**Archaeology South-East** 

# ASE

An Archaeological Watching Brief at Orchard Wharf, Orchard Place, Poplar, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, E14 0JW

NGR TQ 3941 8079

Project No: 4368 Site Code: ORW 10

ASE Report No: 2010100

OASIS id:

By

**Giles Dawkes MIFA** 

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#### Abstract

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Archaeology South-East during groundworks for the construction of a new wharf at Orchard Wharf, Orchard Place, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The work was commissioned by Jacobs.

Works included the excavation of trenches, for the insertion of sheet piling, to a maximum depth of 2.5m below the current ground surface (4.70m O.D.). Site visits were made to monitor groundworks in May and June 2010.

Elements of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century timber revetment wharf were recorded on the site and on the adjacent foreshore. The masonry remains of a later 19<sup>th</sup> century building associated with an iron works was also identified. Finds included a late 19<sup>th</sup> century anchor.

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#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Site Background

- 1.1.1 Archaeology South-East (ASE), the contracting division of the Centre for Applied Archaeology at the University College London, were commissioned by Jacobs on behalf of the Environment Agency (EA) to undertake an archaeological watching brief at Orchard Wharf, Orchard Place, Poplar, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, E14 0JW (NGR: TQ 3941 8079; Fig 1).
- 1.1.2 The proposed development was undertaken by the EA and comprised of the improvement of the Orchard Wharf flood defence works by the replacement of the river frontage with steel-sheet pilingset back from the existing pile-line, with a 28m long reed bed terrace in front of the defence.
- 1.1.3 The scheme was not subject to planning and it was carried out under the EA permitted development rights. A non-statutory Environmental report was produced and sent to the Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service of English Heritage (GLAAS), in their role as advisor to the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 1.1.4 The GLAAS Archaeological Advisor recommended that a watching brief be undertaken during the groundworks to record any potential archaeological remains
- 1.1.5 A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared by ASE for this works in accordance with the English Heritage Archaeological Guidance Standards Paper 2 (EH 2009) and was approved by GLAAS.

## 1.2 Aims and Objectives

- 1.2.1 According to the WSI (ASE 2010), the aims areto establish the presence or absence of archaeological remains within the proposed development area. To determine the nature, extent, condition, date, character, quality, significance and state of preservation of any archaeological features and deposits affected by the proposed works. To assess the ecofactual and palaeo-environmental potential of archaeological deposits and features within the site, to take samples where deemed appropriate and to report on the results of the fieldwork.
- 1.2.2 Site specific aims included:
  - Identify and record any remains dating to the prehistoric period.
  - Establish how any prehistoric remains relate to the waterfront at that time.
  - Are there any remains of the old Copperas House on the site?
  - Is there any evidence for docks/shipbuilding in an area previously thought to be devoid of such work?
  - Establish to what extent recent activity has damaged/destroyed any previous archaeological remains.

## 1.3 Geology and Topography

- 1.3.1 The geology of the area comprises River Terrace Gravels overlain by alluvial deposits.
- 1.3.2 The general topography of the site is of a relatively level area at 4.70m OD with the majority of the standing building demolished. Part of the eastern river frontage is stepped-back 18m from the rest exposing a greater area of foreshore than elsewhere.

## 1.4 Scope of Report

- 1.4.1 This report aims to outline the findings of the archaeological watching brief.A Written Scheme of Investigation for these works was produced by Archaeology South East (ASE 2009) and was subsequently approved by MrDavid Divers, the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) Officer for the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.
- 1.4.2 The fieldwork was undertaken by Giles Dawkes and Dan Swifton the 4<sup>th</sup>to 6<sup>th</sup> May and9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>June 2010. The project was managed by Andy Leonard (Project Manager) and Jim Stephenson (Post-excavation Manager).

## 2.0 HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Evidence of prehistoric activity in the vicinity was identified during evaluation trenching at Blair Street, East India Dock Road, which exposed a deep sequence of alluvium and peat dated to the Late Neolithic and Bronze Ages. Evidence for water-fowling and fishing, as well as settlement and agricultural activity, was also found (LAARC website).
- 2.2 Although the centre of Roman settlement was focussed on the current City of London, evidence of Roman activity is scattered across east London. However, finds dating to this period are limited in the Blackwall area. Saxon remains are also limited in the area, the focus of Saxon archaeology being further to the west, in modern-day Covent Garden.
- 2.3 The area around Leamouth and Blackwall is well known as the centre for the East India Dock Company's operation. Recent work undertaken by AOC Archaeology at the site of Charrington's Wharf, to the southwest of the Orchard Wharf site, uncovered extensive remains of docks, slipways, dockside buildings, river walls and associated surfaces dating from 17<sup>th</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (LAARC website).
- 2.4 The Orchard Wharf site itself is one of the earliest industrial sites in the Blackwall area not associated with shipbuilding. A Copperas works was established here in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century and continued in use until the East India Dock Company bought the site in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.5 Green Copperas was a chemical used in the dyeing of cloth, tanning and the manufacture of black ink. It was an important industry around the Essex coast during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

- 2.6 In the 18<sup>th</sup> century the works comprised a Copperas House, furnaces of lead and iron work, various workshops, sheds and outbuildings, and a timber wharf complete with a crane. The part of the site where the Copperas House was built, now the site of Orchard Wharf, is thought to have been built on reclaimed land.
- 2.7 In 1803-4 the East India Dock Company bought the site of the Copperas works and converted its use to that of an engineer's residence. Shortly after that it became a dockmaster's house and appears to have survived until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The building is visible in Daniell's 1808 view of the East India Docks, which shows a two-storey house of five bays.
- 2.8 The 1841 Plan of East and West India Docks shows the site marked with the name 'Sir Robert Fitzwigram' and a north to south aligned building set back from the river fronting on to Orchard Street. The access to the river later known as 'Orchard Stairs' is marked 'Ferry' (Fig 6).
- 2.9 In twenty years the site had altered considerably. The Stanford Map of London and its Suburbs 1862 First Edition shows Orchard Wharf named and the site is an iron works. New buildings have been constructed along the street frontage butting up to the former building and as well as other buildings in the middle of the plot. The earlier building is numbered '16' and may have been extended south towards the river. The river frontage has also been partially dug out creating a recessed wharf directly south of this building (Fig 7).
- 2.10 In 1888 the Orchard Wharf site was let to a new tenant who set up a business supplying sand, ballast and cement for road construction. This business lasted until the wharf closed in the 1980's under the name J.J. Prior (Transport) Ltd. From the 1930's to 1950's Prior shared the southern part of the Orchard Wharf site, where there was a drawdock, with a succession of boat-builders.
- 2.11 In 1993 the Orchard Wharf site was let by the LDDC for a petrol station.

#### 3.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL METHODOLOGY

- 3.1 The site code ORW10 was used.
- 3.2 The work was undertaken in accordance with the EH/GLAAS guidance and followed the methodology laid out in the WSI (ASE 2010).
- 3.3 Prior to the initial site visit some of the trenching had already been undertaken. These works were recorded in section and samples taken of the masonry and wood structures.
- 3.4 The groundworks consisted of the excavation of trenches to insert the steelsheet piling and concrete beams. These trenches were approximately 8m wide and extended along the river frontage. These trenches were up to 2.5m in depth.
- 3.5 It was not alwayspossible toenter the trenches due to the depth and instability of the sides, however the base of the trench could be observed from the side, and the spoil was inspected *ex situ*.
- 3.6 All archaeological features were recorded according to standard UCLCAA practice. Where practicable, all features were planned at 1:20 and section drawings were at 1:10, unless this was impractical in which case an alternative would be agreed with the GLAAS Archaeological AdvisorDrawings were made on plastic draughting film. Features and deposits were described on standard pro-forma recording sheets used by ASE. All remains were levelled with respect to Ordnance Survey datum wherever practicable. A photographic record was made.

60
4
0
52 digital, 20 black
and white, 20 colour
slide
3
3
1
0
0

 Table 1: Quantification of Site Archive

## 4.0 ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESULTS (Figs 2-4)

- 4.1 The earliest structureon the site was the timber wharf revetment visible on the foreshore and in the groundworks. The timber posts had driven into the natural foreshore deposits with horizontal timber shuttering forming box-shapes filled by reclamation dumps to raise the ground level. The timber structure was braced by iron tie-backs between the posts.
- 4.2 The tops of 15 timber posts (29-37, 40-45)were visible at low tide in the area of the recessed river frontage and were recorded during temporary breaks in the on-site excavations. The posts formed three distinct north to south alignments and were driven into the natural foreshore sand and silt (053). The southern end of these postswere in the same alignment as the river frontage to the east and west indicating that the creation of the recessed river frontage post-dated the wharf the posts related to. The remains of longitudinal timbers (38) and (39) set on edge were nailed or bolted to the posts in two of the north to south alignments. These appeared to act as shuttering to contain reclamation dumps rather than as base-plates, which would be set on the face, for revetment braces.
- 4.3 The posts were squared timbers between 0.35m and 0.5m in breadth and at least 0.86m long. The shuttering planks were 0.22m wide, 60mm thick and at least 1.1m long.
- 4.4 The natural alluvial foreshore deposits were not seen within the groundworks. In the trench excavated directly north of the recessed river frontage, the earliest feature was the remains of the wharf revetments comprising of three timber posts (19, 21 and 24); timber shuttering (22); and iron tie-backs (23) and (25).In the trench to the west of the recessed river frontage were four posts (47, 49, 50 and 52); timber shuttering (46) and iron tie-backs (48 and 51).
- 4.5 As there was no access to the revetment *in situ* the structures were recorded from the trench-side.
- 4.6 Timber posts (019), (021) and (024) were all squared 0.35m in breadth and timber shuttering (022) was nailed to the south side of the posts. Iron eye-let (025) was inserted through post (024) and this was perhaps attached by a chain to another eyelet and post to the south. Iron tie-back bar (013) attached to a T-shaped iron beam (Fig11) was recovered *ex situ*from (004).All iron tie-backs are typically 19<sup>th</sup> century in date (David Divers *pers.comm.*).
- 4.7 Similarly, timber posts (047), (049, (050) and (052) were all squared between 0.3m and 0.35m in breadth and had timber shuttering (046) nailed to the north side. Iron tie-backs (048) and (051) were inserted through shuttering (046) and were anchored south beyond the limit of excavation.
- 4.8 Overlying the revetments elements were a series of reclamation dumps tipped from the north and east. The earliest was loose yellow brown water-rolled gravel (Fig 4; 01) at least 0.26m thick, with overlying stiff grey redeposited alluvial clays (Fig 4; 02) and (Fig 4; 04) up to 1.5m thick, and loose yellow brown water-rolled gravel (Fig 4; 03) up to 2.10m thick.

- 4.9 A single sherd of post-medieval pottery was recovered from (04). These deposits were dumps behind the timber piles and shuttering to raise the ground level of the wharf before the construction of the river frontage buildings.
- 4.10 Dug through the reclamation deposits were the construction cuts of masonry culvert (09) and the wall foundations of a 19<sup>th</sup> century building fronting the river.
- 4.11 Construction cut (026) was 2.66m wide, 1.6m deep and at least 3m long aligned north to south with stepped sides and a flat base. The cut was dug for culvert (09) and wall foundation (07).
- 4.12 Culvert (09) had massively-builtyellow Kentish stock brick walls up to 0.8m wide with a brick arch. The internal dimensions were 0.7m wide and 1.16m high and the culvert was filled with loose brick rubble and gravel (010). The culvert drained from the north to the river in the south.
- 4.13 Wall foundation (07) was aligned north to south parallel to culvert (09). The wall was 0.3m thick, at least 1.52m high with a stepped base and built of a similar 19<sup>th</sup> century yellow Kentish stock brick. Construction cut (026) was backfilled with soft grey silt (08).
- 4.14 Trench-built in construction cut (027) was the remains of culvert or drain base (011). Only the base of the culvert remained which was built to a surprising thickness of 0.7m butting the south side of culvert (09). The culvert was built of similar bricks and the internal width was 0.4m. Wall foundation (012) was built directly off the top of culvert (09) and was 0.36m wide with a stepped base. This wall was aligned north to south parallel towall (07) with aneast to west dog-leg.
- 4.15 Between walls (07) and (012) were the remains of flooring. Floor make-up layer (013) of yellow lime mortar with ceramic building material (CBM fragments was laid directly on top of culvert (09) and butting walls (07) and (012). Above was flagstone floor (020) with stones 80mm thick and of various sizes.
- 4.16 Wall (014) was eastern external wall of the building. The wall was similarly built of yellow Kentish stock bricks with a stepped base and was built in construction cut (016). The construction cut was backfilled with soft grey brown silt gravel (015) on the west side. There was no construction cut on the west side of the wall as this was an open public access to the river from Orchard Street to the north called Orchard Stairs. The former base or stairs themselves stairs was not reached. The open access was backfilled with black and grey silt gravel (017).
- 4.17 Pit (05) was cut into dump (04) and had near vertical sides and a concave base. The fill was brown gravel and silt (06) with no finds.
- 4.18 Truncating the upper deposits and walls was modern concrete slab (018). The lower part of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century anchor (Fig 12) was found within (018).
- 4.19 To the west of the building remains had been greatly truncated by a modern building which survived as concrete piles (028).

#### 5.0 FINDS

Context	Pot	Wt (g)	CBM	Wt (g)
us			1	1850
4	1	28	1	214
7 <1>			4	4586
12 <2>			2	4984
14 <3>			3	3638

Table 2: Quantification of finds

#### 5.1 **The Ceramic Building Material** by Sarah Porteus

5.1.1 A total of nine fragments of ceramic building material (CBM) with a total weight of 15268g were recovered during the watching brief. The assemblage mostly comprised of brick in Museum of London fabric MoL3035, a yellow Kentish stock brick fabric. All bricks had a slightly warped appearance and had a shallow rectangular frog, the bricks are most likely of 19<sup>th</sup> century date. Brick samples were taken from contexts [7] <1>, [12] <2> and [14] <3>. A single unstratified brick, also in fabric MoL3035 had a large anchor stamped into the frog the origin of the maker's mark is unknown and also of 19<sup>th</sup> century date. A single fragment of pantile in fabric MoL3203 was also recovered and is of broad late 17<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century date. The material has been recorded on standard pro-forma sheets and transferred to an Excel database for archive. The original material has been discarded.

#### 6.0 DISCUSSION

- 6.1 The elements of timber wharf revetments recorded here can be dated by historic maps (Figs 5-7). The construction of the recessed river frontage between 1840 and 1862 was dug through the timber wharf revetments leaving the stumps of the revetment posts in the foreshore. The wharf was built before 1840 but probably after 1800.
- 6.2 The building remains are identified as the rear portion of the large north to south building marked '16' on the 1862 map (Fig 7). This appears likely to have been an extension built after 1841 and part of the iron works. The building may have survived until the 1980s and the construction of the petrol station.

#### 7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The Watching Brief succeeded in its general aim of monitoring and recording the groundworks. An early 19<sup>th</sup> century timber revetment wharf and later 19<sup>th</sup> century building probably associated with an iron works were recorded.

#### Bibliography

ASE, 2010, Orchard Wharf, Orchard Place, London Borough of Tower Hamlets, Archaeological Watching Brief Written Scheme of Investigation.ASE unpublished report

#### Acknowledgements

ASE would like to thank Adam Brossler of Jacobsfor commissioning the work as well as David Diversof the Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service (GLAAS) forhis guidance through the project.

#### **SMR Summary Form**

Site Code	ORW10					
Identification Name and Address	Orchard W	harf, Orchard P	Place, E14 0JW			
County, District &/or Borough	Poplar, Lor	ndon Borough c	f Tower Hamlets			
OS Grid Refs.	NGR TQ 394	1 8079				
Geology	Alluvium					
Arch. South-East Project Number	3944					
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.	Excav.	WB. 4 <sup>th</sup> to 6 <sup>th</sup> May and 9 <sup>th</sup> , 10 <sup>th</sup> , 25 <sup>th</sup> June 2010	Other		
Sponsor/Client	Jacobs	•	•			
Project Manager	Andy Leon	Andy Leonard and Jim Stephenson				
Project Supervisor	Giles Daw	kes				
Period Summary	Palaeo.	Meso.	Neo.	BA	IA	RB
	AS	MED	PM ✓	Other Modern		

100 Word Summary.

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Archaeology South-East during groundworks for the construction of a new wharf at Orchard Wharf, Orchard Place, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The work was commissioned by Jacobs.

Works included the excavation of trenches, for the insertion of sheet piling, to a maximum depth of 2.5m below the current ground surface (4.70m O.D.). Site visits were made to monitor groundworks in May and June 2010.

Elements of an early 19<sup>th</sup> century timber revetment wharf were recorded on the site and on the adjacent foreshore. The masonry remains of a later 19<sup>th</sup> century building associated with an iron works was also identified. Finds included a late 19<sup>th</sup> century anchor.

## OASIS Form

#### OASIS ID: archaeol6-80012

# Ρ

Project details	
Project name	Orchard Wharf
Short description of the project	An archaeological watching brief was undertaken by Archaeology South-East during groundworks for the construction of a new wharf at Orchard Wharf, Orchard Place, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The work was commissioned by Jacobs. Works included the excavation of trenches, for the insertion of sheet piling, to a maximum depth of 2.5m below the current ground surface (4.70m O.D.). Site visits were made to monitor groundworks in May and June 2010. Elements of an early 19th century timber revetment wharf were recorded on the site and on the adjacent foreshore. The masonry remains of a later 19th century building associated with an iron works was also identified. Finds included a late 19th century anchor.
Project dates	Start: 01-05-2010 End: 30-06-2010
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	ORW 10 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Other 13 - Waste ground
Monument type	WET DOCK Post Medieval
Monument type	IRON WORKING SITE Post Medieval
Significant Finds	ANCHOR Post Medieval
Significant Finds	BRICK Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPS
Project location	
Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS POPLAR Orchard Wharf
Postcode	E14 2
Study area	2500.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 389 805 51.5058368674 0.00161417284439 51 30 21 N 000 00 05 E Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 0m Max: 0m

#### **Project creators**

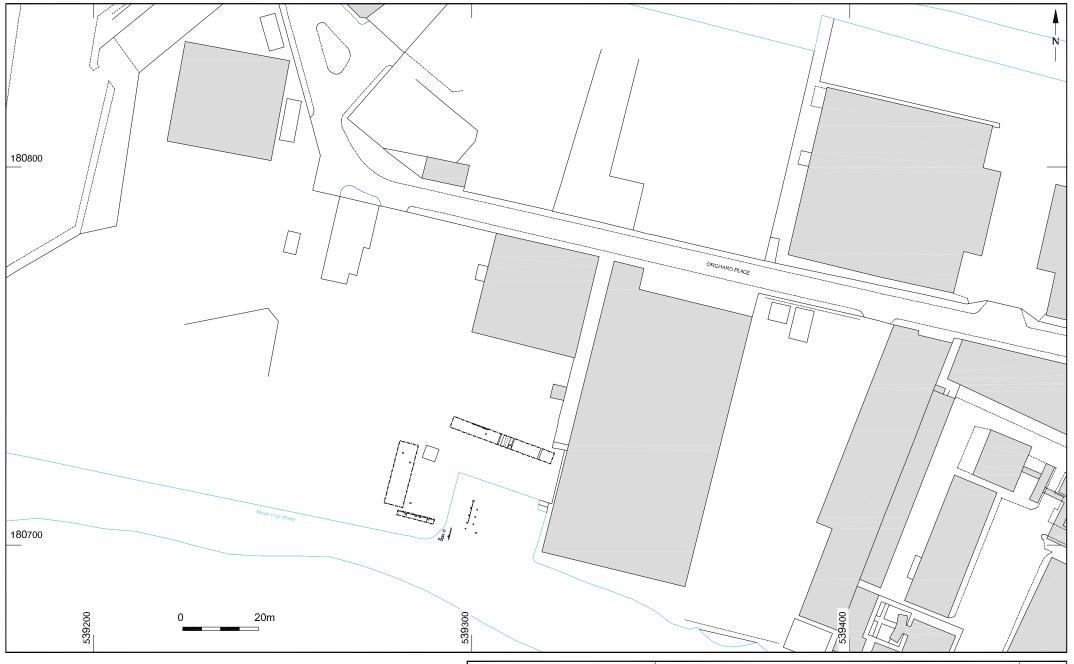
Project creators	
Name of Organisation	Archaeology South-East
Project brief originator	English Heritage/Department of Environment
Project design originator	Archaeology South-East
Project director/manager	Darryl Palmer
Project supervisor	Giles Dawkes
Type of sponsor/funding body	private client
Project archives	
Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Physical Archive ID	OWR 10
Physical Contents	'Ceramics','Metal'
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive ID	OWR 10
Digital Contents	'Ceramics','Metal','Stratigraphic','Survey'
Digital Media available	'Images raster / digital photography','Imagesvector','Survey','Text'
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Archive ID	OWR 10
Paper Contents	'Stratigraphic'
Paper Media available	'Context sheet','Correspondence','Drawing','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section'

# Project bibliography 1

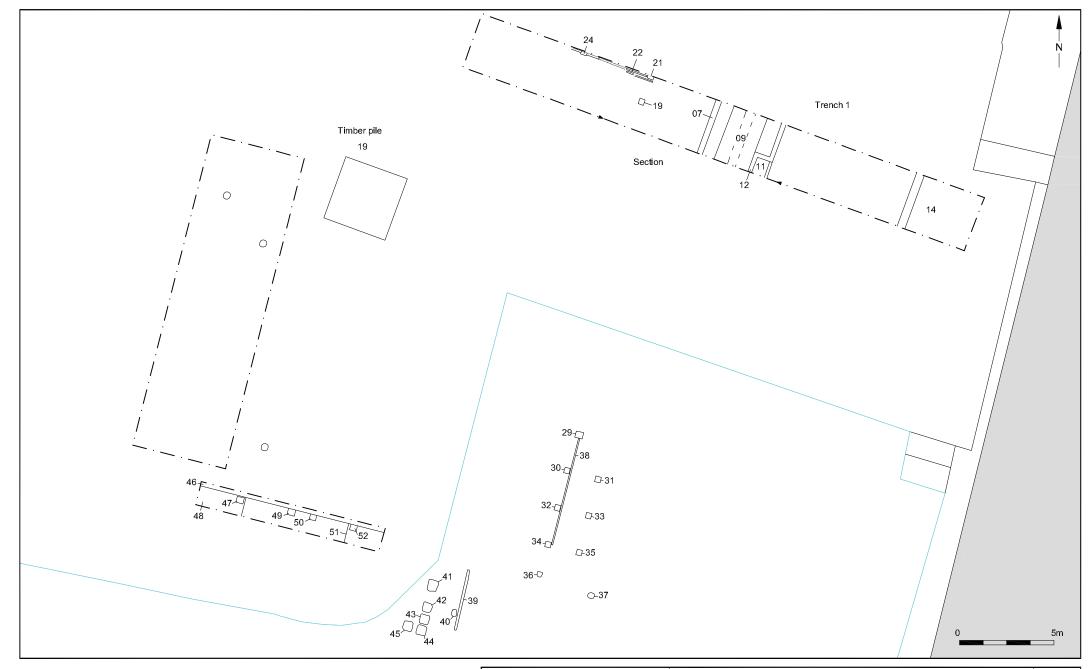
Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
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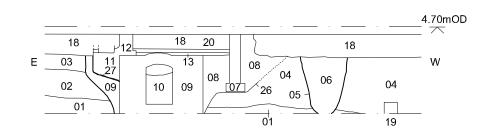
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Report Ref: 2010100	Drawn by: JLR	Site location	



© Archaeology Sout	th-East	Orchard Wharf, Poplar, London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Fig. 2
Project Ref: 4368 Ju	uly 2010	Site plan	119.2
Report Ref: 2010100 Dr	rawn by: HLF	Site plan	



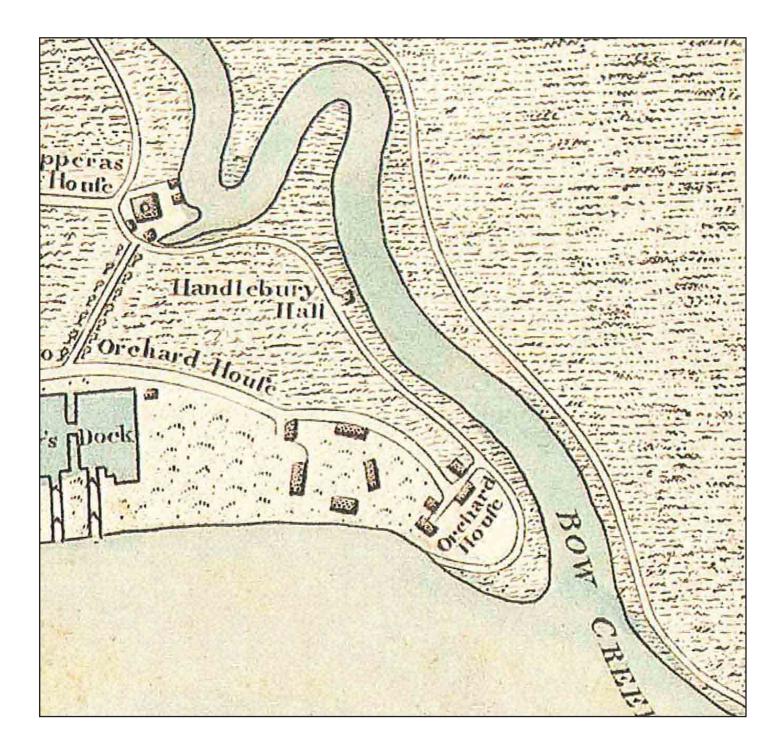
© Archaeology S	outh-East	Orchard Wharf, Poplar, London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Fig. 3
Project Ref: 4368	July 2010		
Report Ref: 2010100	Drawn by: HLF	Site detail	



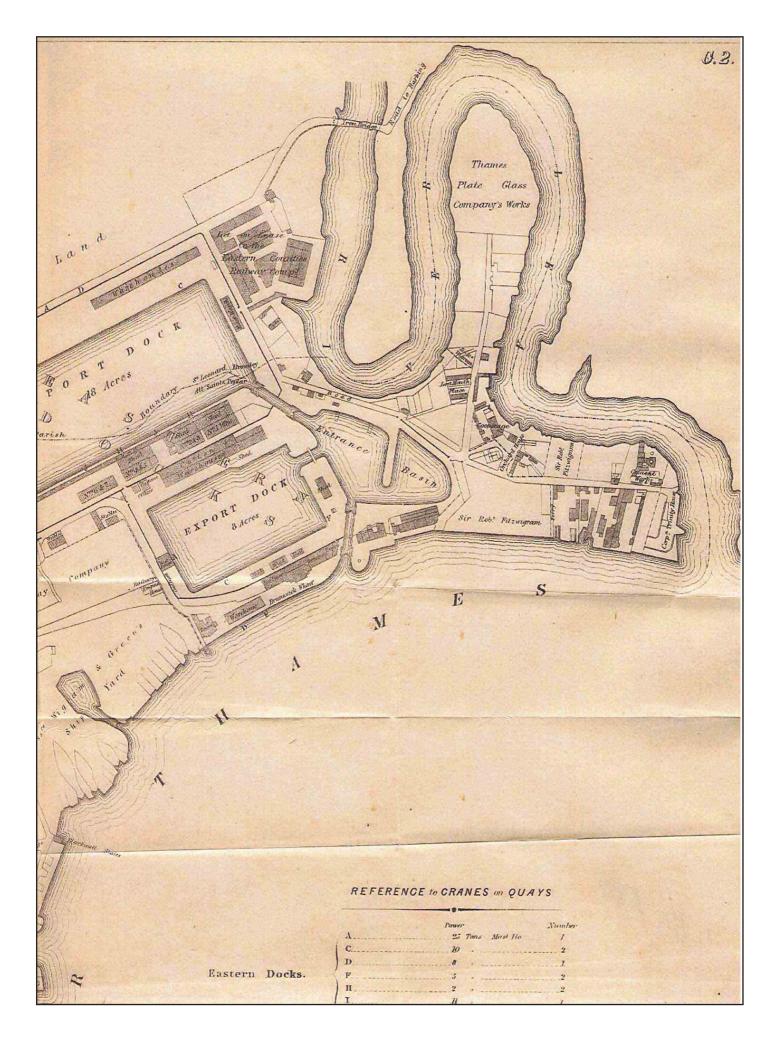
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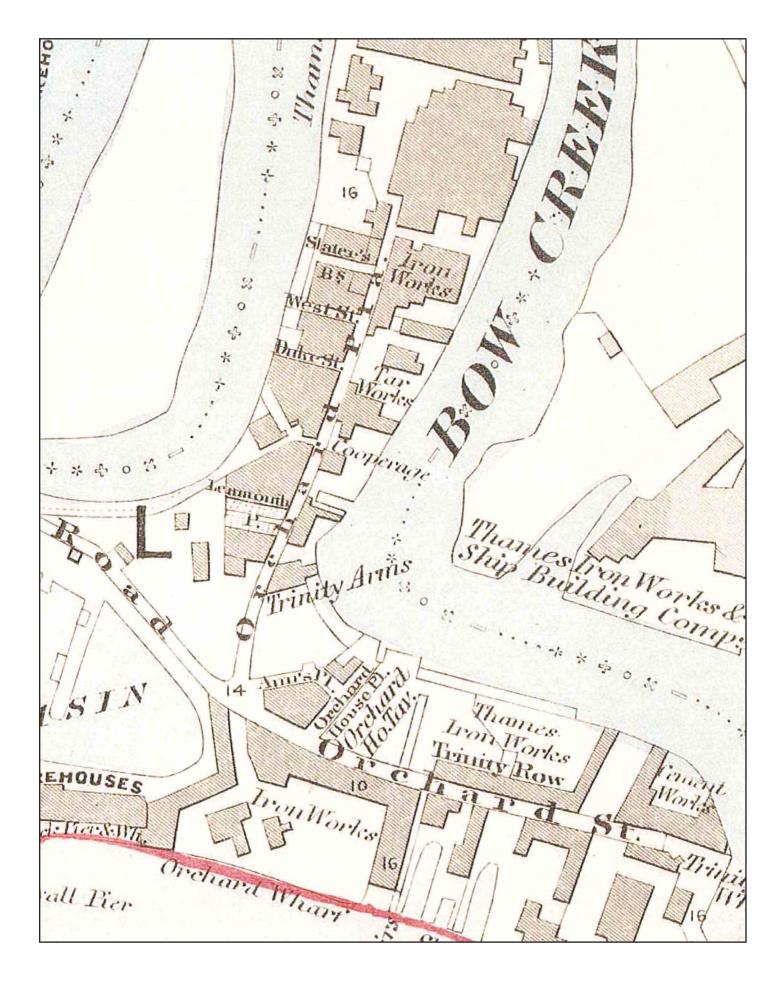
© Archaeology South-East		Orchard Wharf, Poplar, London Borough of Tower Hamlets	- Fig. 4
Project Ref: 4368	July 2010	Trough 1 section	- i ig. <del>-</del>
Report Ref: 2010100	Drawn by: HLF	Trench 1 section	



© Archaeology South-East		Orchard Wharf, Poplar, London Borough of Tower Hamlets	- Fig.5
Project Ref: 4368	July 2010	Fairburn Map of London, Westminster	l ig.5
Report Ref: 2010100	Drawn by: JLR	and the New Docks, seventh edition 1802	



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Project Ref: 4368 July 2010	1841 Plan of London and its Suburbs 1862, first edition	1 ig. 0
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Project Ref: 4368 Report Ref: 2010100	July 2010 Drawn by: JLR	Stanford Map of London and its Suburbs 1862, first edition	1 ig. 7



Fig.6: Foreshore timber posts facing south

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Project Ref: 4368	July 2010	Photo	Tig. o
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Fig. 9 South Section showing culvert 009 nand other masonary features



Fig. 10: Wall 014 facing north. The backfill of 'Orchard Stairs' is the dark material on the right. The lighter material on the left is the reclamation dumps beneath the building

© Archaeology South-East		Orchard Wharf, Poplar, London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Figs.
Project Ref: 4368 July 2010 Report Ref: 2010100 Drawn by:		Photos	9 & 10
Report Ref: 2010100 Drawn by:			

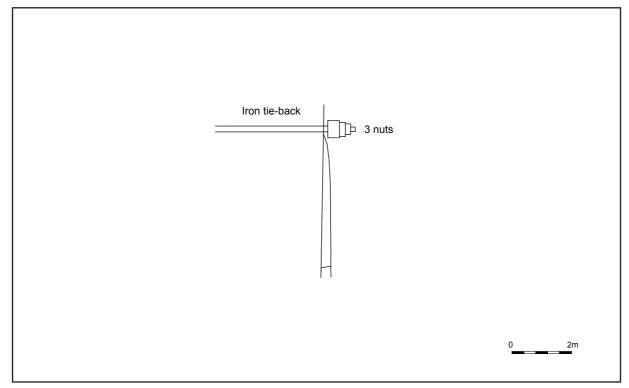


Fig.11: Detail of Iron Tie-back 013



Fig.12: Late 19th Century Anchor

Orchard Wharf, Poplar, London Borough of Tower Hamlets	Figs.
	11 & 12
	Orchard Wharf, Poplar, London Borough of Tower Hamlets

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