



79–81 Grosvenor Street London W1K

City of Westminster

Watching brief report

June 2019



**79–81 Grosvenor Street
London
W1K 3JY**

Site Code: GSR17
NGR: 528830 180865
OASIS reference: molas1-353502

Planning reference: 13/12738/FULL
Pre Commencement Condition number 17

Report on an archaeological watching brief

Sign-off History:

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1	14.06.2019	Martin Banikov Senior Archaeologist	Rosalind Morris	First issue

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Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by MOLA at 79–81 Grosvenor Street, London W1K 3JY. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Jackson Coles LLP on behalf of the client Frelene (Grosvenor Street Ltd).

In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2017b) a watching brief was carried out on the site between May- June 2018 for phase one and April- May 2019 for phase two.

Natural alluvial deposits were observed in the central/ western area of the site, these were the same deposits that were recorded during the archaeological evaluation (MOLA 2017a). Above the alluvial deposits a thin layer of organic peat or a dump of rich organic material was recorded. The deposits could relate to the River Tyburn, as former channels are thought to have flown through areas of the site in the past.

Above the natural deposits the demolition and excavation works revealed some structural remains of an 18th and 19th century origin. MOLA observed a small red brick culvert orientated east-west was recorded in the north-eastern area of the site. The culvert was recorded to the extent of about 3m and had a diameter of 0.75m. North of the culvert and along the north-eastern limits of the site, a partially demolished red brick wall survived to approximately 1.2m in height. Another brick lined silted culvert/drain with a diameter of about 0.60m was seen in section in the central area of the site. These post-medieval remains are surviving parts of the previous buildings occupying the site and relate to the urban development of the area.

The watching brief revealed heavy modern truncation and disturbance from the previous building's basements and foundations.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was carried out by MOLA at 79–81 Grosvenor Street, London W1 ('the site') between May 2018 and May 2019 (see Fig 1). This document is the Report on that work.
- 1.1.2 A desk top Historic Environment Assessment (MOLA 2013, section 9) (HEA) was previously prepared which covers the whole area of the site (MOLA 2013). This document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site, and the initial interpretation of its archaeological potential).
- 1.1.3 A field evaluation was carried out by MOLA between 13th and 31st January 2017. An Evaluation Report was written on the results (MOLA 2017b).
- 1.1.4 Further to the condition on Planning Consent a Written Scheme of Investigation was prepared by MOLA (MOLA 2017a). All archaeological work has been carried out in accordance with that WSI.

1.2 Planning background

- 1.2.1 The legislative and planning framework in which the watching brief took place was fully set out in the previous Historic Environment Assessment (MOLA 2013) approved as part of planning permission 13/12738/FULL which formed the project design for the watching brief (see Section 9, MOLA 2013).
- 1.2.2 The watching brief was carried out to fulfil a condition attached to the Planning Consent given by Westminster City Council (Planning reference 13/12738/FULL Pre Commencement Condition number 17).

1.3 Scope of the watching brief

- 1.3.1 An archaeological watching brief is normally a limited fieldwork exercise. It is not the same as full excavation, though individual features may be fully excavated.
- 1.3.2 The watching brief was carried out within the terms of the relevant Standard for watching brief specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA, 2014).
- 1.3.3 All work has been undertaken within the research priorities established in the Museum of London's A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002.
- 1.3.4 All work was undertaken within research aims and objectives established in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the watching brief (Section 2.2).

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1.1 This section summarises the geology, archaeology and history of the site provided in the Archaeological HEA (MOLA 2013).

2.2 Topography

2.2.1 The site lies on the course of the historic River Tyburn, which arose in Hampstead hills and followed a line broadly from Bond Street Station along or parallel with Molton Lane and Avery Row before it flowed onwards beneath Buckingham Palace, curving westwards. Throughout its course this river has been diverted into culverts and much of the water that fed it has been intercepted and used for other purposes. The British Geological Survey (BGS) shows underlying superficial deposits as alluvium surrounded by Lynch Hill River Terrace gravels. However, a small area of the slightly younger Hackney Gravels are identified near where the Tyburn crossed the line of Oxford Street, upstream and uphill from the site.

2.2.2 The underlying geology of the site is recorded as alluvial deposits above terrace gravels (MOLA 17a) at c 15.6 to 14.8m Ordnance Datum (OD).

2.2.3 The ground today slopes from north to south, from 22m above OD (approximately) at Bond Street Station to 16m OD at the south side of Berkeley Square. The river valley can still be seen within Regent Street and Grosvenor Square, either side of the site, at 25m OD, whilst the surroundings of the site fall from c 18.9m–17.9m OD, from northeast to southwest.

2.3 Archaeology

2.3.1 A Lower Palaeolithic Hand axe was found in 1910 in Bond Street presumably from around 350,000 – 300,000BC (Marine Isotope stage 9) and quite possibly eroded from the side of the Tyburn river valley. No other prehistoric remains have been found in the vicinity of the site.

2.3.2 It has been speculated that the line of Oxford Street may have originated as a road between two tribal capitals before the Roman conquest, from Silchester to Colchester. However, there is little evidence for the Roman Road thought to have connected both of these capitals to the Roman city of Londinium.

2.3.3 There has been no archaeological evidence for medieval activity near the site, or of the Civil War defences thought to join to the nearby “Oliver’s Mount” commemorated by Mount Row. Post-medieval remains include possible Tyburn channel deposits at Horse Shoe Yard where there was also 17th-century and later ground-raising dumps. Various structural remains have been found of the 18th century development of the area. They include: part of an 18th or 19th century brick wall found at 111–112 New Bond Street; a cast iron furnace found at 21–22 Grosvenor Street; and at 41–42 Conduit Street, post medieval rubbish pits and an 18th century well (MOLA 2013)

2.3.4 Number 81 Grosvenor Street was built in c 1736. Numbers 79 and 80 were rebuilt in the 19th century.

2.4 Archaeological evaluation results

2.4.1 The full results of the MOLA archaeological evaluation were published in a separate report (MOLA 2017b) and also summarized in the WSI for the watching brief (MOLA 2017a). These documents should be referred to for additional information related to this evaluation. To summarise here:

- 2.4.2 The archaeological evaluation of the site consisted of three archaeological test pits and the archaeological monitoring of geotechnical site investigation works. The three trial pits; one 1.75m x 1.75m and two 1m x 2m in dimensions were excavated by archaeologists to 1.2m in depth, with further 0.5m x 0.5m sondages excavated to the top of alluvium. The alluvium was augured and examined by geoarchaeologists.
- 2.4.3 The geoarchaeological sequence of silts and clays represents accretionary floodplain soils probably building up from the Iron Age to the post-medieval period. The sediments were coarse (sandy) with no organic deposits present. This is in keeping with the landscape position of the site; raised above the lower Tyburn floodplain zone. Consequently, the potential for organic ecofactual preservation (such as botanical remains) is low, but there is some potential for faunal and algal remains (ostracods and diatoms) from which information on the local ground conditions and environment could be derived. However, the absence of organic material to provide a chronological framework via radiocarbon dating for these alluvial deposits will limit the value of any palaeoenvironmental remains present.

3 The watching brief

3.1 Field methodology

3.1.1 The investigations and recording of features was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2017a). The fieldwork was split into two phases (see Fig 3):

3.1.2 *Phase one (between May - June 2018)*

In phase one the initial breaking out and ground clearance was done by the Principal Contractor and monitored by a member of MOLA staff. The works requiring a watching brief in the first phase were:

- Demolition of existing buildings
- Bulk ground reductions
- Underpinning along the eastern and northern boundary.

3.1.3 *Phase two (between April - May 2019)*

In phase two the excavations continued along the western and central areas of the site. The works requiring a watching brief in the second phase were:

- Monitoring of the pile probing for sheet piling;
- Bulk ground reduction for the new basement;
- Excavation works for new pile caps and a lift pit; and
- Excavations work for new services and an attenuation tank.

3.1.4 The area of the archaeological watching brief was plotted on plans provided by the client using and subsequently tied to the OS grid.

3.1.5 Because of the nature of the fieldwork it was not possible to accurately measure/calculate OD levels for features recorded: relative depth levels have been provided where it was possible to measure them – eg ‘approximately 3.5m below street level’.

3.2 Recording methodology

3.2.1 A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2017a).

3.3 Site archive

Number of trench record sheets	n/a
Number of overall location plans	3
Number of Context (SU) sheets	13
Number of photographs	100
Number of Plan sheets	4
Number of Sections	1

4 Results of the watching brief

For the archaeological phase one and phase two area locations see Fig 3.

4.1 Phase one

4.1.1 Eastern area

In the eastern area of the site the made ground, which contained mostly demolition rubble had a thickness of up to 3m.

A small brick culvert orientated east-west was seen in the north-eastern area of the site. The culvert was recorded and extended roughly 3m and with a diameter of 0.75m. A partially demolished red brick wall was observed north of the culvert, protruding along the north-eastern boundary (see Fig4). The wall measured 1.2m in length, 1m in thickness and the top of the wall was recorded at c 15m OD. Partially preserved peat was recorded, at west of the brick wall, under the made ground at approximately 14.2-14.5m OD.

The deposit measured c 4.5m north-south and c 3m east-west, and deposit could possibly be linked to some surviving material from the Tyburn River. Potentially, relating to an in filled former channel course.

4.1.2 Northern and north-western area

In the northern and north-western area of the site, no masonry structures of archaeological features were observed during the watching brief. The demolition rubble (Fig 5) consisting mainly of brick; the thickness of this section was between 3 and 4m. The extent of modern truncation here was very high due to the previous building's concrete footings and deep basement.

4.1.3 Southern area

In the southern area of the site no archaeological features or natural deposits were encountered during the watching brief.

Under the accumulated rubble in the south-western area of the site a solid concrete slab (Fig 6), lying at c 14.4m OD, was observed. Below the concrete slab was yellowish sand, mixed with other made ground materials, including brick fragments, plastic and scattered timber pieces. This mixed deposit formed the foundation layer for the concrete slab. Demolition backfill was seen under the formation deposits extending to about 4m below the current ground level.

4.2 Phase two

4.2.1 Central area

In the central area of the site, natural alluvium sediments potentially related to the Tyburn River was observed in section near to the proposed attenuation tank (Fig 7 and 8), at c 14.5m OD. The natural deposit was similar to the one observed during the evaluation works on the site and thoroughly discussed in the subsequent report (MOLA 17b). The type and character of the natural was dark greyish brown clay with the occasional medium coarse gravels. Above the alluvium and also seen in section was recorded a thin layer of peaty deposit or dump of organic rich material similar to the one uncovered in the eastern area and also noted during the evaluation works

(MOLA 17b).

The deposits were sealed by the demolition backfill, which was recorded in other areas of the site.

4.2.2 *Western area*

In the western parts of the site, and under the temporary stairs an in filled culvert drain with a mix of yellow and red stock bricks (Fig 9) were recorded. The drain measured approximately 0.60m in diameter and was orientated towards the east. No other parts or elements of this culvert were seen to extend in any other area of the site.

5 Archaeological potential

5.1 Answering original research aims

5.1.1 The limited nature of the proposed works and the watching brief upon them makes it unreasonable to establish many specific archaeological research objectives. Nevertheless a few research questions can be outlined:

5.1.2 *What is the nature and level of the natural topography?*

Natural alluvium was recorded in the central/ western area of the site at about 14.50m OD. The deposit was composed of dark greyish brown clays with some coarse gravel. The deposit was recorded in section only.

5.1.3 *Is there evidence for deposits associated with the Tyburn River, and what information do these provide in understanding the nature and development of the floodplain?*

River alluvium relating to the Tyburn was identified. The deposits were weathered and likely to be reworked in some instances. The upper horizons contained historic and sometimes modern materials.

5.1.4 *Is there evidence for the 17th century Civil War defensive ditch?*

No evidence related to the 17th century Civil War Defence ditch was observed during both phases of the watching brief.

5.1.5 *Is there evidence for post-medieval structural remains, and what information can these provide in understanding the urban development of 18th–19th century London?*

Some partial remains of a brick wall and two culvert drains were recorded during the watching brief on site. These remains could be associated with the general urban development during the 18th and 19th centuries, although the evidence gathered from the investigations is insufficient and can't confirm this thought.

5.1.6 *What are the earliest deposits identified?*

The earliest surviving deposits on the site was notably the alluvium, this was identified in the eastern and central sections of the site. The remains would have been deposited from the Iron Age up until the post-medieval period.

5.1.7 *What are the latest deposits identified?*

The latest deposits identified were those of the made ground for construction of 18th- and 19th-century buildings on site.

5.1.8 *What is the extent of modern disturbance?*

The level of modern truncation appears to be very high due to the previous building's foundations and deep basements.

5.2 Significance of the data

- 5.2.1 Whilst the archaeological remains were of local significance there was nothing to suggest that they were of regional or national importance.

6 Publication and archiving

- 6.1.1 The results of the watching brief will be made publicly available by means of a database in digital form, to permit inclusion of the site data in any future academic researches into the development of London.
- 6.1.2 The site archive containing original records and finds will be stored in accordance with the terms of the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (MOLA 2017a) with the Museum of London Archaeological Archive within 12 months of the end of the watching brief.
- 6.1.3 In view of the limited potential of the material (Sections 5) and the relatively limited significance of the data (Section 5.2) it is suggested that a short note on the results of the watching brief should appear in the annual round up of the *London Archaeologist*.

7 Bibliography

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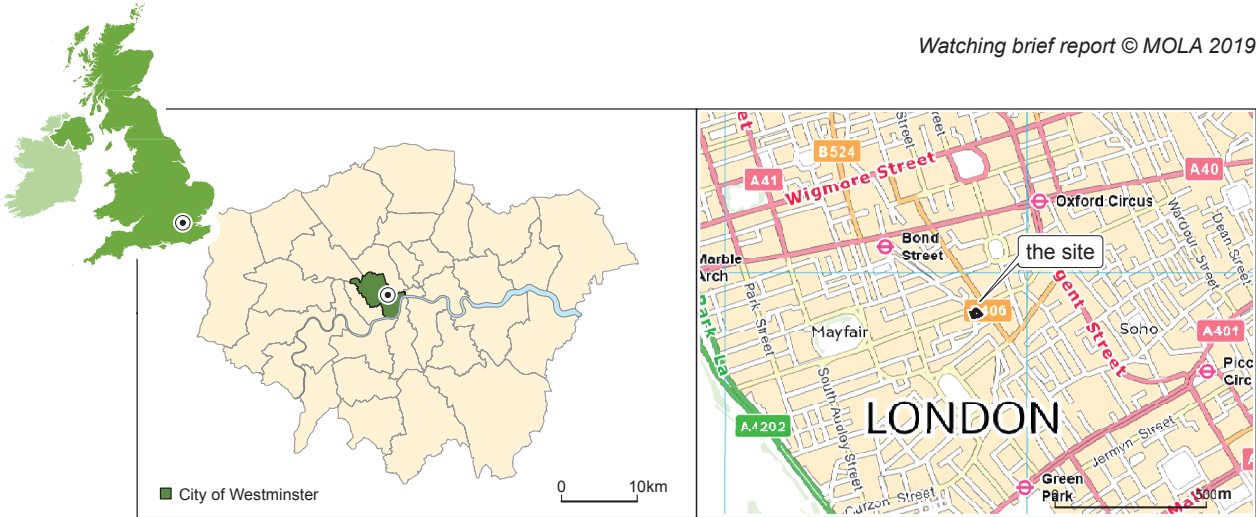
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scale 1:2,000 @ A4

0 50m

Fig 1 Site location



Fig 2 Evaluation trenches and test pits

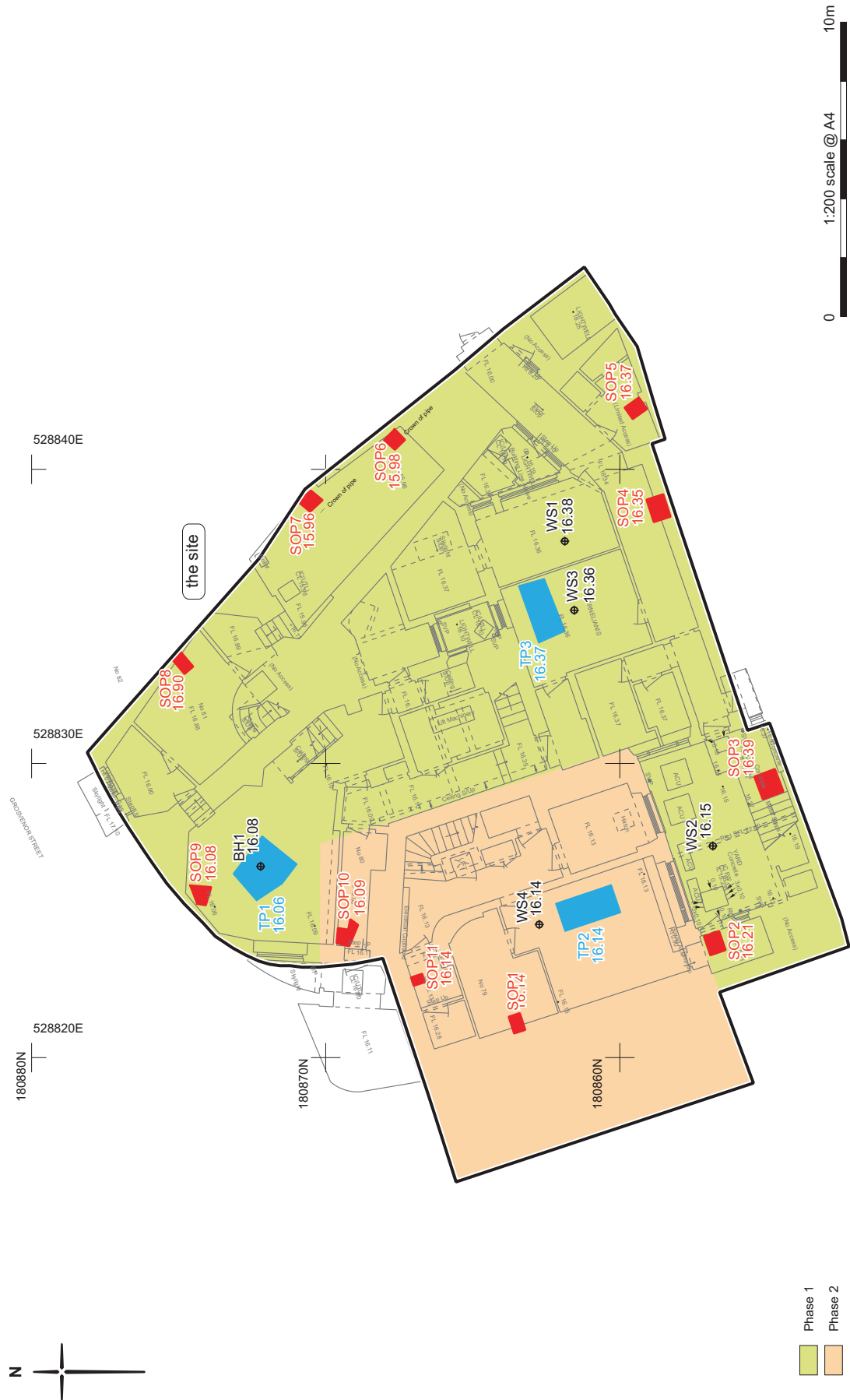


Fig 3 Watching brief Phases One and Two



Fig 4 Brick wall in north-eastern area



Fig 5 General demolition (brick) rubble



Fig 6 Concrete slab and its formation layers in southern area



Fig 7 Alluvial deposits recorded in section 1- towards south



Fig 8 Central area- general look of section 1 (towards north)



Fig 9 Disused drain in western area

8 OASIS archaeological report form

OASIS ID: molas1-353502

Project details

Project name	79-81Grosvenor Street, London W1
Short description of the project	<p>Natural alluvial deposits, also noted in previous archaeological evaluation works on site, were revealed in the central/ western area of the site. Above the alluvial was recorded a thin layer of organic peat deposit or dump of organic rich material and possibly, as well as the alluvial, related to the Tyburn River known to have flown in the area of the site in the past.</p> <p>Above the natural deposits the demolition and excavation works revealed few structural remains of an 18th and 19th century origin. A small red brick culvert orientated east-west was recorded in the north-eastern area of the site. The culvert was recorded to extent for about 3m and had a diameter of 0.75m. North of the culvert and along the north-eastern limits of the site was observed a partially demolished red brick wall that survived to approximately 1.2m in height. Another brick lined silted culvert/drain with a diameter of about 0.60m was seen in section in the central area of the site. These remains are surviving parts of the previous buildings occupying the site and relate to the urban development of the area in the high post-medieval period.</p> <p>Sealing the archaeological remains was a thick layer of demolition (brick) rubble accumulated by the dumping of different materials for levelling of the ground prior to re- building and redevelopment of the area in the past.</p> <p>The watching brief established the high extend of modern disturbance on site due to the depth and extension of the previous building's basements and foundations.</p>
Project dates	Start: 01-05-2018 End: 01-05-2019
Previous/future work	Yes / No
Any associated project reference codes	GSR17 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 1 - Industrial
Monument type	CULVERT Post Medieval
Monument type	BRICK WALL Post Medieval

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CITY OF WESTMINSTER WESTMINSTER 79-81 Grosvenor street

Postcode	W1K 3JY
Study area	401 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 28830 80865 51.511508245302 -0.14328079676 51 30 41 N 000 08 35 W Line
Height OD / Depth	Min: 14.2m Max: 14.5m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MOLA
Project brief originator	MOLA
Project design originator	MOLA
Project director/manager	Craig Halsey
Project supervisor	Martin Banikov
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Physical Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Contents	"Stratigraphic", "Survey"
Digital Media available	"Database", "Images raster / digital photography", "Survey", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Contents	"Survey"
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Correspondence", "Diary", "Drawing", "Map", "Miscellaneous Material", "Notebook - Excavation", "Research", "General Notes", "Plan", "Report", "Survey", "Unpublished Text"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	79-81 Grosvenor Street
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Banikov, M

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