

7-15 BAKER STREET
London
W1

City of Westminster

An archaeological watching brief report

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MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

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An archaeological watching brief report

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Summary (non-technical)

This report has been commissioned by GVA-Second London Wall in order to record and assess the results of a watching brief carried out at 7–15 Baker Street, City of Westminster, W1M 1AB, site code BKZ07.

Two geotechnical testpits were monitored on the 28th June 2007 prior to possible redevelopment of the site. No archaeological remains were identified within the two testpits. Truncated London Clay was observed beneath the modern foundations and basement slab. There was a general truncation from the existing slab to approximately 21.1m OD with deeper truncation caused by modern foundations. Terrace gravels were not observed on the site. Additional boreholes (not observed) indicate the general truncation of the site.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The watching brief took place at 7–15 Baker Street, hereafter called ‘the site’. The site is bounded by Baker Street to the east, Portman Close to the south, George Street to the north and properties on George Street and Portman Close to the west (see Fig 1). The centre of the site is at OS National Grid Reference 528077 181417. The level of the basement slab varies between 22.0 and 21.47m OD. Modern ground level immediately adjacent to the site is approximately 24.5m OD. The site code is BKZ07.

An *Archaeological desk-based assessment* was previously prepared by MoLAS, which covers the whole area of the site (MoLAS, 2006). This document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site, and the initial assessment of its archaeological potential. The desk-based assessment recommended the watching brief on geotechnical works which was eventually carried out.

1.2 The planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Archaeological desk-based assessment* which formed the project design for the watching brief (see Section 3, MoLAS, 2006)

1.3 Planning background

This report was undertaken as a condition of planning approval.

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

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

The purpose of the watching brief was to determine whether archaeological remains or features were present on the site and, if so, to record the nature and extent of such remains.

The purpose of the present report is to analyse the results of the excavation and to suggest what further work, including analysis or publication (if any), should now take place.

1.5 Aims and objectives

The following research aims and objectives were established prior to the watching brief:

- What is the level of truncation caused by earlier basements in this area?
- What is the nature and significance of the surviving archaeological remains?
- What are the levels of natural deposits and how do these compare to adjacent sites?

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

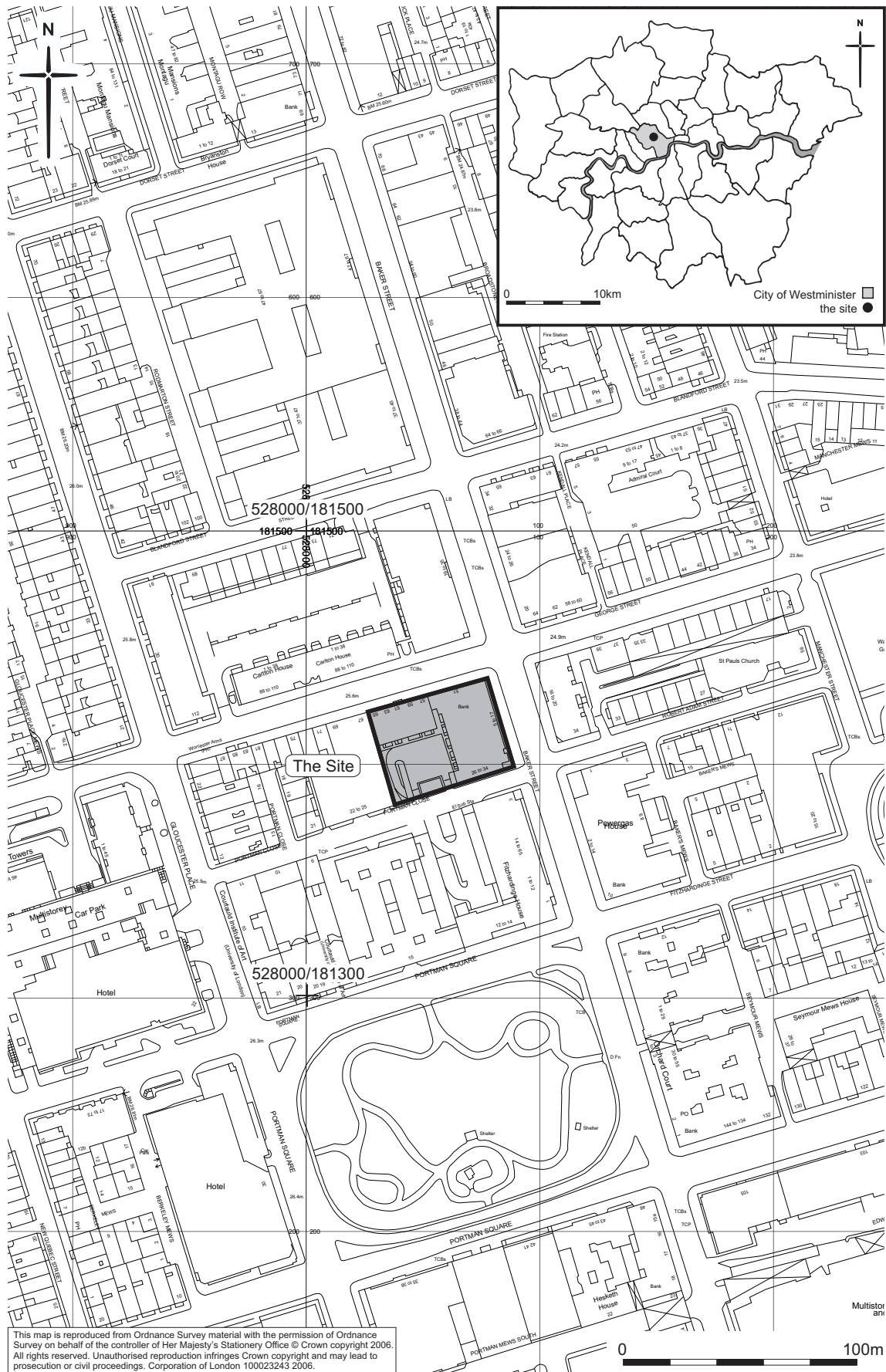


Fig 1 Site location

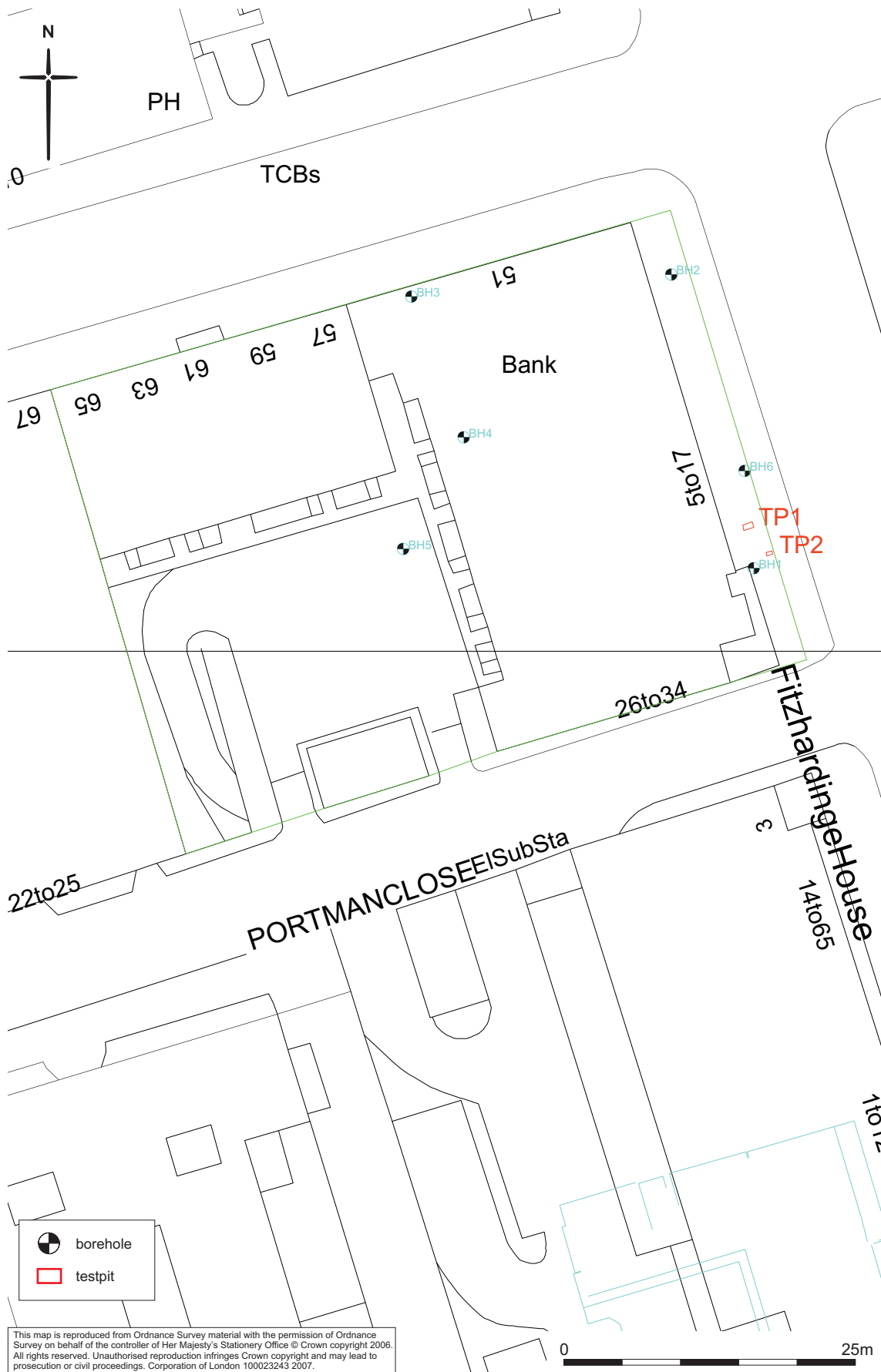


Fig 2 Standard trench locations marking BM (borehole) and TP (testpit)

2 Topographical and historical background

The reader is referred to the archaeological desk-based assessment for details of the topographical, archaeological and historical background of the site and its vicinity.

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).

Contiguous cores were diamond drilled through the slab by contractors to open two small test pits within a room in the south-east of the site. Further contractors excavated the testpits to expose modern footings adjacent to the pits, monitored by a member of staff from MoLAS.

The locations of the areas of excavation were recorded by offsetting from adjacent standing walls and plotted on to a Basement Survey (Squire and Partners, drawing no 01-01_P001 Rev A). This information was then plotted onto the OS grid.

The heights of observations were recorded relative to the provided levels of the existing basement slab (Squire and Partners, drawing no 02-03_SK007 Rev A).

Where relevant, sections were drawn at a scale of 1:10. The site has produced: one trench location plan; no context records; two 1:10 section drawings.

The site records can be found under the site code BKZ07 in the MoL archive.

3.2 Results of the watching brief

In total, two separate interventions (testpits) were made for the purposes of geotechnical recording of the existing foundations. These have been numbered 1-2 consecutively. There follows a brief description of the archaeological deposits as recorded.

For all trench locations see Fig 2.

<i>Watching Brief Testpit 1</i>	
Location	Within basement room, southeastern corner of the site
Dimensions	0.8 by 0.45m
Top of slab	21.70m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	21.10-20.70m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	None observed
Level of base of deposits observed	N/A
Natural observed	Truncated London Clay at 21.10m OD

Testpit 1 was located to establish the size, depth and nature of the foundation to the concrete columns supporting the front elevation of the building adjacent to Baker Street. The testpit measured 0.8m by 0.45m and had been cored through the floor screed and concrete slab, which were approximately 0.5-0.6m thick. At the east of the testpit a deposit of weakly cemented late 20th century brick and concrete lay beneath the floor slab to a depth of 1.0m below floor level. London Clay was observed, and dug into, at a depth of 0.6m at the east of the trench, and 1.0m at the east of the trench beneath the floor slab and modern deposit. A limited amount of probable perched groundwater entered the testpit.

<i>Watching Brief Testpit 2</i>	
Location	Within basement room, southeastern corner of the site
Dimensions	0.55 by 0.3m
Modern ground level/top of slab	21.70m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	21.20-21.15m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	None observed
Level of base of deposits observed	N/A
Natural observed	21.20m OD

Testpit 2 was located adjacent to the basement retaining wall on Baker Street in order to establish the depth of the slab, and the depth and nature of the retaining wall foundation. The testpit measured 0.55m by 0.3m and had been cored through the floor screed and concrete slab, which were approximately 0.5m thick. The base of the retaining wall was located at a depth of approximately 0.55m below floor level. London Clay was observed, and dug into, immediately below the concrete slab and retaining wall. No water entered the testpit.

4 Potential of archaeology

4.1 Original research aims

- What is the level of truncation caused by earlier basements in this area?

The existing basement is between 0.5 and 0.6m thick, and has truncated the eastern part of the site to a level of at least 21.20m OD

Borehole logs indicate truncation from the modern slab to be fairly consistent at between 0.41m and 0.75m, with deeper truncation where foundations were encountered (GEA boreholes 1-6)

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

No archaeological remains were encountered on the site.

- What are the levels of natural deposits and how do these compare to adjacent sites?

Truncated London Clay was located at a maximum height of 21.20m OD. No terrace gravel deposits were seen on the site. There are no closely adjacent sites to make comparisons with as to the level of the natural and any topographic inferences, although the lack of terrace gravels may indicate either that they were eroded in antiquity, or quarried, or the existing basement was of sufficient depth to truncate them.

4.2 New research aims

No new research aims can be formulated.

4.3 Significance of the data

No archaeological deposits, structures or artefacts were observed in either of the small testpits.

Truncation caused by the existing basement is likely to have removed most archaeological deposits across the site.

Natural terrace gravels were not found on site, with the highest natural geological strata being truncated London Clay at 21.20m OD.

The two testpits were very limited in size, and were located outside of 18th or 19th century buildings on the site, making the presence of archaeological remains from that

period less likely, although the testpits would have been located within probable front 'areas' or coal vaults.

The proposed lowering of the basements, although slight, is likely to require the removal of the existing basement slab and foundations, this is likely to adversely affect any archaeological remains that may exist on the site, however these are likely to be already severely truncated across the site.

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.

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

In view of the absence of archaeological material (Sections 4) and the limited significance of the data (Section 4.3) 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*.

6 Conclusions

The construction of the existing basement slab appears to have truncated the site to approximately 21.1m OD across the site, with local variation. This is considered likely to have removed all but the deepest archaeological features, which would themselves be highly truncated. No archaeological remains were found within the two limited testpits. Terrace gravels do not appear to have survived on the site, and may have been removed by the construction of the present building, or have been eroded off or quarried in antiquity.

7 Acknowledgements

MoLAS would like to thank the client, GVA-Second London Wall, for generously funding this report. The author would like to thank Catherine Blunden of Geotechnical and Environmental Associates for her assistance on site, and Neville Constantine of MoLAS for preparing the AutoCAD drawings.

8 Bibliography

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Squire and Partners, 2006 *Drawing no 02-03_SK007 Rev A*

9 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

9.1 OASIS ID: molas1-28763

Project details

Project name 7– 15 Baker Street, London, W1M 1AB

Short description of the project Two geotechnical testpits were monitored prior to possible redevelopment of the site. No archaeological remains were identified within the two testpits. Truncated London Clay was observed beneath the modern foundations and basement slab. There was a general truncation from the existing slab to approximately 21.1m OD with deeper truncation caused by modern foundations. Terrace gravels were not observed on the site.

Project dates Start: 28-06-2007 End: 28-06-2007

Previous/future work No / Not known

Any project codes associated reference BKZ07 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Site status None

Current Land use Industry and Commerce 2 - Offices

Current Land use Industry and Commerce 3 - Retailing

Investigation type 'Test-Pit Survey', 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Planning condition

Project location

Country England

Site location GREATER LONDON CITY OF WESTMINSTER CITY OF WESTMINSTER 7– 15 Baker Street, London, W1M 1AB

Postcode W1M 1AB

Study area 2500.00 Square metres

Site coordinates TQ 28077 81417 51.5166410646 -0.153926485333 51 30 59 N 000 09 14 W Point

Height OD Min: 20.70m Max: 21.20m

Project creators

Name of MoLAS
Organisation

Project originator brief Greater London Archaeology Advisory Service

Project originator design MoLAS

Project director/manager Ros Aitken

Project supervisor Chiz Harward

Type of Developer
sponsor/funding body

Name of GVA-Second London Wall
sponsor/funding body

Project archives

Physical Archive No
Exists?

Digital Archive LAARC
recipient

Digital Archive ID BKZ07

Paper Archive LAARC
recipient

Paper Archive ID BKZ07

**Project
bibliography 1**

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