

CENTRE POINT TOWER CENTRE POINT LINK AND CENTRE POINT HOUSE

101–103 New Oxford Street
and 5–24 St Giles High Street
London WC1

London Borough of Camden

Archaeological evaluation report

February 2015



**CENTRE POINT TOWER, CENTRE POINT LINK AND
CENTRE POINT HOUSE
101–103 New Oxford Street and 5–24 St Giles High Street
London WC1**

Site Code: CPO14
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Planning reference: 2013/1957/P
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Archaeological evaluation report

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Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology) at Centre Point Tower, Centre Point Link and Centre Point House, 101–103 New Oxford Street and 5–24 St Giles High Street, London WC1. Centre Point is a Grade II Listed building in the London Borough of Camden. The report has been commissioned from MOLA by Almacantar Limited.

In accordance with the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (MOLA, 2014), a single evaluation trench was excavated on the site from 13th November to 19th December 2014.

The evaluation recorded a 19th or 20th century brick wall, superseded by two brick walls and a floor, all contemporary and dated to the 20th century. All structures were probably remains of basements/cellars associated with the White Lion public house. The White Lion is recorded on the 1875 First Edition Ordnance Survey map and appears to still be in use eighty six years later, featuring on the 1957-61 Ordnance Survey map. The structural remains were sealed by modern infill deposits.

Results from the evaluation indicate the development is unlikely to impact on archaeological remains. Late 19th(?)/20th century basement/cellar walls were recorded at heights below the predicted natural land surface and have probably removed any earlier features/deposits. A watching brief undertaken in the public highway south of the site suggests late post-medieval features/deposits may survive but these would not be affected by the development. To the north of the evaluation trench, any archaeological remains would have been removed during the construction of Centre Point House and the adjoining public house.

MOLA recommends that there is no value in any further archaeological work in response to this development, although the decision on any archaeological mitigation rests with the Local Planning Authority.

Contents

<u>1</u>	<u>Introduction</u>	<u>3</u>
<u>2</u>	<u>Topographical and historical background</u>	<u>4</u>
<u>3</u>	<u>Evaluation methodology</u>	<u>6</u>
<u>4</u>	<u>Results of the evaluation</u>	<u>7</u>
<u>5</u>	<u>Archaeological potential</u>	<u>9</u>
<u>6</u>	<u>Proposed development impact and conclusions</u>	<u>11</u>
<u>7</u>	<u>Acknowledgements</u>	<u>12</u>
<u>8</u>	<u>Bibliography</u>	<u>13</u>
<u>9</u>	<u>OASIS archaeological report form</u>	<u>18</u>

List of Illustrations

Front cover: Ordnance Survey map of 1916

Fig 1: Site location	14
Fig 2: Trench location	15
Fig 3: Trench 1 under excavation, looking west. Shows walls [1], [4] and [5]; slab [2] and mortar layer [3]	16
Fig 4: Trench 1, post-excavation plan	17

List of tables

Table 1: Trench 1	7
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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological evaluation was carried out by MOLA at Centre Point Tower, Centre Point Link and Centre Point House, 101–103 New Oxford Street and 5–24 St Giles High Street, London WC1 ('the site') from 13th November to 19th December 2014. This document is the Report on that work.
- 1.1.2 A written *Archaeological Desk-based Assessment* (DBA) was previously prepared, which covered the whole area of the site (URS, 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.

1.2 Planning background

- 1.2.1 The legislative and planning framework in which the evaluation took place was fully set out in the *Archaeological Desk-based assessment*. The DBA informed the subsequent *Written scheme of investigation for an archaeological evaluation* (MOLA, 2014) which set out the project design for the evaluation. To summarise here:
- 1.2.2 The evaluation was carried out to address a condition attached to the Planning Consent provided by the London Borough of Camden (Consent reference: 2013/1957/P; Condition number 6).

1.3 Scope of the evaluation

- 1.3.1 Evaluation is defined by English Heritage as intended to provide information about the archaeological resource in order to contribute to the:
- 1.3.2 - formulation of an appropriate response or mitigation strategy to planning applications or other proposals which may adversely affect such archaeological remains, or enhance them; and/or
- 1.3.3 - formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigations within a programme of research.
- 1.3.4 An archaeological evaluation is a limited fieldwork exercise designed to test the conclusions of preliminary desk based work. It is not the same as full excavation.
- 1.3.5 The evaluation was carried out within the terms of the relevant Standard for evaluation specified by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA, 2013).
- 1.3.6 All work has been undertaken within the research priorities established in the Museum of London's A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002.
- 1.3.7 All work was undertaken within research aims and objectives established in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the evaluation (Section 1.6.3).

2 Topographical and historical background

The entire site lies within the London Suburbs Archaeological Priority Area as defined by the London Borough of Camden. A detailed description of the geology, archaeology and history of the site was provided in the earlier *Archaeological desk-based assessment* (URS 2013). A brief resume is provided here:

2.1 Topography

The general topography of the application site and its surrounding area is formed by the essentially flat Lynch Hill gravel terrace which slopes gently southwards towards the River Thames. Street level drops from a height of 25.50m to 25.60m Ordnance Datum (OD) on New Oxford Street to a height of 24.55m to 25.25m OD on St Giles' High Street immediately to the south of the application site.

British Geological Survey (BGS) mapping (BGS, 2006) records the underlying solid geology of the application site as the London Clay Formation, Lower Eocene sediment laid down when London was submerged in an inter-glacial deep water marine environment. The superficial geology of the application site is recorded by the BGS mapping as comprising: Quaternary sands and gravels of the Lynch Hill Gravel Terrace. This terrace represents a former flood plain of the ancient River Thames and was probably laid down in cold conditions during the Wolstonian glaciation between c.303,000 BP and c.250,000 BP (Gibbard, 1985).

2.2 Archaeology

- 2.2.1 **Prehistoric:** The location of the site on the well-drained Lynch Hill gravel terrace would have made the area attractive for settlement; however there is no evidence for prehistoric activity in the vicinity of the site, possibly as a result of post-medieval development and truncation. Archaeological evidence is limited to isolated finds of flint tools recovered from the terrace gravels.
- 2.2.2 **Roman:** Evidence for Roman activity in the vicinity of the site is limited to a single cremation burial (found on New Oxford Street prior to 1894) and three Roman roads which linked *Londinium* with other Roman towns. These include the route leading west from the city to Silchester (along the line of Oxford Street and New Oxford Street); a section of the road which by-passed the city on its way to Colchester is shadowed by Theobald's Road. Tottenham Court Road to the north of the site also follows the line of a suspected Roman road.
- 2.2.3 **Early medieval (Saxon):** Throughout the early medieval (Saxon) period the site was located some distance from the known settlements. The main Saxon settlement of Lundenwic was a busy trading port which developed and flourished for c 200 years (7th–9th centuries) in the area around Aldwych, the Strand and Covent Garden, to the south-east of the site. Its full extent is not clear, but to the west it probably extended at least to what is now Charing Cross Road and Trafalgar Square and the northern boundary is thought to be some distance to the south of the site in the approximate area of Shorts Gardens.
- 2.2.4 **Medieval:** During the later medieval period, the site lay in open land to the north of the precinct of St Giles Hospital, a leper hospital founded in 1117 and dedicated to St Giles in the Fields. The hospital's gatehouse stood to the south of Centre Point

on St Giles' High Street. Following the foundation of the hospital, the village of St Giles in the Fields developed as a small settlement along St Giles' High Street. The site appears to have been located within a plot of farmland recorded as 'The Pitance Croft' on a map dated 1818 which purports to depict the 13th century parish of St Giles and may have formed part of the hospital's holdings. Archaeological investigations nearby have revealed evidence of medieval occupation including drainage ditches and quarrying at the St Giles Court site and a masonry wall foundation of 13th-century or later date at 16 Denmark Place.

2.2.5 **Post-medieval:** Cartographic evidence indicates that from the 16th century onwards, the area surrounding the site became developed as suburbs of the Cities of London and Westminster. By the mid-17th century the site lay at the junction of two of the main roads leading west and north from London. Between 1642 and 1643 Parliament raised Civil War defences which encircled the city. Part of these defences enclosed the junction of Oxford Street and Tottenham Court Road comprising a fort, battery and siegeworks that ran eastwards in a line across the southern side of Bedford Square. The conjectured line of further Civil War siegeworks comprising a ditch and bank extend across the area immediately to the north of the site from the current line of Great Ormond Street.

Faithorne and Newcourt's map of 1658 show the site occupied by houses lining St Giles High Street, with orchards to the rear and open fields beyond. By the time of Morgan's map of 1682, the site had been incorporated into an emerging pattern of new streets and housing.

During the 18th and first half of the 19th century, the site lay within a notorious slum known as the St Giles Rookery. Excavations at St Giles Court to the east revealed well-preserved structural remains of 17th/18th century buildings (wall foundations, vaulted cellars) and their associated yards (wells, drains, cess pits, cobbled surfaces). To the west of the site, excavations in advance of the new Crossrail station recorded structures dating to the 17th century and subsequent phases of 18th-, 19th- and early 20th-century development, including evidence of the Victorian Crosse and Blackwell industrial complex.

3 Evaluation methodology

3.1 Field methodology

- 3.1.1 One evaluation trench was excavated, measuring 2m by 2m by 3.6m deep.
- 3.1.2 The ground surface was broken out and cleared by contractors under MOLA supervision. The trench was excavated by hand by the contractors, monitored by a MOLA supervisor. A number of 19th/20th century structural features were cleaned and recorded by a MOLA supervisor.
- 3.1.3 The investigation was carried out in accordance with the *Written Scheme of Investigation* (MOLA, 2014).
- 3.1.4 The trench location was plotted on a plan provided by the client (Dwg. no: 25411T-01-4, Plowman Craven) using an 'offset methodology' and subsequently tied to the OS grid by the MOLA Geomatics team.

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, 2014).

3.3 Site archive

Number of overall location plans	1
Number of Context (SU) sheets	5
Number of photographs	7
Number of Plan sheets	1

4 Results of the evaluation

For trench locations see Fig 2

4.1 Trench 1

Table 1: Trench 1

Location	South of Centre Point House, outside entrance to 15 St Giles High Street
Dimensions	2m by 2m by 3.6m depth
Modern ground level	25.56m OD
Base of modern fill	Unknown
Depth of archaeological stratigraphy above natural	N/A
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	Unknown
Top of surviving natural observed at:	N/A
Level of base of trench	21.96m OD

- 4.1.1 In situ natural ground was not exposed. The earliest feature was a late 19th(?) or early 20th century brick wall [4] extending across the trench on a NE-SW alignment (Fig 3, Fig 4), 0.49m wide with a truncated surface height at 22.39m OD. The area immediately south of [4] was infilled with a soil/rubble deposit.
- 4.1.2 The upper surface of wall [4] was sealed along its northern edge by a narrow layer of light yellow-brown mortar [3] (Fig 3). The mortar's function was unclear, but it may have been truncated remains of defunct floor bedding.
- 4.1.3 Mortar [3] and wall [4] were sealed by a concrete slab, serving as bedding for a thin floor layer [2] (Fig 3), comprised of very decayed wood or vinyl(?) beneath a bitumen-type sealant. The slab/floor had a combined thickness of 0.25m and its surface lay at 22.64m OD.
- 4.1.4 Floor [2] was contemporary with, and inserted along the southern edge of a 20th century brick wall [1] (Fig 3, Fig 4) which was built immediately adjacent to wall [4] on its north side. Wall [1] was 0.61m wide with a truncated surface height at 22.66m OD.
- 4.1.5 Brick wall [5] was part-exposed towards and along the north trench limit (Fig 3, Fig 4). It was aligned NW-SE and was part of the same build as wall [1]. It demonstrated an extension of the building northward, serving as an internal room partition. Its truncated surface height also lay at 22.66m OD.
- 4.1.6 Walls [1], [4] and [5] were excavated to a depth of 22.16m OD (3.4m below ground level) but all extended deeper, below the base of the trench. Walls [1], [5] and slab/floor [2] were sealed by a soil/rubble infill excavated to 22.16m OD, which also continued below the base of the trench. At 22.79m OD it was overlain by a 1.63m thick layer of mixed sand/gravel with concrete and brick rubble to 24.42m OD, in turn sealed by 0.7m of garden-type soil to 25.12m OD. The soil underlay the existing ground surface, which included a concrete slab beneath a layer of cement, serving as bedding for block paving; surface height at 25.56m OD. Soil/rubble infill south of wall [4] was excavated to 21.96m OD (3.6m below ground level) but also extended

below the base of the trench.

- 4.1.7 In summary: the walls and floors represented two building phases, both likely associated with the White Lion public house. The White Lion is recorded on the 1875 First Edition Ordnance Survey map (see DBA, Fig 8) and appears to still be in use at least eighty six years later, featuring on the 1957-61 Ordnance Survey map (see DBA, Fig 10). The walls and floor are at a depth indicating basement/cellar structures; the late 19th(?) or 20th century wall [4] superseded by 20th century walls [1], [5] and floor [2].
- 4.1.8 The level of the structures described above demonstrate that they have truncated the *in situ* natural ground surface and will have removed any archaeological remains, with the possible exception of deep-cut features; wells or pits for example.

4.2 The finds

No finds were retrieved.

5 Archaeological potential

5.1 Answering original research aims

A number of broad objectives and research questions have been identified for this evaluation:

- *What is the nature and level of natural topography? Does the untruncated surface of natural gravels and/or brickearth subsoil survive?*

The natural land surface was not exposed. The heights of basement/cellar walls recorded during the evaluation indicate they would have truncated in situ natural ground.

- *What are the earliest deposits identified and is there any evidence for prehistoric activity?*

There was no evidence for prehistoric activity. The earliest feature was a post-medieval wall of late 19th or 20th century date.

- *Is there any evidence to suggest that Saxon activities were taking place in the area of the site? If so, what is the character and nature of this activity?*

None

- *What evidence is there for medieval activity on the site? Do any deposits/features survive that can be related to the precinct of St Giles Hospital which lay to the south of the site? If so, what form do they take? (agricultural activity, structural remains?)*

None

- *Do any features survive relating to the village of St Giles? If so, what form do they take (structures, property/field boundaries)?*

None

- *Do post-medieval structures survive? If so, what date are the earliest post-medieval buildings on the site and how do they relate to the street pattern shown on early maps?*

A late 19th or 20th century brick wall survived, superseded by two brick walls and a floor, all contemporary and dated to the 20th century. All structures were probably remains of basements/cellars associated with the White Lion public house. The White Lion is recorded on the 1875 First Edition Ordnance Survey map and appears to still be in use eighty six years later, featuring on the 1957-61 Ordnance Survey map.

- *What are the latest deposits identified?*

20th century brick basement/cellar walls and a contemporary floor surface.

- *What is the extent of modern disturbance?*

With the possible exception of the earlier brick basement/cellar wall [4], which may date to the late 19th rather than 20th century, all structural remains and overlying fills are modern (post-1901). Heights of structural remains in the base of the trench to the top of infill beneath the existing ground surface, ranged from 22.39m OD to 25.12m OD and the base of their foundation were not reached.

5.2 General discussion of potential

The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of ancient ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification above natural ground) is negligible. Potential for survival of cut features also very low, though it is possible that deep-cut features such as wells or pits may survive. However, further south beyond the limits of the proposed basement, there is a moderate potential for archaeological remains dating from the 17th to late 19th centuries (as evidenced by recent excavations at St Giles Court to the east, the new Crossrail station to the west, and recent excavations in St Giles High Street) although these will not be affected by this proposed development.

5.3 Significance

Whilst the 19th(?) / 20th century remains recorded during the evaluation are of local significance, there is nothing to suggest that they are of regional or national importance.

5.4 Assessment of the evaluation

The evaluation demonstrated that within the confines of the trench, 19th and/or 20th century structural remains have removed earlier archaeological features/deposits (with the possible exception of underlying deep-cut features) and likely truncated the natural land surface. This truncation is likely to extend throughout the area of excavation required for the construction of the new basement. However, any further excavations further south in the area currently occupied by the public highway, would have potential for late post-medieval features (see Section 5.2 above). Immediately north of the trench; archaeological remains will have been removed during construction of Centre Point House basement and the public house immediately north of the evaluation trench.

6 Proposed development impact and conclusions

The proposed development comprises the refurbishment and restoration of the Grade II Listed Centre Point Buildings, involving changes of use from office to residential and retail/restaurant/bar. At Centre Point House, intrusive works will be undertaken in the basement and sub-basement, creating a small extension for the construction of the base of two car lifts. New piling and reinforced concrete walls will also be required in the sub-basement in order to create new stair wells. At the southern end of Centre Point House, a new extended basement level will be created, utilising piled foundations and secant pile retaining walls.

The evaluation has demonstrated that the development not impact on any significant archaeological remains as late 19th(?) /20th century basement/cellar walls were recorded at heights below the predicted natural land surface and would have removed any earlier features/deposits.

MOLA recommends that there is no value in any further archaeological work in response to this development, although the decision on any archaeological mitigation rests with the Local Planning Authority.

7 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank:

Dave Sankey and Rob Tutt from the MOLA Field team

Mark Burch from the MOLA Geomatics team

Judit Peresztegi from the MOLA Drawing Office

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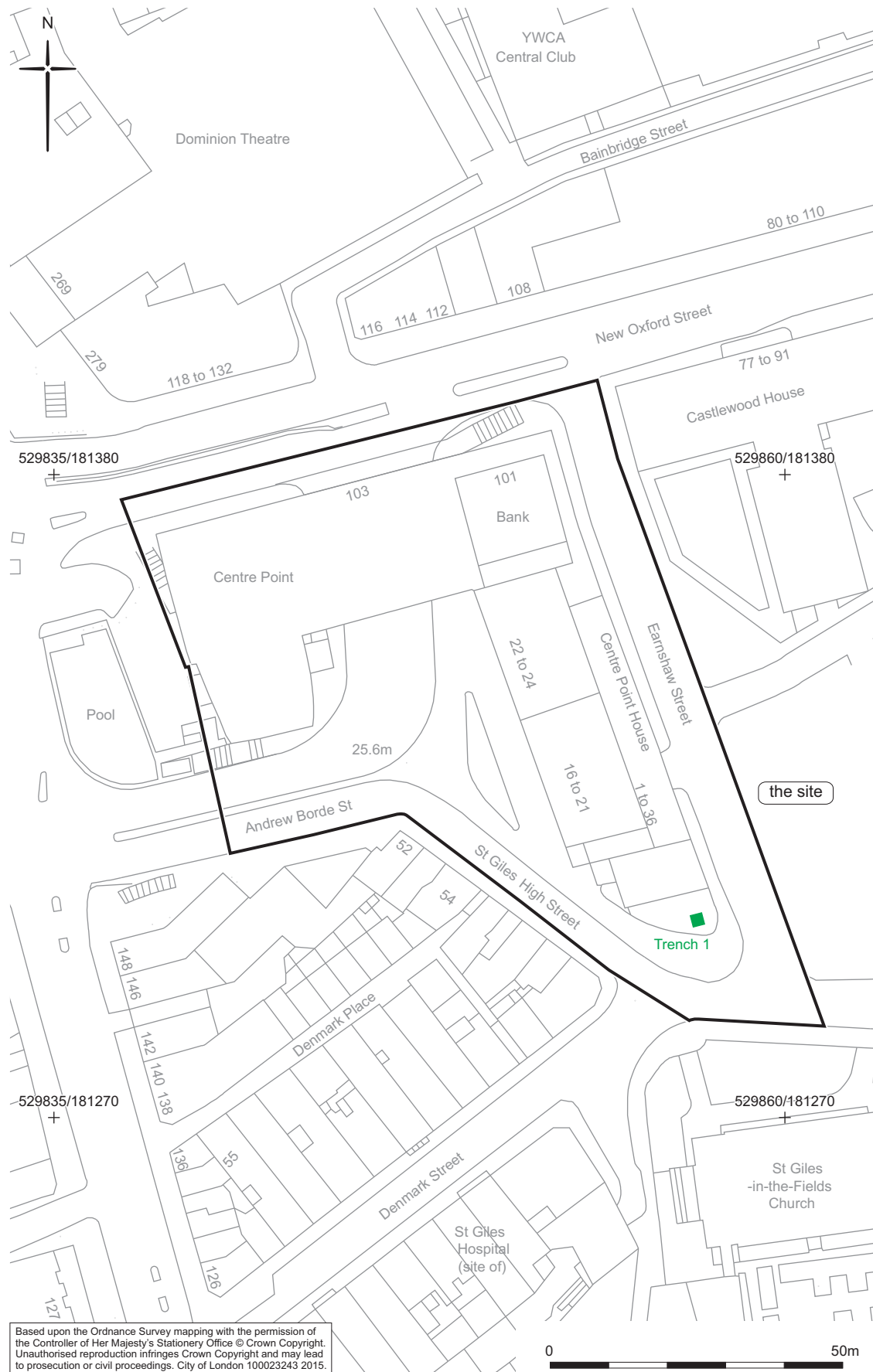
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Fig 1 Site location



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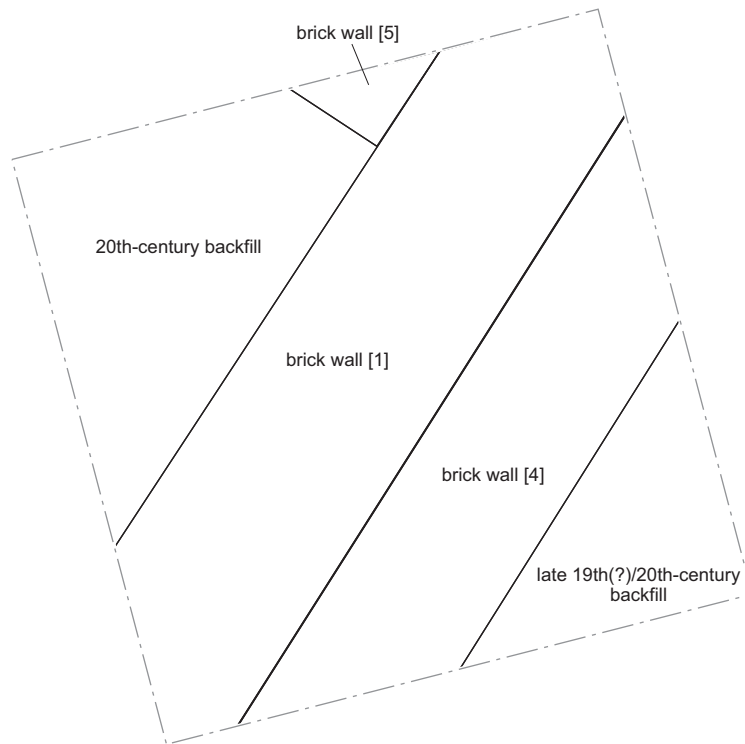
Fig 2 Trench location



Fig 3 Trench 1 under excavation, looking west. Shows walls [1], [4] and [5]; slab [2] and mortar layer [3]



529945/181306



529945/181302



Fig 4 Trench 1, post-excavation plan

9 OASIS archaeological report form

9.1 OASIS ID: molas1-203427

Project details

Project name	Centre Point Tower, Centre Point Link and Centre Point House, London WC1
Short description of the project	A single evaluation trench was excavated on the site from 13th November to 19th December 2014. The evaluation recorded a 19th or 20th century brick wall, superseded by two brick walls and a floor, all contemporary and dated to the 20th century. All structures were probably remains of basements/cellars associated with the White Lion public house. The White Lion is recorded on the 1875 First Edition Ordnance Survey map and appears to still be in use eighty six years later, featuring on the 1957-61 Ordnance Survey map. The structural remains were sealed by modern infill deposits.
Project dates	Start: 13-11-2014 End: 19-12-2014
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	CPO14 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	Listed Building
Monument type	WALL Post Medieval
Monument type	WALLS Modern
Monument type	FLOOR Modern
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CAMDEN CAMDEN Centre Point Tower, Centre Point Link and Centre Point House, London WC1
Postcode	WC1
Study area	10080.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 29940 81305 51.5152080916 -0.127130221235 51 30 54 N 000 07 37 W Point

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MOLA
Project brief originator	MOLA
Project design originator	MOLA
Project director/manager	David Divers
Project supervisor	Jez Taylor
Type of sponsor/funding body	Developer
Name of sponsor/funding body	Almacantar Limited

Project archives

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

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Centre Point Tower, Centre Point Link and Centre Point House, 101-103 New Oxford Street and 5-24 St Giles High Street, London WC1, Archaeological evaluation report
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