

**THE MEWS
Old Royal Naval College
Greenwich
SE10**

London Borough of Greenwich

An archaeological watching brief report

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MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

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Old Royal Naval College
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An archaeological watching brief report

Site Code: RNU05

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Summary (non-technical)

This report has been commissioned by the Greenwich Foundation in order to record and assess the results of a watching brief carried out at the Mews at the Old Royal Naval College.

Work on refurbishing the north side of the building included the construction of a new arch at the eastern end and the digging of a new drain in the yard. Two 'trenches' were monitored between 4th and 12th July 2005.

The ground surface lay between 5.30 and 5.65m OD. Below modern fills, the only deposits recorded were dated to the 19th and 20th centuries.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The watching brief took place at The Mews, hereafter called ‘the site’. The building of that name is located at the western end of the Old Royal Naval College fronting College Road to the south and adjacent to the West Gate of the College (Fig 1). The centre of the site is at OS National Grid Reference 538390 177832. The level of the modern tarmac surface lies between 5.65M and 5.30M OD. The site code is RNU 05.

1.2 The planning and legislative framework

The site lies within a Scheduled Monument (Greater London 51). The excavations were granted Scheduled Monument Consent – HSD/9/2/7/146 dated 11th April 2005 with the proviso (condition 3, iv) that archaeological monitoring take place.

1.3 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by the Greenwich Foundation and produced by the Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute of Field Archaeologists (IFA, 2001).

The purpose of the watching brief was to determine whether archaeological remains or features were present on the site and, if so, to record the nature and extent of such remains. The purpose of the present report is to analyse the results of the excavation and to suggest what further work, including analysis or publication (if any), should now take place.

1.4 Aims and objectives

The following research aims and objectives were established for this watching brief:

- What is the nature and significance of the surviving archaeological remains?
- Are there any traces of Henry VIII’s stable block, known to be in this vicinity?
- What evidence is there for the construction and development of the Mews building?

All research is undertaken within the priorities established in the Museum of London’s *A research framework for London Archaeology*, 2002

1.5 Historical and archaeological background

The area west of the Tudor palace and the (later) Greenwich Hospital was largely occupied by service buildings. These include stables, brewery and a bakehouse. They lay amongst the alleyways and dwellings of Greenwich village.

The dominant building in the area was a stable block built by Henry VIII in 1511. This was an irregular rectangle aligned north–south. It survived, albeit with much remodelling until the 1830s so that its location is securely known; largely occupying the western half of the present ‘mews’ building.

In the 1830s, the area formerly incorporated into the hospital grounds, the village buildings, (now largely slums), were razed along with the old stables. The building generally known as ‘The Mews’ was actually constructed as a stable block with coach house in 1835-6 by the architect Joseph Kay (Bold 2000,189). This building, similar in plan to its predecessor, was aligned east–west. Additions in the 1870s to the eastern end of the building were removed in 1999. In 1905, rooms originally used as a boiler house and workshops were added to the north side of The Mews, effectively joining it to the Pepys Building, begun in the 1870s. A new entranceway, flanked by pillars, into The Mews courtyard was created in the 1870s, but subsequent plans show that the pillars were moved on a number of occasions (see plans in Quarme figs 11, 18). The south–eastern end of the mews building was destroyed by a bomb in 1943 and only rebuilt, largely to its original design, in the 1950s.

There has been only limited archaeological investigation in the area of The Mews. In 1999 Test Pit 1 of RNP 99 was located within the 1905 rooms against the original north wall of The Mews. The test pit revealed that its foundations comprised stone and concrete at 5.06m OD, below the brick superstructure. Other watching briefs in front of the building, to the south, only penetrated into recent dump deposits.

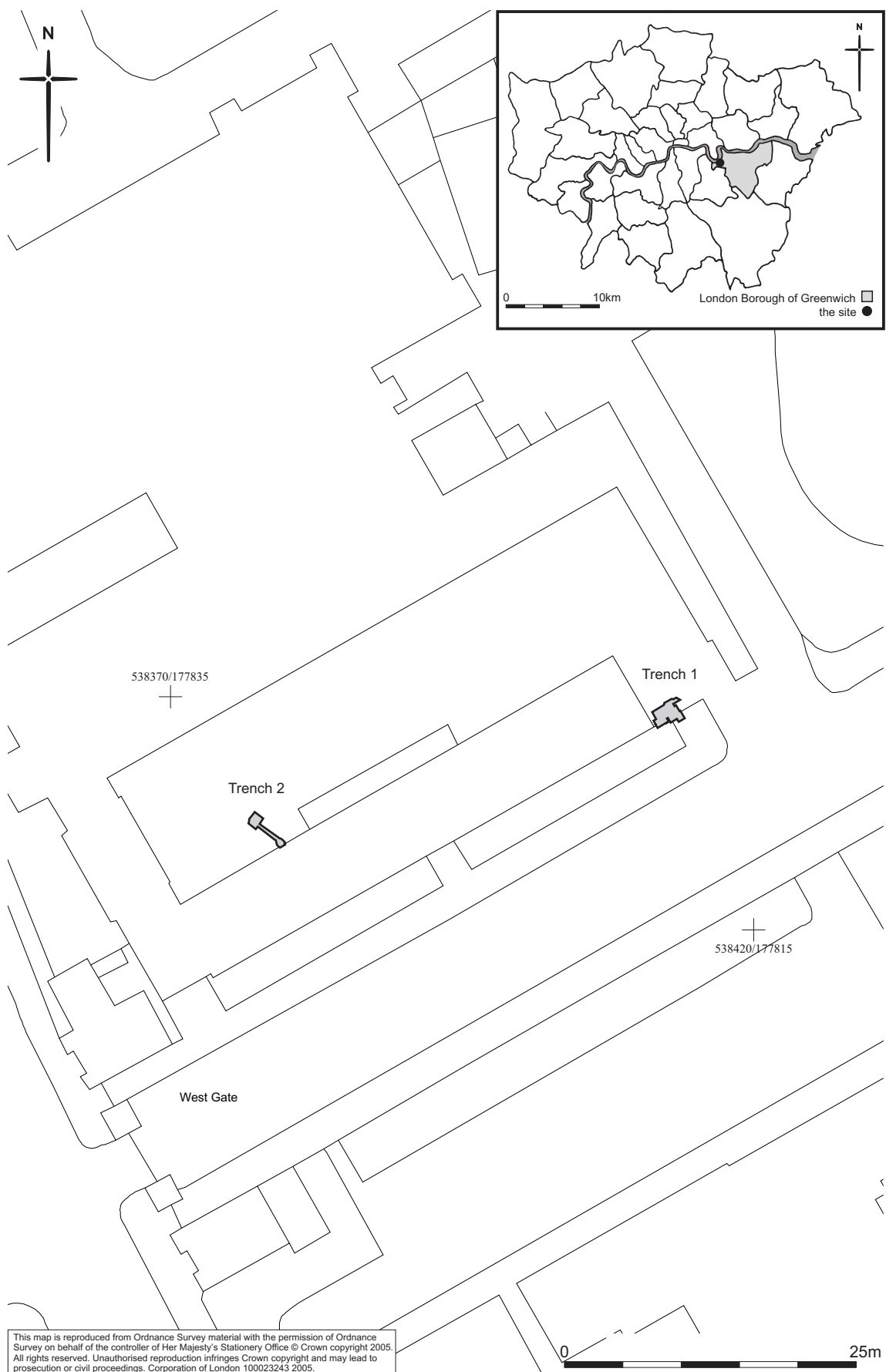


Fig 1 Site location

2 The watching brief

2.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and recording during the watching brief was done in accordance with the MoLAS Archaeological Site Manual (MoLAS, 1994).

The ground was broken out and cleared by contractors under MoLAS supervision. The trenches were excavated by hand and machine by the contractors, and monitored by a member of staff from MoLAS.

The locations of the areas of excavation were recorded by a member of staff from MoLAS offsetting from adjacent standing walls and subsequently plotted onto the OS grid by MoLAS Geomatics.

The heights of observations were recorded relative to Ordnance Datum via a traverse to the OS benchmark on the south-east corner of the King Charles Building which has a value of 5.33m OD.

The site has produced two trench plans at 1:20. There were no material finds from the trenches. The site records can be found under the site code RNU05 in the MoL archive.

2.2 Results of the watching brief

Two separate interventions (trenches) were made. Trench 1 was preparatory to the construction of a new archway and Trench 2 was excavated for a new drain run. There follows a brief description of the archaeological deposits as recorded.

<i>Watching Brief Trench 1</i>	
Location	Eastern end of the Mews building
Dimensions	2.40 by 2.0 by max 0.6m deep
Modern ground level/top of slab	5.65m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	5.37m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	0.85m (maximum)
Level of base of deposits observed	4.80m OD
Natural observed	N/A

The trench was located at the south-east corner of the building. A single pillar was connected to the main building by a thin brick wall. The wall was demolished and the pit dug for geo-technical purposes to examine the stability of the ground preparatory to building an archway from the existing pillar to the building. The surface of the pit straddled flagstone paving to the east separated from turf to the west in front of the building by a stone kerb. To the north of the (former) brick wall was a tarmac surface.

The eastern part of the trench revealed much concrete (surrounding service pipes) and what appeared to be a mortar surface lying at an average of 5.37m OD. A patch of harder mortar in the centre of this area is likely to have been the footing, or base, of a previous pillar. The stone kerb had been set into a concrete base. The western half of the trench revealed concrete footings below the main building. The base of this concrete was at 5.05m OD and overlay a deposit of dark silt. Visible within this silt were red bricks that might be the remains of a former structural feature.

<i>Watching Brief Trench 2</i>	
Location	In the western end of the yard
Dimensions	1.10m (max) by 3.70m by 0.45m deep
Modern ground level/top of slab	5.35m OD (average)
Base of modern fill/slab	5.20m OD (average)
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	0.7m (maximum)
Level of base of deposits observed	4.60m OD
Natural observed	N/A

The trench was dug to connect a water pipe inside the building to an existing pipe in the courtyard. The main run of the trench was 0.35m wide and dug to an average depth of 0.45m. The northern end of the trench was widened to accommodate the construction of a manhole over the existing buried pipe, here it reached a depth of 0.70m.

The tarmac surface of the trench was an average of 90mm thick, overlying a make up deposit (of 'Type 1' aggregate) of 80mm. Below this were fills largely comprising mixed silty clays, with occasional brick and mortar fragments. Towards the northern end of the trench were two parallel brick walls running east-west. The bricks were dark red and their width was 90mm, set in a grey cement mortar. The sections revealed that there had been a previously broken stone slab covering both walls which also both rested on a concrete base. Within the larger area of the trench, at its northern extremity, there was a higher concentration of loose sandy mortar. There was no artefactual material other than fragments of brick (mid to dark red) and tile: There were also one or two fragments of oyster shell.



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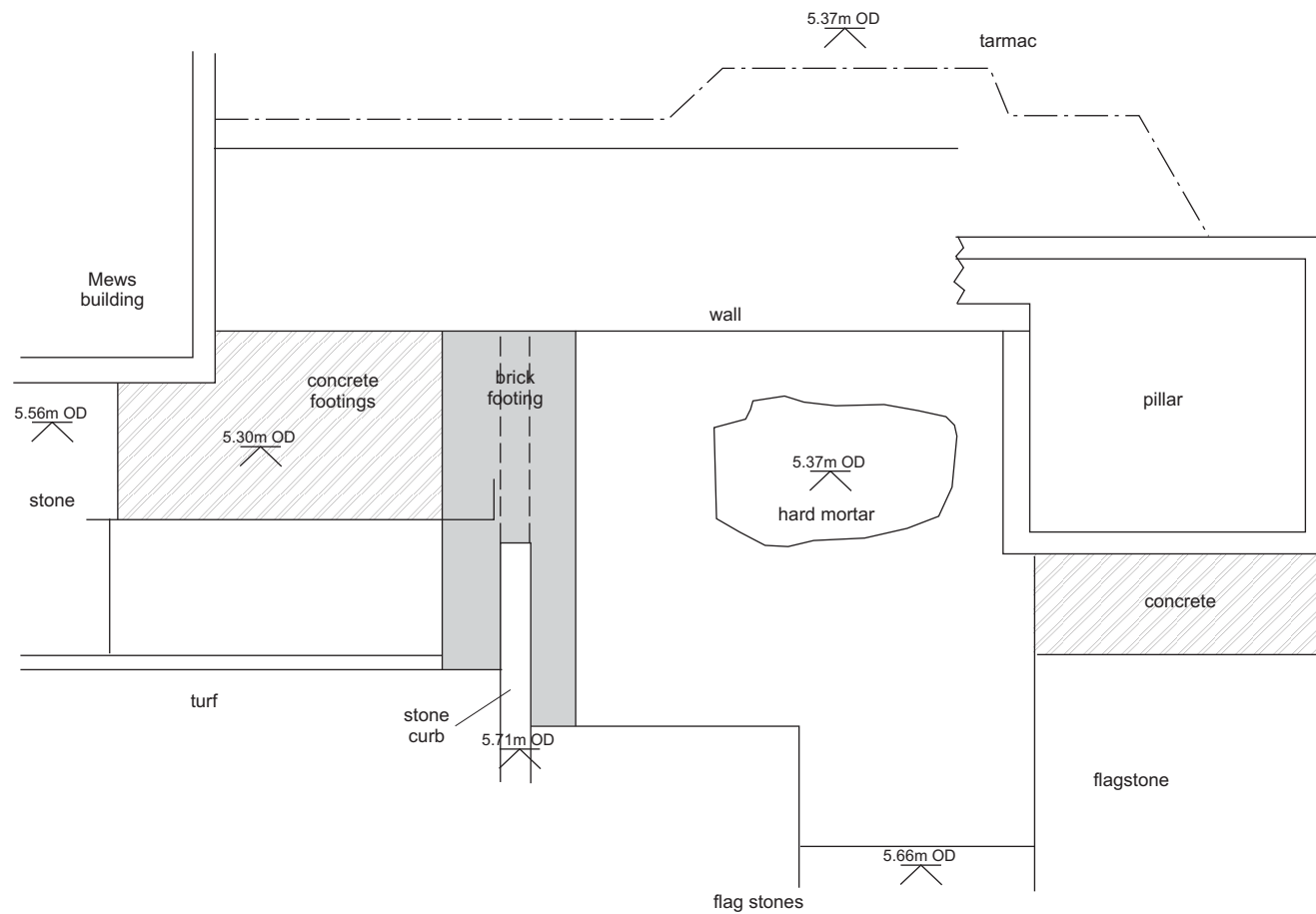


Fig 2 Plan of Trench 1

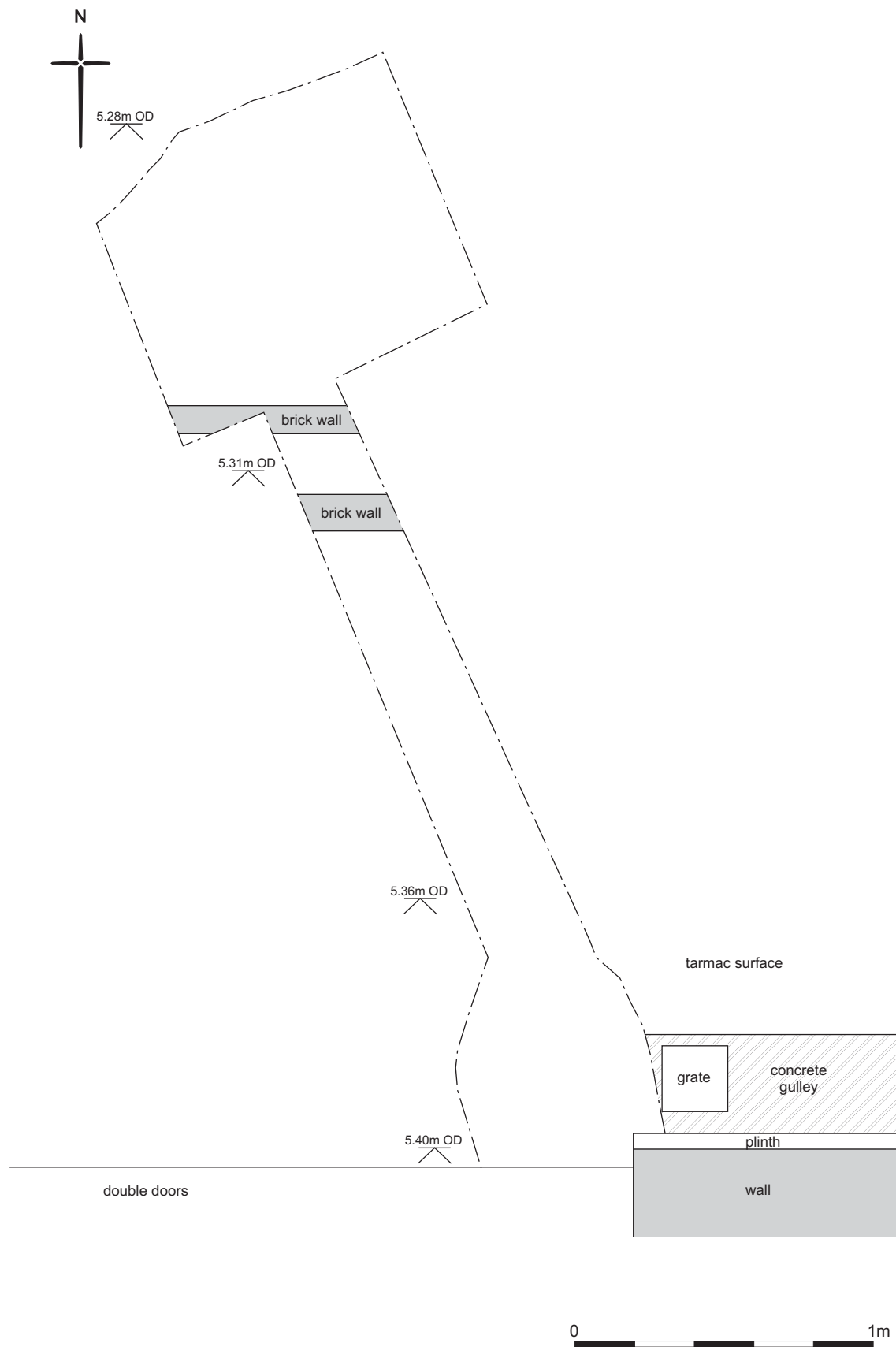


Fig 3 Plan of Trench 2

3 Potential of archaeology

3.1 Original research aims

- *What is the nature and significance of the surviving archaeological remains?*

The archaeological remains comprised low-grade backfills over minor structural features dating to the 19th and 20th centuries.

- *Are there any traces of Henry VIII's stable block, known to be in this vicinity?*

Trench 2 did not penetrate deep enough to encounter potential remains associated with the stables.

- *What evidence is there for the construction and development of the Mews building?*

The only evidence relating to the construction of the mews were concrete foundations associated with its reconstruction after wartime bomb damage. The position of a former pillar was also recorded. Trench 2 revealed a drain of possible 19th century origin.

3.2 Significance of the data

The archaeological remains recorded are of minor local significance, revealing meagre details associated with the development of the mews block largely known from documentary sources.

No significant remains were jeopardised by the development. Any deeper excavations, particularly in the western half of the site, however, may have an impact on buried remains of greater significance.

4 Publication and archiving

Information on the results of the excavation 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.

The site archive containing original records and finds will be stored with the Museum of London within 12 months of the end of the excavation.

In view of the limited potential of the material (Sections 3) and the relatively limited significance of the data (Section 3.2) 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*.

5 Acknowledgements

The Museum of London Archaeology Service (MoLAS) would like to thank The Greenwich Foundation for commissioning this report. In particular we should like to thank Messrs Duncan Wilson and Neil Coe. We should also like to thank Dr Michael Turner (English Heritage) for his advice.

6 Bibliography

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7 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

7.1 OASIS ID: molas1-10900

Project details

Project name	The Mews, Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, London SE10
Short description of the project	Watching brief on two small pits. Modern fills were over and around 19th and 20th century structural footings.
Project dates	Start: 04-07-2005 End: 12-07-2005
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	RNU05 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM)
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	PAVEMENT Post Medieval
Monument type	YARD Post Medieval

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON GREENWICH GREENWICH The Mews, Old Royal Naval College, Greenwich, London
Postcode	SE10
Study area	1300.00 Square metres
National grid reference	TQ 38390 77832 Point
Height OD	Min: 5.30m Max: 5.60m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MoLAS
Project brief originator	English Heritage/Department of Environment
Project design originator	MoLAS
Project director/manager	Robin Nielsen
Project supervisor	JMC Bowsher
Sponsor or funding body	The Greenwich Foundation for the Old Royal Naval College

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Digital Archive ID	RNU05
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Paper Archive ID	RNU05

Project bibliography 1

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