



82 BOROUGH HIGH STREET London SE1

London Borough of Southwark

Report on an archaeological watching brief

February 2017



**82 Borough High Street
London
SE1 1LL**

Site Code BOR13
NGR 532540 180030
OASIS reference molas1-272567

Planning reference 08/AP/1447
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Report on an archaeological watching brief and excavation

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Summary

This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief and excavation carried out by MOLA at 82 Borough High Street, London, SE1. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Whitebay Properties Ltd

In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2013) there were several periods of watching brief and an excavation that were carried out on the site between 03/06/13 and 21/12/16.

Natural ground was brickearth. Roman features were a possible posthole and a large pit with pottery dated c AD 50–100, an undated chalk wall and an 18th/ 19th century brick soakaway were also found during the watching brief. Post-medieval dumped deposits found in the watching brief and excavation appeared disturbed, this probably occurred during the post-war rebuilding of the property.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

- 1.1.1 Several archaeological watching briefs and an excavation were carried out by MOLA at 82 Borough High Street, in the London Borough of Southwark ('the site') between 03/06/13 and 21/12/16 (see *Fig 1*). This document is the Report on that work.
- 1.1.2 The redevelopment of the site involves refurbishment of the existing building to create a mixed residential/commercial development including a rear extension from first floor level. The existing basement will be retained but some structural works will be undertaken including underpinning and the installation of a new lift.
- 1.1.3 Further to the condition on Planning Consent a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by MOLA (MOLA 2013). 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 Written Scheme of Investigation which formed the project design for the evaluation (Section 1.2, MOLA 2013).
- 1.2.2 The archaeological work was carried out to fulfil a condition attached to the Planning Consent given by the Local Authority (reference 08/AP/1447; condition number 5).

1.3 Scope of the watching brief

- 1.3.1 Ground works for new drainage within the basement were subject to a watching brief in 2013. A further watching brief was carried out on ground works in 2016 for underpinning, new foundations and new drainage behind the existing basement in 2016. A new lift pit also to the rear of the existing basement was monitored and excavated in December 2016 (See *Fig 2*).
- 1.3.2 All archaeological work was carried out within the terms of the relevant Standard for watching brief specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA, 2014) and within the research priorities established in the Museum of London's A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002.
- 1.3.3 All work was undertaken within research aims and objectives established in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the watching brief (Section 2.2, MOLA 2013)

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1 Topography

- 2.1.1 The geology of the area consists of Pleistocene river terrace gravels overlain by Holocene fluvial sediments. The site lies on the edge of one of two islands of relatively high natural ground intersected by river channels. One of these channels, known as the Southwark Street channel, has been projected to run east–west just to the north of the site.

2.2 Archaeology

Prehistoric

- 2.2.1 The higher ground of the islands would naturally have been attractive to early settlers however the evidence for occupation in the prehistoric period around the site is fragmentary, a Bronze Age hearth, flintwork and possible late Iron Age burial were recorded to the south at 120-126 Borough High Street (site code 124BHS77).

Roman

- 2.2.2 The focus of development in Southwark in the Roman period was the southern bridgehead of London Bridge, the lowest crossing point of the Thames and thus a key location in the communication network of Roman Britain. Whilst occupation was limited to the sand islands, Southwark developed as a major suburb of Londinium and by the late 1st century AD an area of c 13 hectares was settled. By the middle of the 2nd century AD, the settlement had become densely populated, but appears to have contracted during the later Roman period.
- 2.2.3 The Roman roads from Londinium to Dover and to Chichester (known as Watling Street and Stane Street in the Saxon period) converged at the southern limit of the marshland (in the Borough area) and a single main road from the south was constructed across the low lying marsh area of what is now Southwark to the bridgehead of Roman London Bridge, the only bridge over the Thames at London in this period. Evidence of this Roman road and associated ditches were found on previous archaeological excavations in the direct vicinity of the site.
- 2.2.4 Evidence for Roman activity in the form of the main Roman road, roadside buildings and activity along Borough High Street has been recorded directly adjacent to the site in previous archaeological investigations. Adjacent to the site to the north at 78-80 Borough High Street a watching brief in 1973 recorded Roman and later deposits (site code 78BHS73). Directly to the south of the site at 84-86 Borough High Street excavation in 1974 (site code 84BHS74) revealed evidence of a Roman road (Road One) leading to London Bridge and supported on a timber corduroy. The road was flanked to the east by an early Roman building dated to the early-mid-2nd century. The road was 7m wide and was constructed on a base of timbers set in clay (MoL DGLA 1988, 20). Sections recorded through the road during the investigations suggests that in this area of Borough High Street the road surface would be encountered at a level of between 1.5m OD and 2m OD with the associated deposits beneath the road reaching depths of 1m OD or lower (MoL DGLA 1988, Fig

25). If the road survives on the site it would be encountered as at similar height.

2.2.5 Also close to the site at Maidstone Buildings, located at 72–76 Borough High Street excavations revealed the earliest deposits lay on the east side of the site, close to the Borough High Street frontage and consisted of deposits of silty sand, sandy silt, charcoal and burnt brickearth (site code BIH99). These deposits are probably indicative of the destruction by fire of early Roman clay and timber buildings which lay on the west side of the road to the bridgehead.

Medieval

2.2.6 Southwark is first mentioned in AD 910–920, when it is included in the Burghal Hideage, a document listing all burhs (fortified settlements). Southwark or *Suthringa Geweorc* means ‘fortification of the men of the southern province’. It was probably constructed in order to defend the southern bridgehead following the resettlement of the Roman city and the re-establishment of the bridge crossing, and may have been built by King Alfred himself. The exact location and extent of the burh is uncertain. It probably occupied much of the northern end of the main eyot beside the bridgehead. Several Roman roads continued in use during this period, but no substantial remains dated to this time have been found in the site vicinity. The rise in sea levels at the end of the Roman period and the consequent reduction in inhabitable space, along with socio-economic factors are a likely reason for the area’s decline.

2.2.7 There is little evidence for the Saxon occupation in the direct site vicinity however even though the early medieval settlement of Southwark was concentrated to the north of the site at around the southern bridgehead of London Bridge, rebuilt in stone in 1176. However at 72–76 Borough High Street evidence of medieval and post-medieval reclamation and make-up dumps was recorded, together with fragmentary remains of a chalk lined cess-pit and a chalk rubble footing. Further south at 124-126 Borough High Street (site code 124BHS77) a medieval pit of 14th-century date and several 18th-century pits were recorded.

Post-medieval

2.2.8 By the 16th century Borough High Street was known as ‘Long Southwark’. The area consisted of numerous inns and alehouses which flanked either side of the road. During the 17th century Southwark was a densely populated area with a network of streets and narrow lanes. Southwark also became an industrial area with trades such as the skimmers, tanners and tallow smelters. In the later post-medieval, period much of the site vicinity was occupied with housing, factories, alleys and yards. Historical mapping of the 18th and 19th century shows the site in an area of Borough High Street lined with tenements at the site frontage with yards to the rear with the site subsequently becoming more built over with time. By the later 19th century the site was fully built over and located to the east of large hop warehouses built to the south of Maidstone buildings.

2.2.9 The London County Council WWII bomb damage maps for the area indicates the property was damaged beyond repair during World War II (Saunders/London Topographic Society 2005, Map 76). This existing building on the site was built in the 1950s.

3 The watching brief and excavation

3.1 Field methodology

- 3.1.1 In the basement the slab was broken out and cleared by contractors under MOLA supervision. Trenches for new drainage were excavated by hand by the contractors. This was monitored by a member of staff from MOLA and any archaeological features were recorded.
- 3.1.2 In the new lift shaft area excavation by machine was monitored by MOLA until undisturbed archaeological deposits were encountered. Hand excavation then followed.
- 3.1.3 Archaeological excavation was carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2013).
- 3.1.4 Trench locations and archaeological features were plotted on plans provided by the client using an 'offset methodology' and subsequently tied to the OS grid by MOLA geomatics.
- 3.1.5 Where referenced in this report (eg '3.45m OD'), levels relate to OS Ordnance Datum and were calculated by measurement from a nearby spot height on a plan provided by the developer.

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 2013).

3.3 Site archive

Number of trench record sheets	0
Number of overall location plans	1
Number of Context (SU) sheets	12
Number of photographs	24
Number of Plan sheets	1
Number of Sections	0

4 Results of the watching brief

4.1.1 For watching brief and excavation area locations see *Fig 2*.

4.2 Watching brief – 2013

Four trenches for new drains and a new chamber were investigated in the current basement;

4.2.1 **Trench 1** Dimensions: two drain runs both 0.30m wide x 5.80m long x 0.40 to 0.50m deep.

4.2.2 Two features were found; a possible posthole [04] measuring 0.25m diameter x 0.30m deep filled with burnt clay and charcoal fragments was clipped by one branch of the drain and deposits comprising thin bands of charcoal, yellow silt and burnt clay with oysters and pottery suggest a large Roman pit [02], measuring over 2.0m N/S x over 2.0m E/W x over 0.40m deep, exists in the south west corner of the basement. Some pottery from a Highgate 'B' grog-tempered ware jar, c AD 50–100 was recovered from pit [2].

4.2.3 Apart from these features the rest of trench contained a dirty yellow/brown clay at 1.30m OD which is probably natural brickearth.



Photo; Trench 1 looking east, post-hole [04]



Photo; Trench 1 looking south west, banded deposits [01] in a possible cut [02]

4.2.4 **Trench 2** Dimensions: 0.30m wide x 2.0m long x 0.60m deep

4.2.5 The western part of the trench was filled with a loose made ground deposit of dark grey/brown silt with sandy bands [06], although no dating was recovered this was probably post-medieval. To the east the rest of trench filled with a loose silt and post-medieval brick fragments [05] suggesting something had been disturbed or robbed out.

4.2.6 **Trench 3** Dimensions: 0.30m wide x 1.10m long x 0.40m deep

4.2.7 This cut through yellow brown clay at c 1.30m OD, which is probably a natural brickearth deposit.

4.2.8 **Trench 4** Dimensions: 0.30m wide x 2.20m long x 0.40m deep

4.2.9 This cut through yellow brown clay at 1.30m OD, which is probably a natural brickearth deposit.

4.2.10 **New chamber** Dimensions: 1.0m N/S x 0.70m E/W x 0.80m deep

4.2.11 Only disturbed deposits were observed here it was located over an earlier cast pipe.



Photo; Trenches 3 and 4 and the new chamber looking north

4.3 Watching brief – 2016 – Trench 5

- 4.3.1 Monitoring a pad for a ground beam revealed a 19th century circular brick soakaway [11] at c 3.30m OD and a fragment of north-south chalk wall [12] at c 3.0m OD. The chalk wall may be medieval but was under the boundary of the next property to the north so could not be investigated; therefore its function remains unknown.



Photo; the brick soakaway [11] (right) and the chalk wall [12] looking north west

- 4.3.2 All other drainage and ground beam trenches were c 1.0m deep with bases at c 2.35m OD and only cut through disturbed 18th/19th century deposits.

4.4 Excavation – Lift shaft – Trench 6

Dimensions	2.70m E-W x 2.50m N-S
Modern ground level	4.35m OD
Top of surviving archaeology at	1.30m OD
Top of surviving natural observed at	1.0m OD
Level of base of trench	0.55m OD

- 4.4.1 Modern concrete foundations on the north and east sides of the trench restricted the area that could be investigated.
- 4.4.2 Natural was at a sandy silt [10] at 1.0m OD. This was sealed by a 0.30m thick deposit of yellow clay [09] at 1.30m OD. The lack of any inclusions suggests this deposit may also be natural representing the undisturbed ground surface.
- 4.4.3 This deposit was cut by an east-west feature [08] that continued to the east, west and north beyond limits of the lift shaft. This cut was up to 1.0m deep and was filled with bands of grey clay and post-medieval brick rubble [07]. The purpose of this feature is unknown, though the rubble may suggest something had been robbed out.
- 4.4.4 Above this feature were up to 2.0m of disturbed 18th/19th century deposits.



Photo; lift shaft looking west, with scale resting on base of cut [08]

4.5 The finds

- 4.5.1 Three sherds of Roman pottery weighing a total of 20 grams were recovered from context [1]. They are from the base and upper body of a Highgate 'B' grog-tempered ware jar, made between c AD 50–100. Highgate 'B' ware was made from local clay with added 'grog' (crushed fired clay) in what is now the Highgate Wood area north of London. It is a ware which is characteristically found in early Roman settlement deposits in London and Southwark.

4.6 Conclusions

- 4.6.1 Some Roman features were found cutting the natural in the basement of 82 Borough High Street, with up to 2m of deposits of 18th/19th century origin located behind the building. These deposits seem very disturbed, probably due to the post-war rebuilding that took place after the building was destroyed in the Second World War. The only *in situ* features were a chalk wall which could not be examined fully and a 18th/19th century brick soakaway. There was no evidence of the Roman road found on the adjacent site to the north, 84-86 Borough High Street, in 1974 (Thompson, 1998, 174).

5 Archaeological potential

5.1 Answering original research aims

5.1.1 The following research questions from the WSI (MOLA 2013) can be answered;

- *What was the level of natural topography?*

Natural was at 1.0m OD in the lift shaft, this was overlain by a clayey deposit (and elsewhere on the site) at 1.30m OD, which may also be the top of undisturbed natural ground.

- *What are the earliest deposits identified?*

The earliest deposits identified are Roman.

- *Does evidence of the Roman Road, buildings or roadside activity recorded directly to the north and south of the site survive on the site?*

Although there is some evidence of Roman activity with a possible posthole and a large pit, without a full excavation is difficult to interpret what this actually represents.

- *Does any evidence of the medieval development along Borough High Street survive on the site?*

There is no evidence for medieval activity on the site although the south face of a chalk foundation was recorded beneath the boundary wall of the adjacent site, 80 Borough High Street. It is unclear what the form of structure it was part of.

- *What evidence is there for the development of the site in the post-medieval period?*

Apart from a brick soakaway there is little evidence of post-medieval activity, though up to 2m of disturbed deposits of 18th/19th century origin were seen in the watching brief.

- *What are the latest deposits identified?*

The latest deposits appear to be 18th/19th century in date, though with the exception of a brick soakaway, these appear to be disturbed.

5.2 Answering new research aims

5.2.1 The limited results of the watching brief mean no new research aims were identified.

5.3 Significance of the data

5.3.1 Whilst the archaeological remains are undoubtedly of local significance there is nothing to suggest that they are 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 2013) 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 5.2) and the relatively limited significance of the data (Section 5.3), 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 Acknowledgements

- 7.1.1 The author would like to thank David Murphy of Joseph O'Connor for assistance during the watching brief, also the following for their contributions and help in producing this report; David Sankey and Adrian Miles who supervised parts of the watching brief, Mark Burch and Raoul Bull for geomatics, and Beth Richardson for the Roman pottery.

8 Bibliography

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Fig 1 Site location



Fig 2 Areas of investigation

9 OASIS archaeological report form

OASIS ID: molas1-272567

Project details

Project name	82 Borough High Street
Short description of the project	There were several periods of watching brief and an excavation carried out between 2013 and 2016. Natural ground was brickearth, several Roman features, an undated chalk wall and an 18th/19th century brick soakaway were found . Other post-mediaeval deposits appeared disturbed, this probably occurred during the post-war rebuilding of the property.
Project dates	Start: 03-06-2013 End: 21-12-2016
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	BOR13 – Site code
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices
Monument type	WALL Uncertain
Monument type	PIT Roman
Investigation type	"Watching Brief"
Prompt	Planning condition

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON SOUTHWARK SOUTHWARK 82 Borough High Street
Postcode	SE1 1LL
Study area	230 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 32540 80030 51.503143741123 -0.090157036397 51 30 11 N 000 05 24 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 1m Max: 1.3m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MOLA
Project brief originator	Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

Project design originator	MOLA
Project director/manager	Derek Seeley
Project supervisor	Tony Mackinder
Project supervisor	Dave Sankey
Type of sponsor/funding body	Client
Name of sponsor/funding body	Whitebay Properties Ltd

Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	Museum of London Archaeological Archive
Physical Archive ID	BOR13
Physical Contents	"Ceramics"
Digital Archive recipient	Museum of London Archaeological Archive
Digital Archive ID	BOR13
Digital Media available	"Images raster / digital photography", "Text"
Paper Archive recipient	Museum of London Archaeological Archive
Paper Archive ID	BOR13
Paper Media available	"Context sheet", "Matrices", "Notebook - Excavation", ' Research', ' General Notes', "Photograph", "Plan"

Project bibliography 1

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	82 Borough High Street, London SE1 1LL
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Description	A4 client report

Entered by Tony Mackinder (tmackinder@mola.org.uk)

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