



**36–43 Kirby Street  
London  
EC1**

London Borough of Camden

An archaeological evaluation report

February 2007



**MUSEUM OF LONDON**

**Archaeology Service**

36–43 Kirby Street  
London  
EC1

London Borough of Camden  
An archaeological evaluation report

Site Code: KIT07  
National Grid Reference: 531396 181808

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## **Summary (non-technical)**

*This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service on the site at 36–43 Kirby Street, EC1, London. The report was commissioned from MoLAS by Unite Integrated Solutions plc.*

*Following the recommendations of the method statement two evaluation trenches were excavated on the site. The results of the field evaluation have helped to refine the initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site and has shown that 19th century cellars truncate the site to the natural sand by around 2.60m in depth and no archaeological features or finds were recovered.*

*The archaeological potential of the site is negative and in the light of revised understanding this report recommends that no further work is necessary.*

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Front cover: Photograph of the site looking north

# 1 Introduction

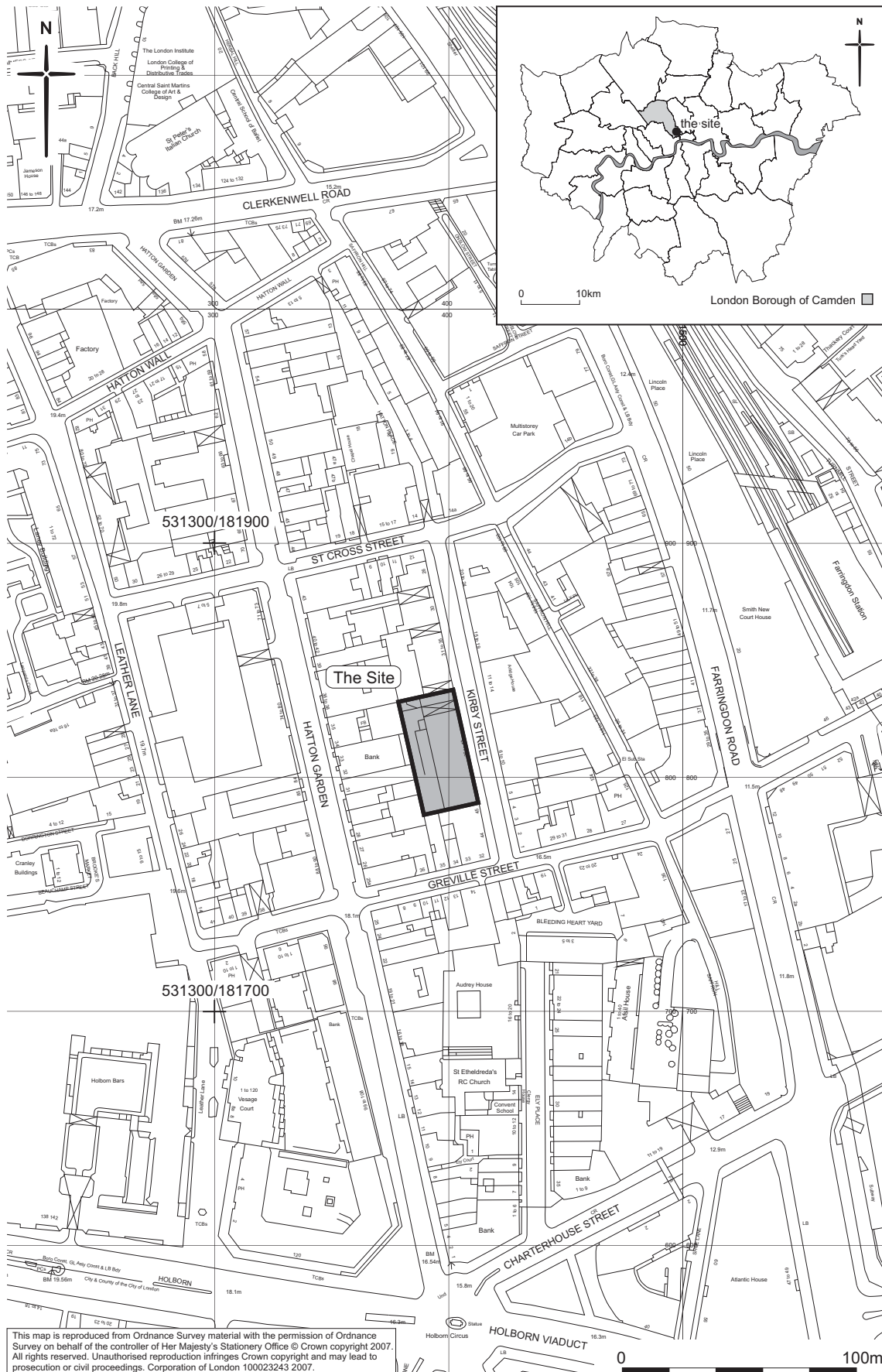
## 1.1 Site background

The evaluation took place at 36–43 Kirby Street, EC1, hereafter called ‘the site’. The site comprises a building fronting the west side of Kirby Street, and is bounded by buildings on all other sides. The centre of the site lies at National Grid reference 531396 181808. The site code is KIT07.

A *method statement* was previously prepared, which covers the whole area of the site (MoLAS, 2007). The *method statement* 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.

An archaeological field evaluation was subsequently carried out within two evaluation trenches located within the yard to the west of the main building. Window samples and a borehole were also undertaken by WSP Environmental Limited.

The proposed redevelopment involves the extension of the basement footprint southwards.



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Fig 1 Site location

## 1.2 Planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Method Statement* which formed the project design for the evaluation (see Section 1.2, MoLAS, 2007).

## 1.3 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Unite Integrated Solutions plc 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).

Field evaluation, and the *Evaluation report* which comments on the results of that exercise, are defined in the most recent English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage, 1998) as intended to provide information about the archaeological resource in order to contribute to the:

- formulation of a strategy for the preservation or management of those remains; and/or
- 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
- formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigations within a programme of research

## 1.4 Aims and objectives

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

The following research aims and objectives were established in the *Method Statement* for the evaluation (Section 2):

Is there any evidence for the sites use as gardens during the Late Medieval/early Post medieval periods?

Is there any evidence for the tributary found to the east at KBY98 and west at NGD04?

If so what date was it infilled and were animal burials associated with it as at KBY98?

What is the nature and level of natural topography?

What are the earliest deposits identified?



What are the latest deposits identified?

## 2 Topographical and historical background

The site is located on the Hackney Gravels (BGS sheet 256), which form part of the Post-diversionary Thames River Terrace Deposits, although archaeological investigations nearby suggests that the site lies within the Fleet valley (London Clay overlain with floodplain alluvium).

There is virtually no information on prehistoric activity within the area of the site. The only evidence is a 'flint implement' dating to the Early Mesolithic period (*c* 10,000–7,000 BC) found in Holborn Hill in the later 19th century (GLSMR ref. 081763).

Within a decade of the arrival of the Romans in AD 43, the Romans had established the town of Londinium on the north bank of the Thames where the City of London now stands. The site was located *c* 1km to the north-west of the settlement. The line of present day Holborn, *c* 220m to the south, follows the approximate line of a Roman road which left the Roman town at Newgate, the road continuing west to Roman Silchester (Reading). A number of Roman burials have been found alongside the road, including part of an inscription from the tomb of G. Pomponius Valens from Barter Street (1.1km to the west) and a lead cist with coins of Vespasian from Endell Street (1.3km to the west). A sculptured Roman tombstone was found in 1911 in Lamb's Conduit Street (800m to the west). Further Roman burials have been found in Gray's Inn Road (400m to the west). In 1905, a 2nd century cinery urn with associated bones was found on the site of the Birbeck Bank, and in 1913 two further burials were found dated to the 1st century. Roman cinery urns were found in the 19th and early 20th centuries at Holborn Hill, *c* 850m to the south-west of the site. The site is, however, probably too far north of the road to have been used for burials.

In 1990, a watching brief by the Department of Greater London Archaeology (site code ELP90) revealed the remains of a Roman structure, *c* 100m to the south of the site. The exact nature of the structure is not known.

Following the departure of the Roman army in AD 410, Londinium was abandoned, and Early and Middle Saxon settlements grew up to the west of the Roman town in the area of the Strand and Covent Garden. In the mid to late 9th century the settlement shifted eastwards to re-occupy the site of the old Roman walled town (MoLAS 2000, 191). This defended settlement was named Lundenburh and formed the basis of the later medieval city.

The earliest map which shows the area is Agas' woodcut of 1560. It appears that the site lay to within the gardens of Ely Palace, the London residence of the Bishop of Ely (GLSMR ref. 082091). In 1290, the property included a great hall, chapel, stables and

58 acres of pasture land (Barron, 1979). The walled gardens of Ely Palace, were famous in particular for vines and strawberries (*ibid*).

Ely Palace survived the reign of Henry VIII but not the reign of Elizabeth I. In 1575, Bishop Richard Cox, leased the garden and orchard to the Queen's favourite, Sir Christopher Hatton, although the Bishop retained the right to walk in the garden and to gather twenty bushels of roses every year (Barron, 1979). This was followed two years later by a further granting of land to Hatton. Hatton, who became Lord Chancellor, built his own house on the land and lived there until he died in 1591 (hence the modern name for the area, Hatton Gardens). Faithorne and Newcourt's pictorial map of 1658 shows the extensive walled formal garden and the site area lies within it. By 1672 cartographic evidence shows houses have been built along the west side of Kirby Road, however the area of evaluation for the site lies behind these houses, probably in gardens or yards. This layout is still apparent in Horwoods map of 1799 and it is not until the 19th century that buildings cover the area of evaluation.

## **3 The evaluation**

### **3.1 Methodology**

All archaeological excavation and monitoring during the evaluation was carried out in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (MoLAS, 2007), and the *MoLAS Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 1994).

Two evaluation trenches were excavated on site. Trench 2 measured 3m by 2m and trench 3 measured 3m by 3m. Trench 1 was not excavated as it lay over the roof of the existing basement.

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

The locations of evaluation trenches were recorded by MoLAS by offsetting from adjacent standing walls and plotted on to a Basement Survey (Drg. No.20519-L02). This information was then plotted onto the OS grid.

A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was made in accordance with the principles set out in the MoLAS site recording manual (MoLAS, 1994). Levels were calculated by transferring the TBM from 31-37 Leather Lane. The value was 20.28m OD.

The site has produced: 2 trench location plan; 7 context records; 1 section drawings at 1:20; and 15 digital photographs. No finds were recovered from the site.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code KIT07 in the MoL archive.

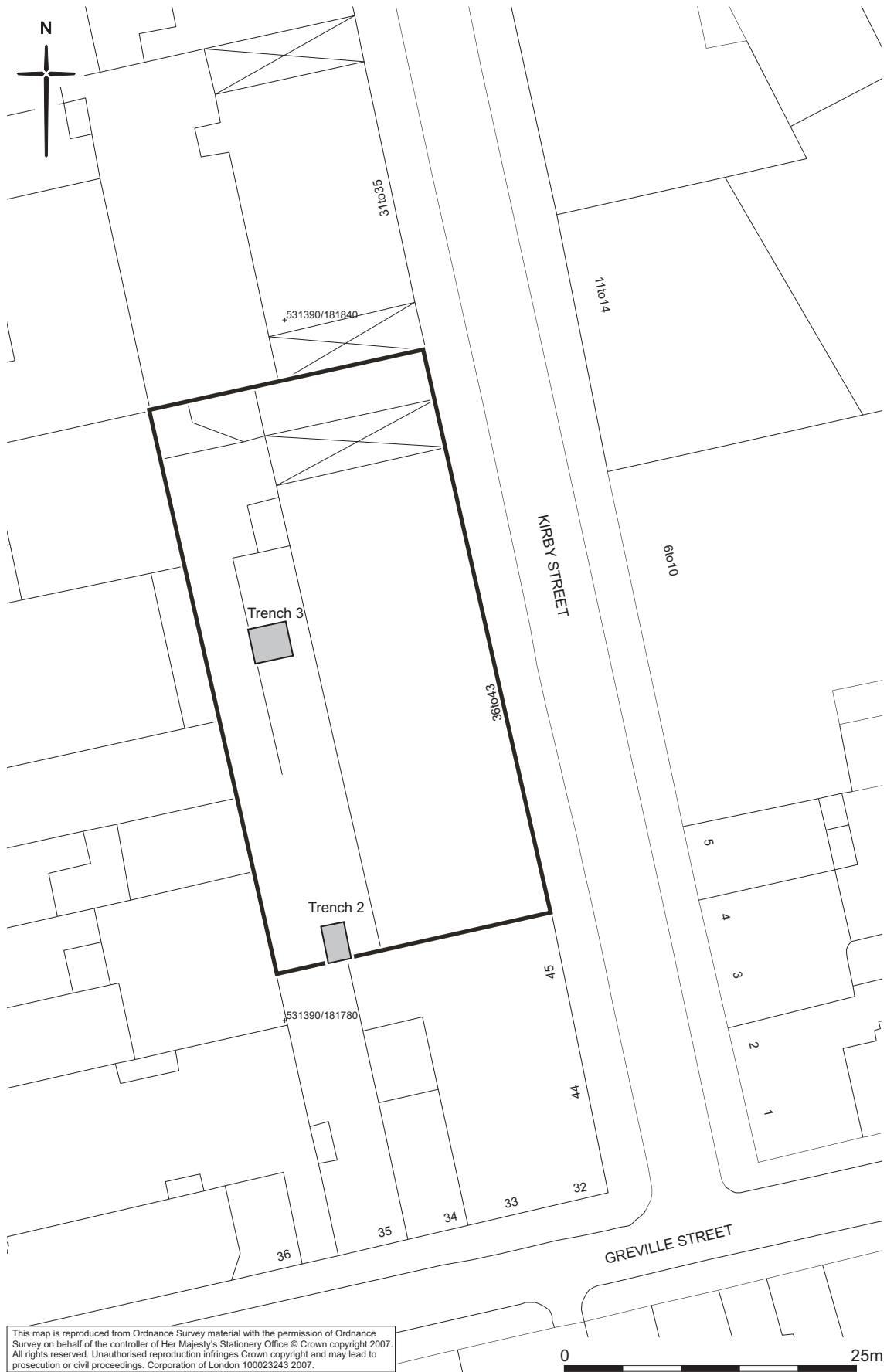


Fig 2 Trench location plan

## **3.2 Results of the evaluation**

### **Trench 1**

Trench 1 was not excavated as it was originally located above the present basement.

### **Trench 2**

The natural sand [1] was reached at 13.83m OD which contained “pressed-in” lumps of concrete and brick. The true level of natural; would be at around 14.05m OD. Overlying the natural was a compacted layer of “spilled” concrete [2] containing brick. The top of this deposit was contaminated with diesel. Overlying the above deposit was a 150mm thick layer of mid brown sand with patches of redeposited grey clay [3] containing concrete and brick. The top was recorded at 14.21m OD. The top of the trench was a 150mm thick concrete slab recorded at 14.36m OD.

### **Trench 3**

The natural sand [1] was reached at 14.00m OD. Aligned north-south was a late 19th-century brick wall [4] measuring 2m north-south by 500mm east-west and was constructed from yellow stock brick and red frogged brick bonded with a hard grey lime mortar. The top of the wall was recorded at 14.11m OD.

To the west of the wall was a brick silt trap [5]. It measured 700mm square with a void measuring 400mm by 300mm by beyond 500mm deep and constructed from yellow stock and red frogged bricks bonded with a grey lime mortar. The void was filled with a black silt. The top was recorded at 14.02m OD.

To the south of the silt trap [6] was a 1.20m by 800mm layer of soft lime mortar measuring around 50mm thick. This may be part of a mortar mixing pit or discarded mortar. This deposit was recorded at 14.05m OD.

Along the western side of the brick wall was a square 20th-century brown ceramic down pipe measuring 200mm with the horizontal pipe [7] buried under concrete lying at 14.08m OD. To the north was a circular brown ceramic down pipe encased in concrete located at 14.03m OD.

Overlying the above features was the concrete slab measuring 150mm thick and lying at 14.24m OD.

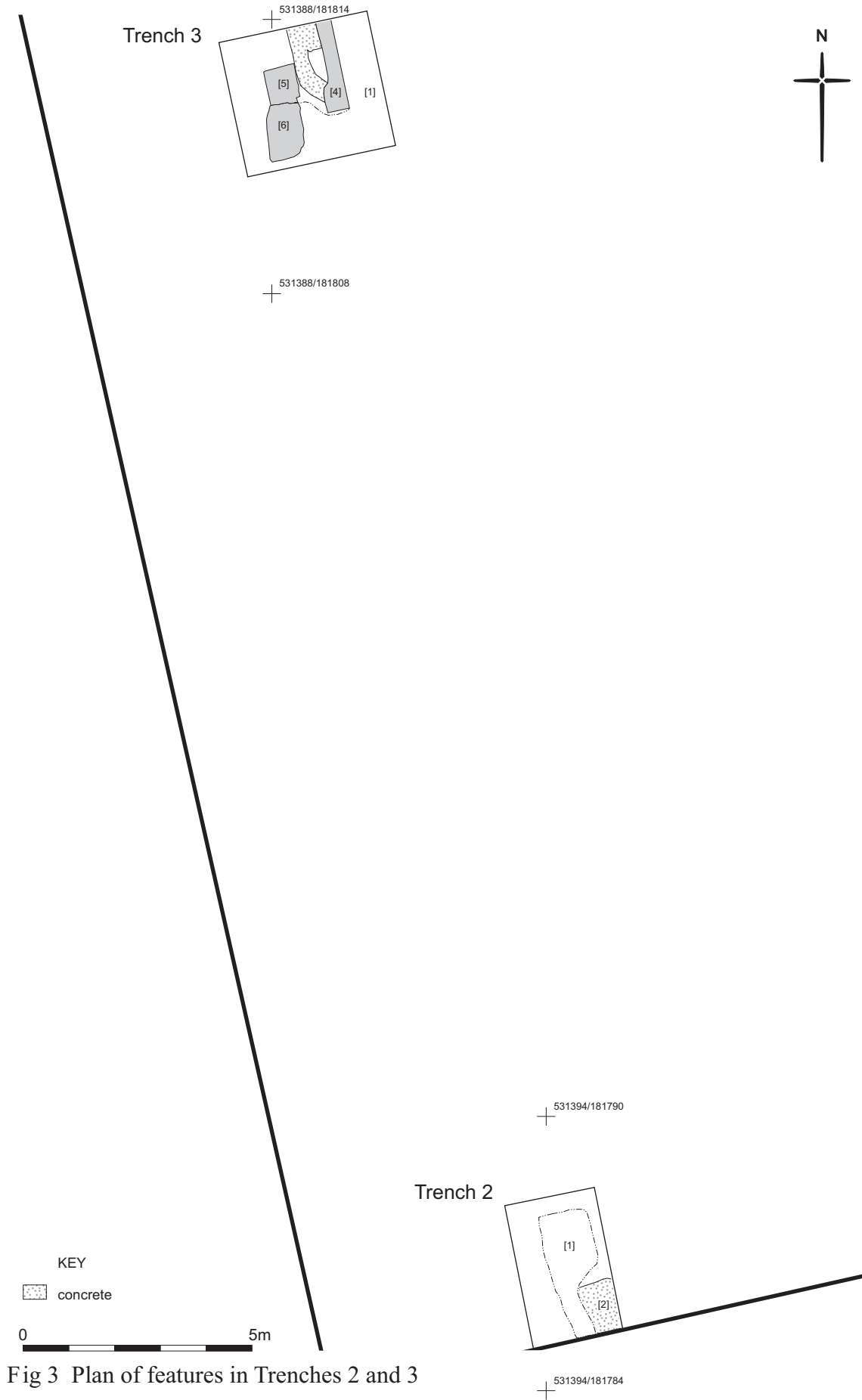


Fig 3 Plan of features in Trenches 2 and 3



Fig 4 Photograph of trench 2 looking east



Fig 5 Photograph of trench 3 looking west

## Window samples and borehole

<b>WS1</b>	
0-0.22m	Concrete slab
0.22m-1m	Sandy gravel with brick fragments
1m-1.85m	Hackney gravels
1.85m-5m	London clay

<b>WS2</b>	
0-0.22m	Concrete slab
0.22m-1m	Sandy gravel with brick fragments
1m-4m	London clay

<b>WS3</b>	
0-0.26m	Concrete slab
0.26m-0.4m	Loose gravel with brick fragments
0.4m-0.9m	Hackney gravels
0.9m-2.5m	London clay

<b>WS4</b>	
0-0.29m	Concrete slab
0.29m-1m	Brown clay with brick and ash and gravelly sandy clay
1m-3m	London clay

<b>WS5</b>	
0-0.18m	Concrete slab
0.18m-0.75m	Brown sandy gravel with ash and clinker
0.75m-1.75m	Hackney gravels
1.75m-3m	London clay

<b>WS6</b>	
0-0.22m	Concrete slab
0.22m-1m	Brown sandy gravel with brick and concrete
1m-4m	London clay

<b>WS7</b>	
0-0.30m	Concrete slab
0.30m-1.3m	Possible sewer



<b>WS8</b>	
0-0.30m	Concrete slab
0.30m-0.60m	Brown sandy gravel with brick and mortar fragments
0.60m-1.5m	Hackney gravels
1.5m-3m	London clay

<b>BH1</b>	
0-0.33m	Concrete slab
0.33m-1.5m	Hackney gravels
1.5m-15.5m	London clay

### 3.3 Assessment of the evaluation

GLAAS guidelines (English Heritage, 1998) require an assessment of the success of the evaluation ‘in order to illustrate what level of confidence can be placed on the information which will provide the basis of the mitigation strategy’. In the case of this site the evaluation showed that the site had been truncated by 19th century cellars and again when the present building was erected in the 1950s.

The natural sand was reached at around 14.00m OD in both of the evaluation trenches. There was no overlying archaeological stratigraphy or evidence of any features. Within trench 3 was a 19th century brick wall and later associated drains. The top of the drains were vertical and would have been set into a cellar floor surface which would have been around 14.10m OD, around 2.60m below present street level. It appears that the western boundary wall was originally the rear wall of the properties locate along Kirby Street and Hatton Garden. The wall is now rendered but has projections resembling fireplaces. This wall and the former properties are shown on the ordnance Survey maps of 1873 and 1916.

Any archaeological features that may have been present would have been removed during the construction of these cellars and subsequent demolition of the cellar in order to lay the present ground slab.

Neither of the window samples or boreholes revealed any archaeological stratigraphy or river silts or pond fills.

## 4 Archaeological potential

### 4.1 Realisation of original research aims

*Is there any evidence for the sites use as gardens during the Late Medieval/early Post medieval periods?*

There is no evidence for the sites use as a garden.

*Is there any evidence for the tributary found to the east at KBY98 and west at NGD04?*

There is no evidence for the tributary on the site within the trenches and window samples and borehole.

*If so what date was it infilled and were animal burials associated with it as at KBY98?*

N/A

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

The natural was an orange sand with gravel measuring around 1.50m thick. It overlaid the grey London clay. It was recorded at around 14.00m OD.

*What are the earliest deposits identified?*

The earliest deposits date to the 19th century.

*What are the latest deposits identified?*

The latest deposits identified date to the 19th century.

### 4.2 General discussion of potential

The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of ancient ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification) on the site is extremely limited. The cellars had truncated the site to the natural sand by around 2.60m in depth. The window samples and borehole did not reveal any deeper cut features such as river or pond fills.

### 4.3 Significance

The 19th-century wall found is not significant in the archaeological record.



Fig 6 Ordnance survey map of 1873 in relation to the site location

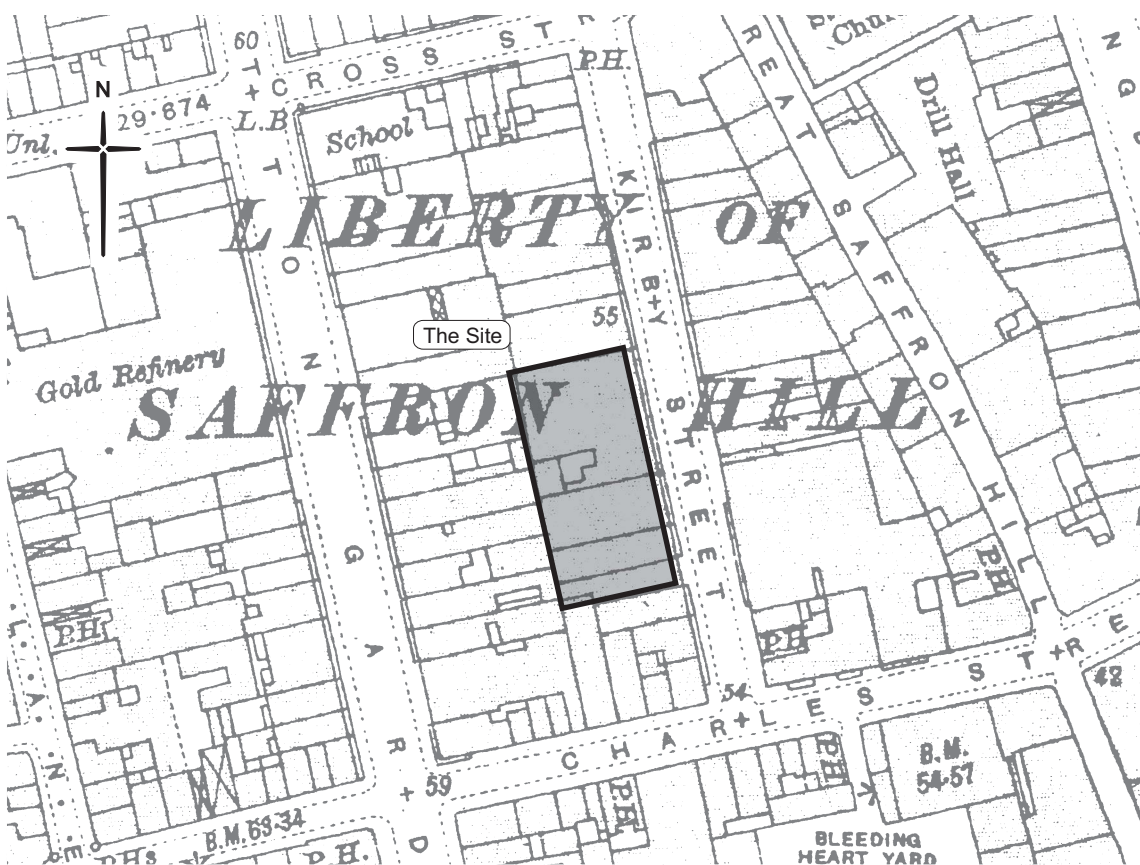


Fig 7 Ordnance survey map of 1916 in relation to the site location

## **5 Proposed development impact and recommendations**

The proposed redevelopment at 36–43 Kirby Street, EC1 involves the extension of the basement footprint southwards. The impact of this will be limited due to the previous basement truncating any archaeological features to a depth of 14.00m OD.

The archaeological potential of the site is negative and in the light of revised understanding this report recommends that no further work is necessary. The decision on the appropriate archaeological response to the site rests with the Local Planning Authority and their designated archaeological advisor.

## 6 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank WSP Environmental Limited and the labourers for their help during the field work and to Unite Integrated Solutions plc for funding the evaluation and allowing access to the site.

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## 8 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

### 8.1 OASIS ID: molas1-23336

#### Project details

Project name Kirby Street

Short description of the project An archaeological evaluation was carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service on the site at 36-43 Kirby Street, EC1, London. Following the recommendations of the method statement two evaluation trenches were excavated on the site. The results of the field evaluation have helped to refine the initial assessment of the archaeological potential of the site and has shown that 19th century cellars had truncated the site to the natural sand by around 2.60m in depth and no archaeological features or finds were recovered.

Project dates Start: 22-01-2007 End: 24-01-2007

Previous/future work No / No

Any associated project reference codes KIT07 - Sitecode

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status Local Authority Designated Archaeological Area

Current use Land Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices

#### Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON CAMDEN HOLBORN Kirby Street

Site coordinates TQ 53139 18180 50.94212124 0.180020613849 50 56 31 N 000 10 48 E Point

Height OD Min: 13.83m Max: 14.00m

#### Project

**creators**

Name of Molas  
Organisation

Project brief MoLAS project manager  
originator

Project design MoLAS  
originator

Project Ros Aitken  
director/manager

Project David Saxby  
supervisor

Type of Unite Integrated Solutions plc.  
sponsor/funding  
body

Name of Unite Integrated Solutions plc.  
sponsor/funding  
body

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**Project  
archives**

Physical Archive LAARC  
recipient

Digital Archive LAARC  
recipient

Paper Archive LAARC  
recipient

Paper Contents 'Stratigraphic','Survey'

Paper Media 'Context  
available sheet','Drawing','Map','Matrices','Photograph','Plan','Report','Section','Survey',

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Entered by David Saxby (daves@molas.org.uk)

Entered on 1 February 2007

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