

8 RIVER ROAD Barking IG11

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

An archaeological watching brief report

October 2007



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

8 RIVER ROAD
Barking
IG11

London Borough of Barking and Dagenham

An archaeological watching brief report

Site Code: RIE07
National Grid Reference: 545200 182700

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Summary (non-technical)

This report has been commissioned by the Environment Agency in order to record and assess the results of a watching brief carried out at 8 River Road, Barking.

Work on replacing sheet piling along the east bank of Barking Creek (River Roding) was monitored between 24th April 2007 and 9th May 2007. During the excavations a number of timbers were found. The area was subject to tidal inundation and there was limited time to make observations and record timbers.

The series of timbers were interpreted as part of a dismantled revetment or river wall dating prior to the 1930s when the later river wall was installed. The remains are part of the Borough of Barking and Dagenham's industrial heritage and are of local significance.

Table Of Contents

1	Introduction	5
1.1	Site background	5
1.2	The planning and legislative framework	5
1.2.1	<i>National planning policy guidance, Archaeology</i>	5
1.2.2	<i>Regional guidance: The London Plan</i>	6
1.2.3	<i>Archaeology and planning in Barking</i>	6
1.3	Planning background	7
1.4	Origin and scope of the report	7
1.5	Aims and objectives	7
2	Topographical and historical background	8
2.1	Site location and topography	8
2.2	Prehistory	8
2.3	Roman	10
2.4	Medieval	10
2.5	Post-medieval	11
3	The watching brief	13
3.1	Methodology	13
3.2	Results of the watching brief	13
4	Potential of archaeology	16
4.1	Original research aims	16
4.2	Significance of the data	16
5	Publication and archiving	17
6	Acknowledgements	17

7	Bibliography	18
8	NMR OASIS archaeological report form	20
8.1	OASIS ID: molas1-27000	20

List Of Illustrations

Front cover: BGS Solid and Drift Geology Map No. 257 (Romford)

Fig 1	Site location	4
Fig 2	Trench location	12
Fig 3	North facing view of pile one (far left. The other wood fragments were loose in the surrounding earth)	14
Fig 4	West facing view of pile two	15

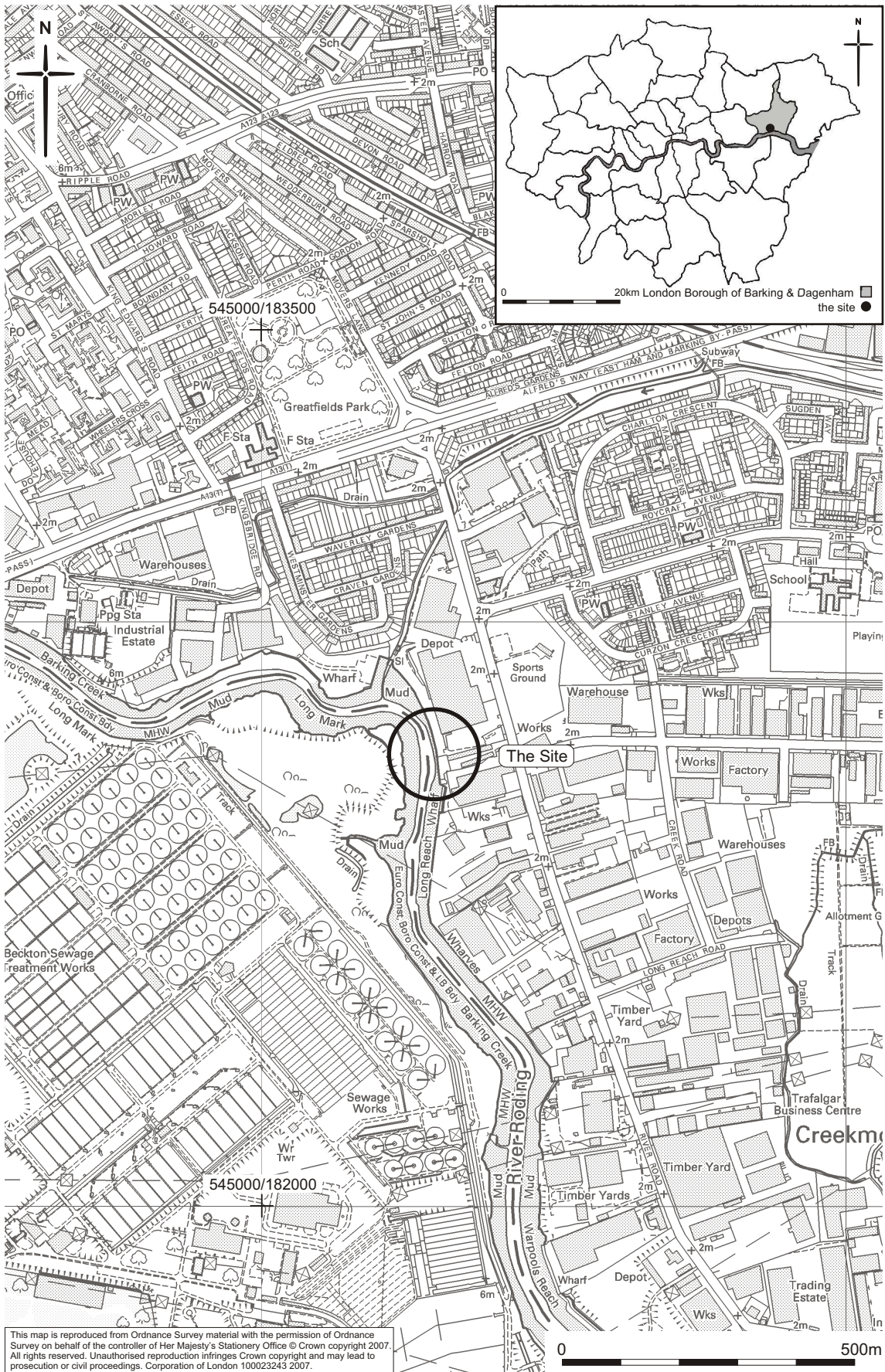


Fig 1 Site location

1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The watching brief took place at 8 River Road, Barking IG11 OJE, hereafter called 'the site'. The site is located at 8 River Road, bounded by Long Reach Wharf to the east (see Fig 1). The centre of the site is at OS National Grid Reference 545290 182760. The level of the ground was 5.55m OD. Modern ground level immediately adjacent to the site is approximately 5.90m OD. The site code is RIE07.

1.2 The planning and legislative framework

1.2.1 National planning policy guidance, Archaeology

Planning Policy Guidance Note 16: Archaeology and Planning (PPG16) sets out the Secretary of State's policy on archaeological remains, and provides recommendations subsequently integrated into local development plans. The key points in PPG16 can be summarised as follows:

Archaeological remains should be seen as a finite and non-renewable resource, and in many cases highly fragile and vulnerable to damage and destruction. Appropriate management is therefore essential to ensure that they survive in good condition. In particular, care must be taken to ensure that archaeological remains are not needlessly or thoughtlessly destroyed. They can contain irreplaceable information about our past and the potential for an increase in future knowledge. They are part of our sense of national identity and are valuable both for their own sake and for their role in education, leisure and tourism.

Where nationally important archaeological remains, whether scheduled or not, and their settings, are affected by a proposed development there should be a presumption in favour of their physical preservation.

If physical preservation *in situ* is not feasible, an archaeological excavation for the purposes of 'preservation by record' may be an acceptable alternative. From an archaeological point of view, this should be regarded as a second-best option. Agreements should also provide for the subsequent publication of the results of any excavation programme.

The key to informed and reasonable planning decisions is for consideration to be given early, before formal planning applications are made, to the question of whether archaeological remains are known to exist on a site where development is planned and the implications for the development proposal.

Planning authorities, when they propose to allow development which is damaging to archaeological remains, must ensure that the developer has satisfactorily provided for excavation and recording, either through voluntary agreement with the archaeologists or, in the absence of agreement, by imposing an appropriate condition on the planning permission.

1.2.2 Regional guidance: The London Plan

The over-arching strategies and policies for the whole of the Greater London area are contained within the GLA's London Plan (Feb 2004) also include statements relating to archaeology:

Policy 4B.14 Archaeology The Mayor, in partnership with English Heritage, the Museum of London and boroughs, will support the identification, protection, interpretation and presentation of London's archaeological resources. Boroughs in consultation with English Heritage and other relevant statutory organisations should include appropriate policies in their UDPs for protecting scheduled ancient monuments and archaeological assets within their area."

1.2.3 Archaeology and planning in Barking

The London Borough of Barking's *Unitary Development Plan* (UDP) was adopted in 1996. The policies set out in this document, and the *Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 6* determine the position of archaeology as a material consideration in the planning process and incorporate recommendations from the Department of the Environment's *Planning Policy Guidance Note 16* (PPG 16). The most important of these are as follows:

POLICY DE36: When any development is proposed on sites of archaeological significance ... or for any site identified by English Heritage the council will seek to ensure that an early evaluation is carried out, and that preservation in situ is given first consideration. However, if preservation in situ is not possible and the nature of the remains does not warrant a planning refusal, the council will require that adequate time, funding and resources are provided to enable archaeological investigations by an acceptable agent to take place during the process of development ...

POLICY DE36.2 Where development may affect land of archaeological significance or potential, the Council will expect applicants to have properly assessed and planned for the archaeological implications of their proposals. This does not only include fieldwork but also the analysis and preservation of results, where appropriate. A preliminary site evaluation to the specifications laid down by the Council, or an acceptable agent would be required. PPG16 states that the needs of archaeology and development can be reconciled, and potential conflict reduced, if developers discuss their preliminary plans for development with the Local Planning Authority at an early stage. It is, therefore, in the interests of prospective developers to include as part of their research into the development of a site, an initial assessment of whether the site is known or likely to contain archaeological remains.

Regarding co-operation between interested parties:

POLICY DE38 The council will promote co-operation between landowners, developers and archaeological organisations in accordance with the British Archaeologists and Developers Liaison Group of Practice and the Confederation of British Industry Code of Practice on archaeological investigations.

Regarding planning applications & archaeological sites:

POLICY DE39 The council will notify English Heritage of planning applications of sites found to correlate with sites as shown on the archaeological constraints map, as early as possible.

In addition, note should also be made of the following policies: **POLICY DE37** (on the protection of archaeological sites and preservation *in situ*); and **POLICY DE40** (re: protection of Ancient Monuments)

The Council has designated a number of *Areas of Archaeological Significance* in the Borough. The present site lies within one of these Areas.

1.3 Planning background

MoLAS was commissioned to observe the excavations by the Environment Agency in full consultation with English Heritage. Due to the danger of tidal pressure on the excavations and the potential failure of the existing piling, the archaeological strategy was agreed in writing without the production of a desk-based assessment or a full archaeological method statement.

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by the Environment Agency 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 against the original research aims, and to suggest what further work, including analysis or publication (if any), should now take place.

1.5 Aims and objectives

As there was no desk-based assessment or method statement produced for this site no prior objectives were prepared. However, in order to put the discoveries in a research framework a few research questions can be asked retrospectively:

- What is the nature and significance of the surviving archaeological remains?
- At what date was the first river wall constructed along this stretch of the river Roding?
- How was the river wall constructed, using what materials and techniques?

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

2 Topographical and historical background

The location of the site, on the floodplain of the Thames, implies that only deposits dating from the very end of the Pleistocene will be present, as it was in this period (about 15,000-10,000 years ago) that the floodplain was carved out. Thus it is essentially with the Holocene and the Late Glacial/Late Upper Palaeolithic periods of the late Pleistocene that this background will be concerned.

2.1 Site location and topography

The BGS Solid and Drift Sheet 257 (Romford) shows that the site spans the alluvial deposits accumulated within the floodplain of the Thames. This part of the floodplain was formerly known as the Barking Level, before agricultural and industrial use of the site during the 20th century. The floodplain of the Thames in this area is up to 4.5km wide between its confluence with the River Roding and the Ingrebourne. Towards the north of the site the ground rises up towards the A13. The A13 follows the northern edge of the floodplain, with the break of slope discernible south of the A13 marking the southern edge of the East Tilbury Marshes Gravel, a former floodplain of the Thames. The River Roding is known as Barking Creek where it reaches its confluence with the Thames. To the east the River Beam flows to meet the Thames in the vicinity of the Ford Dagenham Works.

2.2 Prehistory

The present course of the Thames was established about 0.5 million years ago, when ice sheets diverted it from its former course through the Vale of St Albans to its present more southerly route. Since that time successive cold and warm climatic oscillations have caused alternating downcutting and aggradational cycles to take place which, together with a background gradual tectonic uplift, has led to a sequence of progressively younger Quaternary deposits down the valley sides. These (mainly gravel) deposits form a series of terraces, which represent former floodplains of the river that subsequently became incised and left high and dry as the river down-cut to lower levels.

The present floodplain represents the most recent stage in this sequence. It was created as the river down-cut from a former, higher, floodplain (represented by the 'East Tilbury Marshes Gravel'), as a result of the very low sea-level and large flux of meltwater at the end of the last glacial stage (about ten to fifteen thousand years ago). It subsequently deposited coarse gravel sediments across the valley floor and these deposits (the Shepperton Gravel) underlie the alluvium in the present floodplain. Within the river, sand and gravel bars accumulated, forming an irregular, hummocky topography.

Palaeolithic material pre-dating the incision of the present Thames floodplain is occasionally found in the floodplain gravels, having been eroded from its place of discard on the river terraces above the floodplain and deposited with the river gravels on the valley floor. Such artefacts are usually rolled and worn and their *ex-situ* context makes them of low interest archaeologically.

In situ Late Upper Palaeolithic material could be found associated with the margins of Late Glacial watercourses and floodplain pools. Although such evidence is not well known from this area, characteristic long blades and butchered animal bones dated to this period have been found in the tributary valleys of the Thames (MoLAS 2000).

Mesolithic flints have been found within and at the surface of bedded sands in the Erith Marsh area (Sidell *et al* 1997) suggesting that Mesolithic remains might be expected within or at the surface of the sand and its associated more clayey deposits, which probably continued to accumulate in the early Holocene.

Soils may also have developed above the gravel and sand adjacent to the river channels even in relatively low-lying parts of the floodplain during the Mesolithic, as water flow slackened, river levels fell and as a result of channel migration/avulsion. A peaty soil at -7.5m OD, dated to about 5,500BC, was recorded in a similar landscape position to the present site, but on the opposite side of the Thames, at Corinthian Quay in Erith (Morley 2003). Pollen evidence from such early Holocene peaty soils indicates that the floodplain in the early to mid Holocene between the river channels may have been forested, with a patchwork of lime-dominated woodland (Scaife 2000) which was rapidly becoming ousted by alder (Brown 1997).

Although the floodplain environment was probably attractive for exploitation by hunter-gatherer groups, Mesolithic remains are not frequently recovered from this stretch of the Thames floodplain, although they are frequently encountered in the tributary valleys of the Middle and Lower Thames, such as the Colne, Lea, Darent and Cray. The lack of finds may be a result of their great depth, buried below thick deposits of Holocene alluvium and it has been suggested that well-stratified Mesolithic levels, subsequently sealed by alluvium, could lie at around -8m OD in the Barking Reach area (Bates and Barham 1995).

A thick peat bed, dated to the Neolithic to Bronze Age, which has been referred to as 'blanket peat' (Sidell 2002) is widespread in the Central and East London Thames and locally has been recorded below the Beckton, Erith, Hornchurch and Dagenham Marshes and outcrops on the foreshore of the Thames in this area at low tide. At Dagenham Docks and Wennington Marsh the base of the peat lay just above -3m OD and was dated to the Early Neolithic (*c* 3800-4000BC). At Wennington Marsh its surface, which was dated to *c* 1500BC, lay at -1.3m OD and on site 5 it was recorded at *c* -0.8m OD and dated to the early Iron Age (700-480BC).

In contrast to the characteristics of the Neolithic to Bronze Age blanket peat at Wennington, its characteristics at Summerton Way consisted of laminated peat and organic mud, thought to have accumulated in wet 'alder carr' woodland, with regular flooding or permanent standing water across much of the ground surface. The laminations may represent seasonal layers within floodplain pools. At Summerton Way the organic unit also lay between -3m OD and about -1.3m OD, and here its surface was dated to 1220-830BC.

Detailed examination of the 'blanket peat' in the Wennington and Hornchurch Marshes has provided some of the best evidence from the Lower Thames for floodplain woodland during the Neolithic and Bronze Age. On both sites *in situ* tree

stumps and fallen tree trunks have shown that unexpected tree species (in modern terms) such as yew (today a tree of churchyards and chalk downland – essentially dry environments) were growing on the prehistoric floodplain, where it probably formed a type of wetland community that is today extinct. A Neolithic axe was found 200m to the south of the site (GLSMR 060192) and another from the vicinity is not well located (GLSMR 060189).

There is also good evidence for exploitation of the wetland resources of the floodplain in the lower reaches of the Thames during the Bronze Age. The archaeological investigations along the route of Bronze Age Way in Erith revealed a timber trackway and a gravel causeway built to access the marsh from the higher dryer ground to the west. Radiocarbon dates suggest it was constructed in about 1500 BC. Another Bronze Age causeway, constructed of burnt flint and thought to have been used as a driveway for cattle, was found at the Hays Storage Depot, Dagenham. Both structures were constructed in similar landscape positions, at the margins of the floodplain and river terrace. Traces of a brushwood trackway laid over the marsh were excavated at Bridge Street in Rainham (GLSMR 061690) and it is likely that many similar structures exist within the alluvium of the Barking Levels.

Closer to the vicinity of the site itself, a number of timber structures have been found along the River Roding. A sequence of brushwood trackways and a timber platform, lying at around 0.5m OD and dated to around 1500 BC was found within the peat on the Tesco site, Barking (Chew 1994). It was thought that the platform and trackways were associated with use of the river, either as a crossing point or for up and down stream transport.

Trackways have also been found further to the west in the Beckton area. A cradle supported trackway was found extending up to 75m south eastwards from the gravels at the edge of the floodplain. The track was dated to around 1500 BC. Another similar trackway, also dated to around 1500 BC was found in this area, associated with several wattle and brushwood structures.

Bronze Age finds in the area include a sword and axes from beside the river less than 200m south of the site (GLSMR 060193, 060194 and 060195).

2.3 Roman

The area was probably mainly marshland on the floodplain, although evidence for falling river levels in the later Roman period (Brigham 1990) suggests that areas closer to the Thames and the river Roding may have become available for occupation or cultivation at this time. There is little evidence for Roman activity close to the site. Barking Abbey, nearly 2km to the north-west of the site, has reused Roman building materials in its fabric and Roman coins have been found here. There is tentative evidence for a Roman dock on the river Roding.

2.4 Medieval

Barking itself was a Saxon settlement, with the Abbey being founded in the 7th century. However, there is little evidence for Saxon activity to the south of the town.

Most of the land surrounding the site was probably marsh and grazing land in medieval times. Land reclamation may have begun before the Norman conquest and was carried out *ad hoc* in medieval times by various landowners, many of whom are recorded as having large stock holdings in the Domesday book.

The major importance of the area from the 14th century was centred on its fishing industry. The river Roding, with its access to the Thames and the north sea, provided a useful dock for the trading of fish to the local area and to the massive London market. There is also evidence of early wool trading, dyeing and brick making and the local community included millwrights, wheelwrights and those with numerous trades associated with ship building. The easily navigable river Roding played a major role in these trades.

2.5 Post-medieval

Post medieval archaeology may exist within the upper part of the alluvium or within the lower part of the made ground deposits. However, historic maps of the Barking Levels show that the area largely remained as marsh and seasonal grazing land well into the 20th century. Chapman and Andre's Map of the County of Essex in 1777 shows the area as Barking Levels marsh for a considerable distance around the site. An 1805 map (in Village London Atlas, 1988) and the 1888 and 1904 Ordnance Survey maps show flood defences in the form of embankments along both sides of the river, but the area remained as open land.

As stated, the River Roding was at the centre of a fishing industry from the 1300s but it was in the 19th century that the industry developed rapidly. The owner of a small fleet called Samuel Hewett changed his methods by keeping his vessels at sea for a longer period. The increased catch was ferried to Billingsgate Market to supply London and its hinterland with fresh fish.

To preserve the fish, ice was used for the first time and a great ice-house was built in Barking. Other fishermen adopted the new practices and between the 1820s and the 1850s the number of fishing vessels in Barking increased from 70 to 220 and the town became dangerously dependent on fishing. By the 1850s Barking was full of fishermen, shipwrights, mast makers, sail makers, ships chandlers, water keg makers, pork cask makers, net makers, knitters, waterproof clothing and boot makers and ships biscuits bakers.

In the late 1850s a new dock opened at Grimsby in Lincolnshire and began to attract the Barking fishermen. In 1862 Hewett's fleet moved closer to the fishing grounds and relocated to Gorleston in Suffolk. By the end of the 19th century almost all the fishermen and subsidiary industries had left the town. At this time, however, Barking was becoming built up as part of the Greater London suburbs, with easy access to employment in the City and the east end of London.

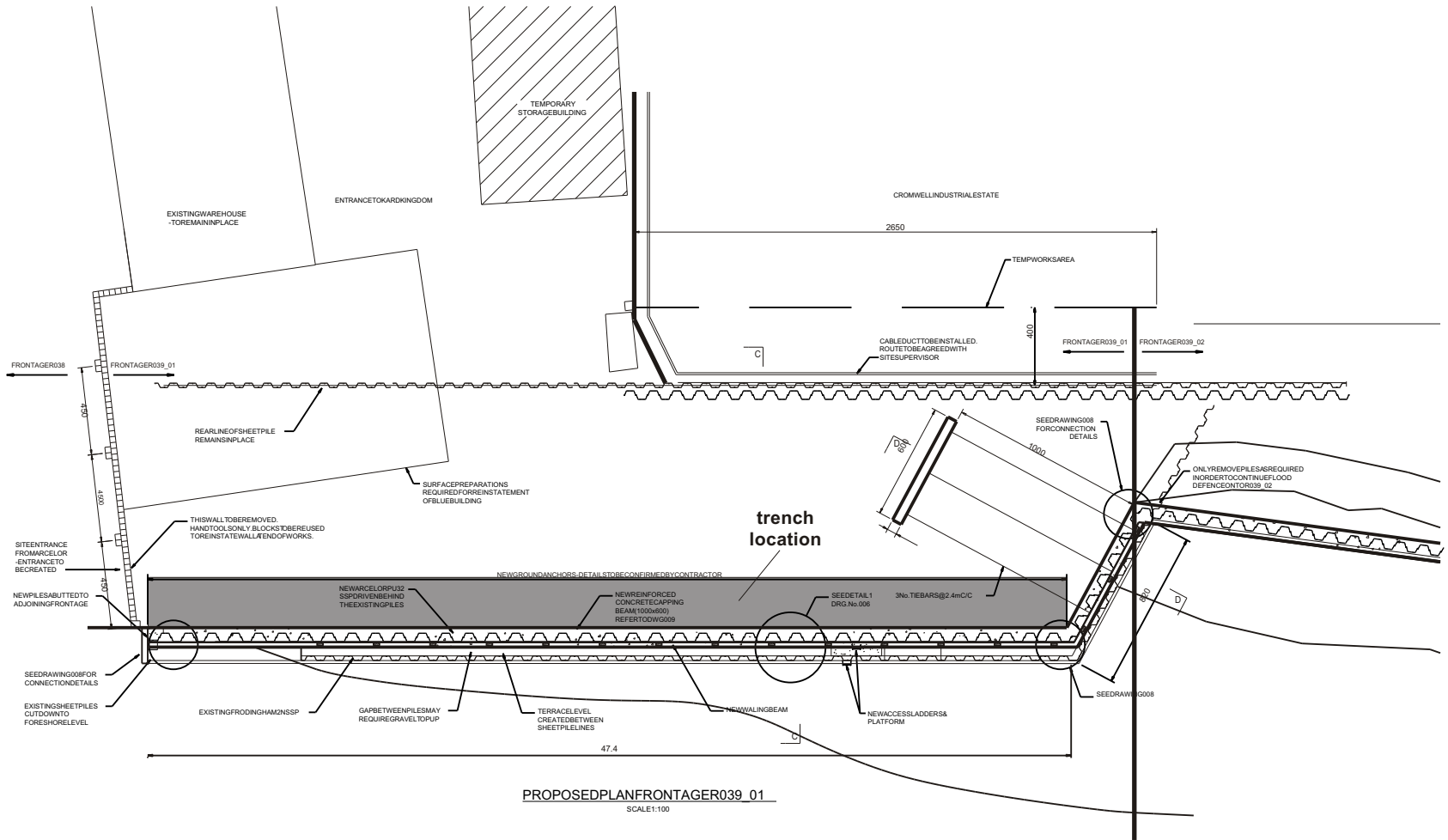


Fig 2 Trench location

3 The watching brief

3.1 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 excavated by contractors prior to MoLAS involvement and subsequent monitoring was carried out under MoLAS supervision. Trenches were excavated by machine by the contractors, and monitored by a member of staff from MoLAS.

The location of the area of excavation was recorded by calculation from elevation drawing number BO289900/004. This information was then plotted onto the OS grid.

The heights of observations were calculated by measuring down from ground level.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code RIE07 in the MoL archive.

3.2 Results of the watching brief

One trench was opened in stages along the river bank, in order to insert sheet piling. For trench location see Fig 2.

Piling along the east bank of Barking Creek (River Roding) was replaced between 24th April and 9th May 2007. Steel sheet piling was driven in directly behind the existing piling causing a line of earlier wooden piles to be exposed.

Site visit 24th Apr 2007

The following piles were observed and recorded during the first site visit. The observations were made at the extreme west end of the site, along the river frontage (see Fig 2):

Pile one.

Pile 1 was 3.10m long, 0.18m wide and 0.18m thick, rounded/ blunt sawn end at top, and probably machine sawn. It was tapered into a pointed stake end at bottom. It is likely to have been ex situ, and probably reused. It has been identified as pine.



Fig 3 North facing view of pile one (far left). The other wood fragments were loose in the surrounding earth)

Pile two.

Pile 2 was c 5m long, 0.18m wide, 0.22m deep, and flat sawn off at the top, probably machine sawn. It was tapered into a pointed pile end at the bottom. It was set upright prior to removal and has been identified as pine.



Fig 4 West facing view of pile two

Site visits 30th Apr to 9th May 07

The following observations were made approximately 5m to the east of piles one and two:

Horizontal timbers were observed approximately 5m-7m east of the south-east corner of existing frontage RO38 (see proposed plan and elevation drawing number BO289900/004) at approximately – 0.75m OD, as well as one vertical timber at the east end and one at the west end. The piles were similar in form to piles one and two, as described above.

There was no evidence of any timbers beyond this point, further to the east. The western limit of the spread of timbers is unknown.

The timbers are related to an earlier attempt at consolidating the river's edge in this area and it is probable that they were associated with some kind of jetty for accessing the river from this site.

4 Potential of archaeology

4.1 Original research aims

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

It is probable that these timbers are the remains of the previous river frontage which was demolished and laid as a surface raft onto which the made ground was added during the insertion of the 1930s piles (Stephen Kemp, Environment Agency, pers comm.). The depth at which some of the timbers were buried suggests that a major amount of material was imported and/or moved in the construction of both the first river wall and the 1930s version.

- *At what date was the first river wall constructed along this stretch of the river Roding?*

It is not known from the archaeological evidence at what date the wall was constructed but it is possible that these timbers represent the first river wall at this location and they may date from the late 19th or early 20th century.

- *How was the river wall constructed, using what materials and techniques?*

The timbers, as found, give little indication of the methods used in the construction of the early river wall. It was apparently built using predominantly pine timber. These fragmentary remains show that substantial timber piles were driven into the foreshore and there was presumably some form of horizontal supports or cladding employing metal nail/spike fixings.

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

4.2 Significance of the data

Whilst the archaeological remains are undoubtedly of local significance there is nothing to suggest that they are of regional or national importance. They form part of the industrial heritage of the Borough.

5 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.

6 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following for their contributions and help in producing this report:

Hannah Pitchford, Senior Environmental Assessment Officer with the Environment Agency

Stephen Kemp, Archaeologist with the Environment Agency

David Divers, Archaeological Advisor, GLAAS, English Heritage

Simon Steele, the site supervisor for Marley Waterproofing

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8 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

8.1 OASIS ID: molas1-27000

Project details

Project name	watching brief at 8 River road, Barking
Short description of the project	Observing timbers by east bank of Barking Creek (River Roding
Project dates	Start: 25-04-2007 End: 09-05-2007
Previous/future work	Not known / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	RIE07 - Site code
Any associated project reference codes	RIE07 - Site code
Site status	None
Current Land use	Coastland 6 - Other
Monument type	RIVER FRONT Post Medieval
Significant Finds	TIMBER Uncertain

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON BARKING AND DAGENHAM BARKING 8 River Road, Barking, IG11 OJE
Postcode	IG11 OJE

Study area 200.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 4529 8276 51.5245355644 0.09456412254620 51 31
28 N 000 05 40 E Point

Height OD Min: Max:

Project creators

Name of Organisation MoLAS

Project brief originator Environment Agency

Project design originator MoLAS

Project director/manager Robin Nielsen

Project supervisor P. Cardiff

Type of sponsor/funding body Environment Agency

Project archives

Physical Archive Exists? No

Entered by Cardiff, P (pcardiff@molas.org.uk)

Entered on 17 May 2007