton Tithe Map, 1844.

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Ordnance Survey Map, Edition of 1913.

Ordnance Survey 1:2500 Map, 1954.

Plan of Merton Estate: Merton Historical Society

Appendix I: Oasis Data Collection Form

OASIS ID:

Project details

Project name	Thames Water Engineering Works opposite No. 2 Station Road, London Borough of Merton, An Archaeological Watching Brief
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief took place outside Leigh Garage, in the south carriageway of Station Road and onto the southern kerb, during repair works to a 42" trunk main. No significant finds or features of archaeological importance were observed, and most of the area was truncated by the existing main, although stratified alluvial deposits were recorded on the northern side of the trench.
Project dates	Start: 24-11-2008 End: 27-11-2008
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	TZE 08 – Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Transport and Utilities 1 – Highways and road transport

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON MERTON WIMBLEDON AND MERTON Thames Water Repair Works opposite No. 2 Station Road, South Wimbledon
Postcode	SW19 2LP
Study area	9.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 2626 6989 51.41 -0.19 51 24 36 N 000 11 24 W Point
Lat/Long Datum	Unknown
Height OD / Depth	Min: 11.66m Max: 14.90m

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	Jonathan Henckert
Type of sponsor /funding body	Thames Water Utilities

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive Exists?	Yes
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London archive
Digital Archive ID	TZE08
Digital Contents	'other'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography'
Paper Archive Exists?	Yes
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London Archive
Paper Archive ID	TZE08
Paper Contents	'stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet', 'Drawing', 'Miscellaneous material', 'Plan', 'Report'

Project bibliography

1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Thames Water Engineering Works Opposite No. 2 Station Road, South Wimbledon, London Borough of Merton, An Archaeological Watching Brief
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Henckert, J
Date	2009
Issuer or publisher	Compass Archaeology
Place of issue or publication	5-7 Southwark Street SE1 1RQ
Description	15 page bound report detailing an archaeological watching brief.
Entered by	Jonathan Henckert (mail@compassarchaeology.co.uk)
Entered on	29 January 2009

Appendix II: London Archaeologist Summary

Site Address: Carriageway opposite No. 2 Station Road, South Wimbledon
SW19 2LP

NGR: TQ 2626 6989

Supervisor: Jonathan Henckert

Project type: Watching Brief

Dates of Fieldwork: 24 – 27 November 2008

Funding Body: Thames Water Utilities Ltd.

Site Code: TZE 08

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken during Thames Water Utilities repair works on a 42" trunk main on the south side of Station Road. No significant deposits or remains were found, despite the proximity to prominent archaeological sites and also a record of masonry structures in the immediate area. The excavated trench was limited in size and was mostly occupied by the cut for the existing trunk main and associated backfills. However, disturbed alluvial deposits merging to a clean sterile clay were recorded to the north.