

**An Archaeological Evaluation  
on Land Adjacent to  
4, Christchurch Way  
London Borough of Greenwich  
SE10 9AJ**

**NGR 53925 17838  
(TQ 3925 7838)**

**Project No: 4673  
Site Code: CKJ11**

**ASE Report No: 2011107  
OASIS ID: archaeol6-102023**

**by Diccon Hart  
with illustrations by Fiona Griffin**

**May 2011**

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**Archaeology South-East  
Units 1 & 2  
2 Chapel Place  
Portslade  
East Sussex  
BN41 1DR**

**Tel: 01273 426830  
Fax: 01273 420866  
Email: [fau@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:fau@ucl.ac.uk)**

## **Abstract**

*Archaeology South East was commissioned by McCulloch Homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to 4, Christchurch Way, London Borough of Greenwich in advance of the redevelopment of the site. The evaluation comprised the excavation of a single trial trench measuring 13m by 1.9m.*

*The natural geology, consisting of fine yellow sand was encountered between 1.27m and 1.31m AOD. This was sealed by a layer of alluvium, in turn overlain by a layer of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century topsoil. A sequence of 20<sup>th</sup> century made ground capped the sequence*

*No archaeological features were observed.*

## **CONTENTS**

- 1.0 Introduction**
- 2.0 Archaeological Background**
- 3.0 Archaeological Methodology**
- 4.0 Results**
- 5.0 The Finds**
- 6.0 Discussion**

**Acknowledgements**  
**Bibliography**

**SMR Summary Sheet**  
**OASIS Summary Form**

## **FIGURES**

- Figure 1: Site Location
- Figure 2: Trench location
- Figure 3: Sample sections and photographs of Trench 1

## **TABLES**

- Table 1: Archive quantification
- Table 2: List of recorded contexts

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Site Background**

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE) a division of the UCL Institute of Archaeology Centre for Applied Archaeology, was commissioned by McCulloch homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to 4, Christchurch Way, London Borough of Greenwich in advance of the redevelopment of the site. The site is centred on NGR TQ 3920 7830 and its location is shown in Figure 1.

### **1.2 Geology and Topography**

- 1.2.1 The British Geological Survey Map (sheet 270) indicates that the site lies on river terrace gravels, overlain by alluvium. In addition, recent geotechnical investigations (K.F. geotechnical 2010) indicate that this sequence is overlain by a sequence of made ground.
- 1.2.2 The site is currently occupied by disused garages and associated hardstanding, with existing residential developments to the south, north and east. The site is bounded to the west by Christchurch Way itself.

### **1.3 Planning Background**

- 1.3.1 Planning permission has been granted for the demolition of the existing garages and the erection of three dwellings on the site (Application Reference Number: 10/0490/F), subject to conditions. Condition 10 states

*“No development shall take place until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme for investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by Local Planning Authority. The development shall only take place in accordance with the detailed scheme pursuant to this condition. The archaeological works shall be carried out by a suitable qualified investigating body acceptable to the Local Planning Authority.”*

REASON: In order to safeguard and preserve archaeological remains likely to otherwise be damaged by the development of this site and to ensure compliance with Policies D30 and D31 of the Unitary Development Plan 2006.

- 1.3.2 A *Written Scheme of Investigation* (WSI) outlining the requirements and scope of the archaeological work was duly prepared by Archaeology South-East (ASE 2010) and approved by the Greater London archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS). All work was carried out in accordance with this document and with the relevant Standards and Guidance papers issued by GLAAS and the Institute for Archaeologists (GLAAS 2009; IfA 2009).

## **1.4 Aims and Objectives**

1.4.1 The aims of the archaeological investigation were set out in the relevant *Written Schemes of Investigation* and are herewith reproduced in full below.

1.4.2 The general aims of the archaeological evaluation were:

- To establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the footprint of the proposed development
- To determine the extent and minimum depth below modern ground level of any archaeological remains
- To determine the nature and significance of any archaeological remains
- To report on the results of the archaeological evaluation

1.4.3 The specific aims of the evaluation were:

- To determine the presence of Bronze Age remains. Specific objectives to be addressed in the London Research Framework are:
  1. “Understanding the relationship between the wooden trackways in the floodplain and the settlements to which they presumably led. What was happening in the areas between the wetlands and the settlements? What light do the trackways shed on woodcraft and woodland management?” (Para 4, P5)
  2. “Absolute dating should be routine on all prehistoric sites” (Para 1, TC1)
- It is probable that the location of the site was underwater during the Saxon period and it is therefore unlikely that archaeological remains of this period will be discovered. However, the project will look to address the Framework objective:
  3. “Studying the tidal regime of the River Thames and its influences on settlement, communications and social interaction” (Para 2, S2)
- Is there any evidence for land reclamation such as revetments/drainage during the medieval/post-medieval periods? Specific Research Framework objectives include:
  4. “Understanding the influence of the environment on human habitation, and the impact of man on the environment” (Para 1, M2)
- To determine the presence of medieval and post-medieval structural remains. Particularly, when did the site become habitable? Is there any evidence for the affluent development of the 17<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> centuries? Specifically, with reference to the Research Framework:
  5. “Considering the tension between private and civic enterprise, and the use and influence of power – by monarchs, governments and military authority – in urbanism and infrastructure” (Para 5, M5)

## **1.5 Scope of Report**

- 1.5.1 This report details the results of the archaeological evaluation of the site. The work was undertaken on the 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> May 2011 by Diccon Hart (senior Archaeologist. Project Management was undertaken by Andy Leonard (fieldwork) and Jim Stevenson (post-excavation management). The illustrations were prepared by Fiona Griffin.

## **2.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1 Introduction**

- 2.1.1 The archaeological background of the site was outlined in the Written Scheme of Investigation (ASE 2010) and is reproduced here in full.

### **2.2 Prehistoric (500,000BC – 43AD)**

- 2.2.1 The geology of the site and conditions often associated with prehistoric settlements, being situated close to reliable and often navigable sources of water and demonstrating good drainage. The floodplain gravels at Deptford Broadway have yielded some Palaeolithic flint tools although most stone tools (including a tranchet axe and pick) date to the Mesolithic or Neolithic periods.
- 2.2.2 Late Neolithic and Bronze Age timber trackways have been found at several locations on both sides of the river, within the floodplain peat. Most relevant to this site is the site excavated at 72-88 Bellot Street aligned parallel to Christchurch Way, immediately to the east (PCA 2003), where a Bronze Age trackway was found preserved in a peat deposit (700mm thick) at -0.50mOD. Although the trackway is aligned north-south, and therefore unlikely to traverse the Christchurch Way site, it amply demonstrates the potential for prehistoric remains in the immediate vicinity of the site. That said, there is no evidence for peat or alluvium in the geotechnical data retrieved from the Christchurch Way site. There is little evidence for the presence of Iron Age deposits; only a saddle quern fragment from Deptford Broadway has so far been found near the site.

### **2.3 Roman**

- 2.3.1 The environs of Greenwich were not favourable for agricultural use in the Roman period, the Thames shoreline being predominantly marshland while to the south lay the Greenwich escarpment and the Blackheath/Woolwich plateau. Even on the higher ground little evidence for settlement has been discovered, probably due to the poor heathland soils.
- 2.3.2 A narrow band of Thanet Sand lay between the marsh and heath, however, and all the principal historic centres were located along this east-west aligned strip, from Greenwich in the west to Erith in the east. It is thought that these settlements would have been linked by a road (now the Woolwich Road) although this can only be proven to date as far back as the 11<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.3.3 Buildings of Roman date have been identified at Romney Road and within the grounds of the Royal Naval Hospital, where a tessellated pavement and Roman stakeholes were recorded at the Pypes Building. Within Greenwich Park, to the

southwest of the site, a Romano-Celtic temple complex was discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and re-examined in 1978. This is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Ref.: 28892). To the east of the park, and directly to the south of the site there is also evidence for a small Roman settlement.

- 2.3.4 Roman pottery and coins were discovered at Westcombe Park Road during 19<sup>th</sup> century construction works and at Vanburgh Park evidence for occupation and an earthwork were recorded about 900m to the southeast of the site. A Roman burial is listed in the area of Vanburgh Park and a Roman bronze bowl was discovered near the Observatory.
- 2.3.5 Further afield, to the south of Greenwich Park lay the Roman road, Watling Street, connecting Londinium to the south coast.

## **2.4 Saxon**

- 2.4.1 Greenwich is of Anglo Saxon origin and was held by the kings of Kent from at least the 7<sup>th</sup> century, initially under the rule of King Aethelbert (560-616). The name Greenwich is derived from the old English name 'Gronovic' or 'Grenevic', which roughly translated means the green port.
- 2.4.2 In 1862 four graves containing bronze objects of Early Saxon date were identified near the University and were probably part of a larger cemetery associated with the village of Greenwich. Within Greenwich Park itself, a cluster of barrows are known and have been investigated in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. These are of much higher status than those found near the University and have been scheduled (Ref.: 28893). A further 8 barrows have been noted further to the south and west, towards the Observatory and Croom's Hill.
- 2.4.3 During the later Saxon periods Greenwich lay within a rural landscape of scattered settlements based on agriculture although the heathland is likely to have dominated the area of the Greenwich escarpment to the south. The location of Greenwich at the bend in the Thames would also have given the area a military advantage, with aspects both up and downstream.
- 2.4.4 This military significance was demonstrated when Alfred, King Aethelred and the Norwegian Olaf defeated the Danish fleet which had sailed up the Ravensbourne shortly before 871. This royal interest appears to have continued throughout the Saxon period despite the carving up of some of the manors as marriage portions. Alfred and King Harold both maintained their residences there.
- 2.4.5 In the latter part of the 10<sup>th</sup> century the village probably developed around St Alphege's Church, now in the centre of modern Greenwich, although the manor's principal dwelling (the abbott's house) lay further to the east. Remains of this house have been excavated within the central court of the University in 1970-71.

## **2.5 Medieval**

- 2.5.1 By the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century Greenwich had become a significant settlement, thought to have centred on Church Street and Billingsgate Dock, extending towards the University to the east. Excavations at Cutty Sark station revealed that the ground was built up in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, probably for land reclamation, and the presence of 13<sup>th</sup> century pits cut into this make-up would



suggest the land was open and in use during this period.

- 2.5.2 After prolonged attacks by the Danes were finally quelled by Edward the Confessor Ghent Abbey was restored to the abbots of Ghent. The abbey lands generally prospered, with manorial accounts from 13<sup>th</sup> century showing a thriving estate. At this time the estate included cottages, barns, farms and extensive lands. It is thought that the manor house itself lay within the grounds of what is now the University and may well have its origins in the Saxon period although there is no archaeological evidence for this.
- 2.5.3 The manor of Greenwich reverted to Crown control in 1414 and was granted by Henry VI to his uncle Humphrey, Duke of Gloucester. Humphrey undertook major refurbishment of the house, calling it Bella Court. It lay close to where the west wing of the Naval College now stands, as was demonstrated by the 1970-1 excavations when remains of both the earlier Abbot's House and Bella Court were identified.
- 2.5.4 Humphrey also acquired 200 acres of Blackheath at around this time which he enclosed with a fence of wooden stakes, later to become Greenwich Park. At the site where the Royal Observatory now stands Humphrey also had a square fortress and tower built, designed to function as a lookout and defensive stronghold against attacks on London from both the Thames and by land from the south.
- 2.5.5 Following the death of the Duke of Gloucester in 1447 Bella Court passed to Henry VI's wife, Margaret of Anjou, who changed the name to 'Plesance'. The name 'Billingsgate Dock' is first mentioned in 1449 when work building materials began to arrive for the house under Margaret of Anjou's direction.
- 2.5.6 In 1480 Franciscan friars were established by Edward IV on land between the royal palace and the town, upon which they were granted permission to construct a house and associated buildings for their habitation. The great house was rebuilt by Henry VII and became the Palace of Placentia stretching from the Thames waterfront to the northern edge of the royal hunting park.
- 2.5.7 Henry VIII was born in Greenwich Palace and it was to remain a favourite of the king, being close to the naval dockyards he established at Deptford and Woolwich, and where he married Catherine of Aragon and Anne Boleyn. On the level ground at the foot of Greenwich escarpment he built armouries, a banqueting hall, a tiltyard with towers, and a gatehouse to the Park where he rebuilt the castle on the hill in 1526.
- 2.5.8 The Franciscan friars were undone following the Dissolution of the Monasteries when Henry had them all killed. Although Mary briefly had them reinstated, Elizabeth I finally had them expelled.

## **2.6 Post-Medieval**

- 2.6.1 Consequent of the royal favour shown by Henry VIII and Elizabeth I to the Palace of Placentia, the surrounding area saw the development of many affluent houses. However, following Elizabeth's death in 1603 the palace was neglected and the houses around it sold to speculators. A new house designed by Inigo Jones was commissioned by Queen Anne to the south of the old palace in the Palladian style which now forms part of the National Maritime Museum and has also been scheduled (Ref.: S00005215). Charles I also lived at Greenwich until the Civil War when the palace was requisitioned for the Lord Protector.
- 2.6.2 Following the restoration in 1660 the palace was demolished by Charles II, the intention being to construct a new one. However, Charles died with only the west wing complete and the rest of the site remained undeveloped until Queen Mary resurrected the idea originally conceived by James II for a hospital for seamen.
- 2.6.3 In the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century both Duke Humphrey's tower and the palace were demolished; the former was replaced with the Royal Observatory, the latter with Wren's Royal Naval Hospital, now a scheduled monument (Ref: S00005214). The work continued until the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century under the direction of Hawksmoor, Wren's pupil.
- 2.6.4 Greenwich continued expanding during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries with many fine houses constructed although the focus remained on Greenwich Park. With the opening of Greenwich Station in 1838, however, the population doubled within a couple of years. Despite these years of affluence, during which many of the small streets were cleared to make way for the Regency buildings of Greenwich market, King William Walk and the enlargement of the Royal Hospital, by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the area had deteriorated to a slum.
- 2.6.5 Although some slum clearance took place in 1902, at the time of the Greenwich Foot Tunnel being built, it was not until the 1930s that any significant slum clearance was undertaken.
- 2.6.6 During the Second World War Greenwich came under repeated bombing raids and most of the significant buildings mentioned above were damaged, including the Royal Naval College, the National Maritime Museum and the Observatory.

### **3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Archaeological Evaluation Methodology**

- 3.1.1 The methodology comprised the mechanical excavation, under constant archaeological supervision, of a single trial trench (Trench 1), measuring 13.00m by 1.90m as shown in Figure 2.
- 3.1.2 The trench was scanned using a Cable Avoidance Tool prior to excavation. Excavation was undertaken in spits of no more than 0.10m to the top of the underlying natural substrate, or to the top of archaeological deposits, whichever was higher.
- 3.1.3 Some revision to trench locations was necessary due to existing site conditions and obstructions. Any significant revisions were made with the agreement of Waterman and GLAAS.
- 3.1.4 All deposits were recorded using ASE standard context sheets, with colours recorded using visual inspection. A full photographic record of the work was compiled during the course of the fieldwork.
- 3.1.5 Spoil heaps and trench bases were scanned by eye, for unstratified artefacts.
- 3.1.6 Trenches were backfilled and compacted by machine but no further reinstatement was undertaken.

#### **3.2 Quantification of Archive**

Number of Contexts	4
No. of files/paper record	1
Plan and sections sheets	-
Bulk Samples	-
Photographs	4 digital
Bulk finds	-
Registered finds	-
Environmental flots/residue	-

Table 1: Archive quantification

## 4.0 RESULTS (Figs. 2 and 3)

Length: 13.00m

Width: 1.90m

Depth: 1.20m

Number	Type	Description	Max. length	Max. width	Max. depth	Max. height (m OD)
1/001	Layer	Made ground	Tr.	Tr.	0.40m	2.46m
1/002	Fill	Buried topsoil	Tr.	Tr.	0.36m	2.06m
1/003	Layer	Alluvium	Tr.	Tr.	0.39m	1.70m
1/004	Layer	Natural	Tr.	Tr.	-	1.31m

Table 2: List of recorded contexts

## 4.1 Summary

4.1.1 Natural geology, comprising fine mid yellow sand with occasional gravel pockets (1/004) was encountered between 1.31m and 1.27m AOD. This was overlain by a layer of mid brown silty clay alluvium (1/003). A thin and discontinuous band of mineral panning was noted at the surface of this deposit. This alluvium was overlain by a layer of dark greyish brown silty clay topsoil (1/002) with occasional fragments of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century brick and tile, which were not retained. The sequence was capped by a layer of recent made ground (1/001), presumably associated with the construction of the garage complex that currently occupies the site.

4.1.2 No archaeological features were observed.

## 5.0 THE FINDS

5.1 No finds were recovered during the course of the fieldwork

## 6.0 DISCUSSION

6.1 No archaeological features were identified during the course of the fieldwork and the recorded sequence of river terrace sand/gravel overlain by alluvium is one that is wholly consistent with the location of the site within the Thames floodplain. The 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century topsoil horizon that caps the sequence probably represents the back plot of a property fronting Christchurch Way.

6.2 Despite the proximity of the site to a Bronze Age trackway preserved within peat deposits some 180m to the north of the site at 72-88 Bellott Street, no peat is present on the subject site, nor is there any evidence of prehistoric activity. However, given that river terrace gravels are present on the site to a height of 1.30m OD, while the peat deposits at Bellott Street was recorded to a maximum height of -0.05m OD, it appears that the site occupies a zone of high ground well beyond the limits of peat formation and, given the absence of any prehistoric evidence on the site, well away from the activity represented by the Bellott Street trackway.

## **Acknowledgements**

ASE would like to thank McCulloch Homes for commissioning the work and GLAAS for their guidance throughout the project.

## **Bibliography**

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Accessed 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011.

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Pre-Construct Archaeology Ltd, 2003. *Archaeological Desktop Assessment of the Garage Site at Bellott Street, London, SE10, London Borough of Greenwich*

## SMR Summary Form

Site Code	CQM10					
Identification Name and Address	Land adjacent to 4, Christchurch Way, London Borough of Greenwich. SE10 9AJ					
County, District &/or Borough	London Borough of Greenwich					
OS Grid Refs.	TQ 3925 7838					
Geology	River Terrace sands and gravels					
Arch. South-East Project Number	4673					
Type of Fieldwork	Eval. ✓	Excav.	Watching Brief	Standing Structure	Survey	Other
Type of Site	Green Field	Shallow Urban ✓	Deep Urban	Other		
Dates of Fieldwork	Eval. 04.05.11	Excav.	WB.	Other		
Sponsor/Client						
Project Manager	Andy Leonard					
Project Supervisor	Diccon Hart					
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other:		
<p>Archaeology South East was commissioned by McCulloch Homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to 4, Christchurch Way, London Borough of Greenwich in advance of the redevelopment of the site. The evaluation comprised the excavation of a single trial trench measuring 13m by 1.9m.</p> <p>The natural geology, consisting of fine yellow sand was encountered between 1.27m and 1.31m AOD. This was sealed by a layer of alluvium, in turn overlain by a layer of 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century topsoil. A sequence of 20<sup>th</sup> century made ground capped the sequence</p> <p>No archaeological features were observed.</p>						

## OASIS Summary Form

**OASIS ID: archaeol6-102023**

### Project details

Project name	Land adjacent to 4, Christchurch Way, London Borough of Greenwich.
Short description of the project	Archaeology South East was commissioned by McCulloch Homes to undertake an archaeological evaluation on land adjacent to 4, Christchurch Way, London Borough of Greenwich in advance of the redevelopment of the site. The evaluation comprised the excavation of a single trial trench measuring 13m by 1.9m. The natural geology, consisting of fine yellow sand was encountered between 1.27m and 1.31m AOD. This was sealed by a layer of alluvium, in turn overlain by a layer of 18th-19th century topsoil. A sequence of 20th century made ground capped the sequence. No archaeological features were observed.
Project dates	Start: 05-05-2011 End: 05-05-2011
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	CKJ11 - Sitecode
Any associated project reference codes	4673 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Field evaluation
Current Land use	Vacant Land 1 - Vacant land previously developed
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Methods & techniques	'Sample Trenches'
Development type	Land reclamation/de-contamination
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

### **Project location**

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON GREENWICH GREENWICH land adjacent to 4, Christchurch Way, Greenwich. SE10 9AJ
Postcode	SE10 9AJ
Study area	465.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 3925 7838 51.4866981359 0.00581776771891 51 29 12 N 000 00 20 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 1.27m Max: 1.30m

### **Project creators**

Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	Archaeology South-East
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Andy Leonard
Project supervisor	Diccon Hart
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	McCulloch Homes

### **Project archives**

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	'Stratigraphic','Survey'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Images vector','Survey'
Paper Archive	LAARC



recipient

Paper Contents 'Stratigraphic'

Paper Media available 'Context sheet', 'Photograph', 'Plan', 'Report', 'Unpublished Text'

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**Project  
 bibliography 1**

Publication type Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)

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Author(s)/Editor(s) Hart, D

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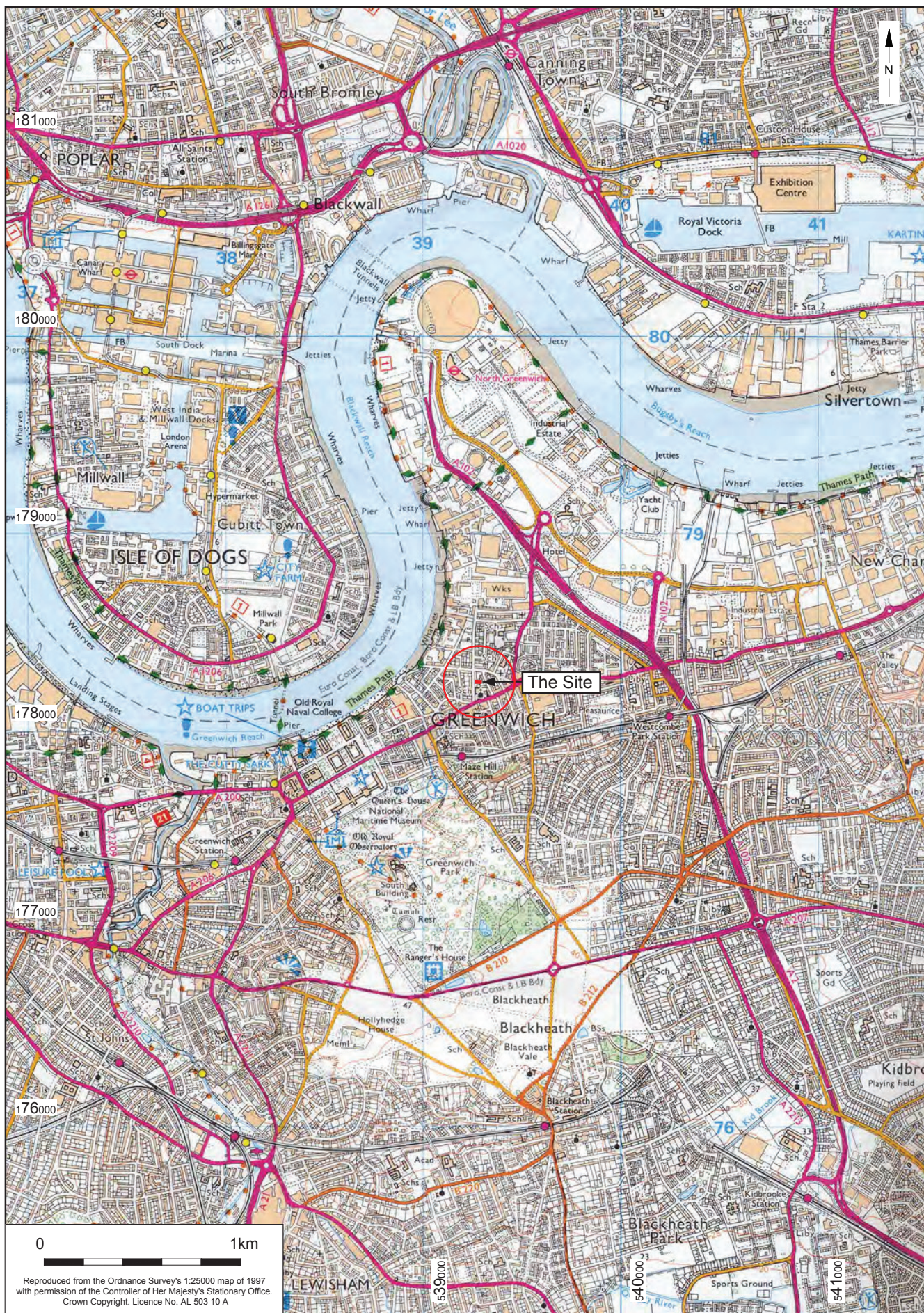
Description A4 booklet

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Entered by D Hart (d.hart@ucl.ac.uk)

Entered on 31 May 2011





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Drawn by: JLR

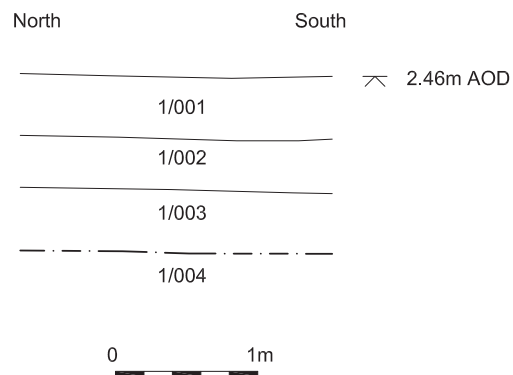
Site location

Fig. 1





© Archaeology South-East		Land adjacent to 4 Christchurch Way, Greenwich	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4673	May 2011	Trench location	
Report Ref: 2011107	Drawn by: JLR		



Trench 1 looking west



Trench 1: sample section

Head Office  
Units 1 & 2  
2 Chapel Place  
Portslade  
East Sussex BN41 1DR  
Tel: +44(0)1273 426830 Fax: +44(0)1273 420866  
email: [fau@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:fau@ucl.ac.uk)  
Web: [www.archaeologyse.co.uk](http://www.archaeologyse.co.uk)



London Office  
Centre for Applied Archaeology  
Institute of Archaeology  
University College London  
31-34 Gordon Square, London, WC1 0PY  
Tel: +44(0)20 7679 4778  
Fax: +44(0)20 7383 2572  
Web: [www.ucl.ac.uk/caa](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/caa)

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