



**THE BERKELEY HOTEL**  
**Knightsbridge**  
**London**  
**SW1**

City of Westminster

Watching brief report

March 2019



**THE BERKELEY HOTEL**  
**Knightsbridge**  
**London**  
**SW1**

Site Code YHO19  
NGR 528110 179755  
OASIS reference: - molas1-343629

Planning reference 17/06350/FULL  
Condition Number 8

Report on an archaeological watching brief

**Sign-off History:**

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## Summary

*This report presents the results of an archaeological watching brief carried out by MOLA at the Berkeley Hotel, Knightsbridge, SW1. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Rainey & Best for the client The Berkeley Hotel Ltd.*

*In accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation (MOLA 2018) a watching brief was carried out on the site on 29th January and 6th February, 2019 monitoring ground reduction at the north-east of the Berkeley Hotel site in 33-39 Knightsbridge as part of a planning condition for the redevelopment of the hotel.*

*In the central area of the site where the watching brief was undertaken, redeposited made ground overlay a truncated natural clayey silt deposit, areas of which had survived to an upper height of c 7.50m OD. This deposit was most probably alluvium associated with the former course of the River Westbourne which previously flowed close to the site. Borehole information available for the site indicated this deposit is c 4m deep and overlay terrace gravels. No archaeological features were seen.*

*Although the information determined about the natural deposits on the site and the possible location of the previous route of the Westbourne are of geoarchaeological interest, in view of the limited potential of the results it is recommended that no further archaeological investigation is required on the site.*

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*Fig 7 Ground reduction towards south of site looking west*

*Fig 8 Alluvial deposits beneath redeposited made ground and modern pile holes (from ground level)*

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Site background

- 1.1.1 An archaeological watching brief was carried out by MOLA at the Berkeley Hotel, Knightsbridge, SW1 in the City of Westminster ('the site') between 29th January and 6th February 2019 (see Fig 1). The development includes the demolition and redevelopment of 33-39 Knightsbridge and north (Knightsbridge) wing of Berkeley Hotel to provide a new building that will contain four basement levels. Selected ground reduction was archaeologically monitored in this area of the hotel redevelopment as a watching brief. This document is the report on that work.
- 1.1.2 A desktop archaeological assessment (Historic environment assessment or HEA) was previously prepared which covers the whole area of the site (MOLA 2017). This document should be referred to for detailed information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site and initial assessment of its archaeological potential.
- 1.1.3 Further to the condition on planning consent a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) was prepared by MOLA (MOLA 2018). 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 Historic environment assessment (see Section 9, MOLA 2017).
- 1.2.2 The watching brief was carried out to fulfil a condition attached to the Planning Consent given by the City of Westminster Local Authority (Consent reference 17/06350/FULL; Condition number 8) which is detailed in Section 1.1 of the WSI (MOLA 2018).

## 1.3 Scope of the watching brief

- 1.3.1 An archaeological watching brief is normally a limited fieldwork exercise. It is not the same as full excavation, though individual features may be fully excavated.
- 1.3.2 Removal of made ground deposits (mainly redeposited backfill after the basement slab had been removed) were monitored at the north-east of the hotel site in the central area of 33 to 39 Knightsbridge. The perimeter of 33-39 Knightsbridge had previously been disturbed for installation of the secant piling and was not available for investigation.
- 1.3.3 The watching brief was carried out within the terms of the relevant Standard for watching brief specified by the Institute for Archaeologists (CIFA 2014).
- 1.3.4 All work has been undertaken within the research priorities established in the Museum of London's A research framework for London Archaeology, 2002 (Museum of London 2002).
- 1.3.5 All work was undertaken within research aims and objectives established in the Written Scheme of Investigation for the watching brief (MOLA 2017, Section 2.2).

## 2 Topographical and historical background

### 2.1 Topography

- 2.1.1 British Geological Survey (BGS) digital data shows that the geology on the site comprises Kempton Park Gravel formation which in places is capped by Brickearth (known in London as the Langley Silt Formation). This was laid down, probably wind-blown, during the last glaciation around 17,000 BC.
- 2.1.2 Alluvium related to the River Westbourne valley is identified to the west of the area monitored on the site. The conjectured route of River Westbourne formulated from Barton's Lost Rivers of London (Barton 1992) suggest the River Westbourne is located c 50m to west of 33-39 Knightsbridge running roughly north/south down the route of Wilton Place.
- 2.1.3 Ground levels lie at c 11.0m OD at the north of the site on Knightsbridge.

### 2.2 Archaeology

#### *Prehistoric period (800,000 BC–AD 43)*

- 2.2.1 No evidence of prehistoric activity prior to the Neolithic period ((4000–2000 BC), has been recorded close to the site with only one date artefact has been noted by the Greater London Historic Environment Records (GLHER) within the site vicinity; that of a Neolithic stone axe was found 215m to the north-east of the site at Hyde Park Corner (GLHER MLO3206). Despite the fact that the site was on geological types that would have been attractive to early settlers there is little evidence to suggest that the area was utilised or settled during the Prehistoric period.

#### *Roman period (AD 43–410)*

- 2.2.2 The site is 3km to the west of *Londinium*, in an area of little known Roman settlement activity. It is 1.3km south of the Iron Age and later Roman road to Silchester along the northern side of Hyde Park on the line of Bayswater Road/Oxford Street. No finds dating to this period have been recorded in the direct site vicinity. During this period the site would most likely have been located in open fields or woodland, between the Tyburn and Westbourne rivers.

#### *Early medieval (Saxon) period (AD 410 –1066)*

- 2.2.3 It is likely that the site lay just within the manor (estate) of Eia (later known as Ebury) which is mentioned in the Domesday survey of 1086 (Weinreb and Hibbert 1995, 412). The manor was bounded to the north by the Roman road from Silchester to London, now Bayswater Road and Oxford Street, to the south by the Thames, to the west by the River Westbourne and to the east by the Tyburn River (Gatty 1921, 16). Little is known about the settlement, if any, within the manor. There was a small Saxon settlement in the neighbouring manor of Tyburn, at the Tyburn crossing near Bond Street Station, c 1.5km to the north of the site (Weinreb and Hibbert 1995, 767). There are no remains from this period noted close to the site was probably located within open fields or woodland away from known areas of settlement.

#### *Later medieval period (1066 –1485)*

- 2.2.4 Shortly after the Norman Conquest in 1066, Geoffrey de Mandeville obtained possession of the manor of Eia, and by c 1080 had given the manor to the monks of



Westminster Abbey (Survey of London, Vol. 39, 1–5). During this period two separate areas came to be distinguished from the main manor, this being Hyde in the north-west corner of the parish in the area of Hyde Park, and Nyte in the area of Pimlico. Hyde was a haunt of deer, boar, and wild bulls and remained relatively undeveloped except for farming by the Abbey (Survey of London 1977, vol. 39, 1–5).

- 2.2.5 A settlement may have existed on the southern parish boundary at Knightsbridge, 200m to the west of the site (Weinreb and Hibbert 1995, 440). Little is known about the settlement and there is no mention of a church. The name possibly originated from the legend that Knights fought on the bridge which crossed the River Westbourne (VCH Old and New London, Vol. 5). The GLHER identifies the possible location of the bridge c 150m to the north-west of the site.

The road through Knightsbridge was an important route into London from the west and it is likely that there was a tollgate, and possibly a small settlement, beside the bridge (Survey of London, Vol. 45). The site was located either within or on the hinterland of the village with Knightsbridge thought to be a medieval route.

### *Post-medieval period (AD 1485–present)*

- 2.2.6 There was very little building in the site vicinity before the end of the 17th century. At that time a narrow roadside belt of manorial ‘waste’ belonging to Westminster Abbey extended, unbroken by any turning and almost entirely unbuilt upon, from Hyde Park Corner to the site of present-day William Street and the area south of Hyde Park was either open ground or agricultural in nature.
- 2.2.7 The area south of Hyde Park had been famous for its market gardens, close to ancient road links to London but development began in the 17th century, with wealthy landowners constructing rural mansions. By the mid-18th century Rocque’s map of 1746, see front cover, shows that development had taken place along the road frontage of the site with gardens behind. Horwood’s map of c 1799 shows individual properties at the north-east corner of the site and to the south of the redevelopment area occupied by the barracks and parade ground of the First Regiment of Foot Guards, built in 1760 and demolished in 1840 (Fig 3). An open yard area (Old Barrack Yard) remained at the east of the site into the later 19th century and subsequently was built over until only the small lane still referred to as Old Barrack Yard remains today.
- 2.2.8 The Knightsbridge frontage of the site, previously known as St George’s Place, was redeveloped from the 1820s. Greenwoods map of 1827 shows to the north-west of the site the Serpentine and various ponds to the south-east of the main lake. The barracks are still present on this map and St Georges Place identified (Fig 4).
- 2.2.9 Individual properties fronted Knightsbridge and Wilton Place throughout the later 19th century and the first half of the 20th-century until the whole block between Old Barrack Yard and Wilton Place was acquired in the 1960s by the Savoy Hotels Group as the new site for the Berkeley Hotel, which had outgrown its premises in Piccadilly. The new buildings fronting Knightsbridge were built between 1965–72 (Brian O’Rourke) with the entrance fronting Wilton Place (Bradley and Pevsner 2003, 756). The old buildings at Nos 37–39 were retained and the block of flats at Nos 33–35 were completed in 1967 replacing an older building.

## 3 The watching brief

### 3.1 Field methodology

- 3.1.1 The works that were archaeologically monitored were excavations for enabling works with the potential to impact on archaeological remains. These consisted of ground reduction for the new basement after the installation of piling at the site perimeter.
- 3.1.2 The area to be monitored was previously basemented and a MOLA Senior Archaeologist observed the removal of made ground/backfill on the site after the basement slab and formation levels had been removed to allow for ground works in 33-39 Knightsbridge.
- 3.1.3 The lower areas of redeposited made ground were cleared by contractors under MOLA supervision in the central area of the site. Areas were excavated by machine by the contractors and monitored by a member of staff from MOLA. Archaeological methodology was carried out in accordance with the WSI (MOLA 2018).
- 3.1.4 Watching brief locations were plotted on plans provided by the client and subsequently tied to the Ordnance Survey grid. The location of the area monitored is shown in Fig 2.
- 3.1.5 Where referenced in this report (eg '11.0m OD'), levels relate to OS Ordnance Datum and were provided by the principle contractors (Keltbray) surveying team at the request of the MOLA Senior Archaeologist during archaeological monitoring when levels were being taken for groundworks on the site.

### 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 2018).

### 3.3 Site archive

Number of trench record sheets	-
Number of overall location plans	1
Number of Context (SU) sheets	-
Number of photographs	22 digital images
Number of Plan sheets	1
Number of Sections	-
Misc	Site notes



## 4 Results of the watching brief

### 4.1 Watching brief area

#### 4.1.1

Location	Central area of basement at 33-39 Knightsbridge
Dimensions	c 14.0m by 8.0m
Modern ground level/top of slab	c 8.20m OD (slab already removed)
Base of modern fill/slab/turf	7.20m OD
Depth of archaeological stratigraphy above natural (if any)	none seen
Level of base of lowest features or deposits observed	N/A
Top of surviving natural observed at	c 7.50m OD (truncated)
Level of base of trench	c 7.0m OD at north c 7.20m OD at south

4.1.2 Ground reduction within the central area of 33-39 Knightsbridge was monitored, see Fig 2. This area lay to the south of an area at the north of the site that had recently been reduced to a general level of c 6.20m OD (well into natural deposits) for piling/shuttering.

4.1.3 Initially the northern section of the watching brief area was observed. In this central area of the site, a thin tread of redeposited made ground overlay a clayey silt deposit that had already probably been truncated to a height of c 7.0m OD (Fig 5). This deposit appeared to be alluvial.

4.1.4 To the south of this area a higher area of deposits survived in a north facing section comprised of redeposited made ground over clayey silt cut by modern intrusions (Fig 6). The made ground in this area of the site was backfill redeposited after the basement slab had been removed. The upper level of the surviving natural clayey silt in section lay at c 7.20m OD and was most probably truncated.

4.1.5 Ground reduction in the south of the previously observed area was subsequently monitored when this became available after the removal of a small platform and access stairway. In this area below the redeposited made ground was a continuation of the clayey silt deposits previously seen on the site. These were recorded at c 7.20m OD at the east rising to c 7.50m OD at the west (Fig 7 and Fig 8). Again this deposit appeared to have been truncated. The only features cutting this natural deposit were evidence of recently installed piles for the current development (Fig 8).

4.1.6 Additional observations at the site perimeter at north and north-east during localised excavations for shuttering also noted natural deposits of alluvium which became sandier with depth.

### 4.2 Summary of results

4.2.1 Only modern made ground survived over natural alluvial deposits associated with the former course of the River Westbourne which previously flowed close to the site. No archaeological features were seen.

4.2.2 The stratigraphically earliest (natural) deposits identified during the watching brief were clayey sandy silts, geological in nature, which appeared to be a dried out

natural waterlain deposit of alluvium most probably associated with the River Westbourne. A former route of the River Westbourne is thought to run on a north/south alignment along Wilton Place at the west site boundary. The conjectured route of the River Westbourne (formulated from Barton's Lost Rivers of London) locates the now lost river route some c 50m to west of site (Barton 1992). Greenwood's map of 1827 (see Fig 4) shows managed areas of the River Westbourne, the Serpentine in Hyde Park, to the north-west of the site. Ponds to the south-east of the main Serpentine Lake head towards Knightsbridge and a former course river probably previously crossed this route close to the site. It is likely the site is probably in or on the edge of a river channel associated with the former course of the River Westbourne.

- 4.2.3 The natural terrace gravels were not observed on site and borehole information available for the site (Concept 2007, BEH1 and BHE2) recorded sand/gravel and gravel in the two boreholes at levels of 3.90m OD and 4.71m OD (6.50m to 7.30m below ground level). This suggests surviving depths of alluvium on the site in this area would be a further c 4m deep and have been truncated at upper levels. The two boreholes sunk in 2007 recorded the top of the probable alluvium at higher levels than those seen on site, i.e. c 8.0m OD and 8.60m OD. This suggests the 20th-century basement had already truncated this deposit and most probably removed all potential archaeological deposits on the site, with the exception of possible deep-cut features cutting into the natural deposits. However, only modern cut features (piles holes) were present in the area monitored on the site.

## 5 Archaeological potential

### 5.1 Answering original research aims

5.1.1 A number of individual research aims were listed in the Written Scheme of Investigation:-

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

5.1.2 The natural deposits were a clayey silt seen beneath redeposited backfill which became sandier with depth. This appeared to be truncated and was seen at an upper height of c 7.50m OD at the east of the site.

*What are the earliest deposits identified?*

5.1.3 The earliest deposits recorded on the site were natural deposits and are thought to be alluvium associated with the previous course of the River Westbourne that originally passed close to the site, remnants of which survive to the north-west as the Serpentine in Hyde Park.

*What are the latest deposits identified?*

5.1.4 The latest deposits were redeposited made ground deposits associated with the disturbance caused by the removal of slabs on the site.

*What is the extent of modern disturbance?*

5.1.5 The modern basement on the 20th-century building on the site previously had a slab level of c 8.50m to 8.80m OD that had most probably removed all upper deposition into the natural deposits. Boreholes records for the site (Concept 2007) indicate that two boreholes at north-east of site (BHE1 and BHE2) sunk in 2007 recorded the top of a deposit described as a sandy clay at c 8.0m OD and 8.60m OD in boreholes directly below the basement slab levels suggesting the previous basement had already truncated this deposit.

### 5.2 Answering new research aims

5.2.1 The results of the watching brief have not raised any new individual research aims.

### 5.3 Significance of the data

5.3.1 Information ascertained about the natural deposits on the site and the possible location of the previous route of the River Westbourne, suggested by the presence of deep alluvial deposits on the site, is of geoarchaeological interest. Whilst the geoarchaeological remains revealed on the site are of local significance there is little to suggest that they are of regional or national importance.

## 6 Recommendations, publication and archiving

- 6.1.1 In view of the limited potential of the geoarchaeological remains recorded on the site it is recommended that no further archaeological investigation is required on the site.
- 6.1.2 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.
- 6.1.3 The site archive containing original records and finds will be stored in accordance with the terms of the WSI (MOLA 2018) with the Museum of London Archaeological Archive (LAA) within twelve months of the end of the watching brief.
- 6.1.4 In view of the limited potential of the material (Sections 5) 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 MOLA would like to thank the client, The Berkeley Hotel Ltd, for funding the field work and the production of this report and Keltbray for facilitating the onsite works.

## 8 Bibliography

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## 9 OASIS archaeological report form

**OASIS ID: molas1-343629**

### Project details

Project name	The Berkeley Hotel, Knightsbridge, SW1
Short description of the project	A watching brief was undertaken monitoring ground reduction in a redevelopment area at the north-east of the Berkeley Hotel site (33-39 Knightsbridge). In the central area of the whole site, where the watching brief was undertaken in a previously basemented area, redeposited made ground overlay a truncated natural clayey silt deposit, most probably alluvium associated with the former course of the River Westbourne. This was recorded at an upper height of c 7.50m OD. No archaeological features were seen.
Project dates	Start: 29-01-2019 End: 06-02-2019
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	YHO19 - Sitecode
Type of project	Recording project
Site status	None
Current Land use	Residential 2 - Institutional and communal accommodation
Monument type	NONE None
Significant Finds	NONE None
Investigation type	""Watching Brief""
Prompt	Planning condition

### Project location

Country England

Site location	GREATER LONDON CITY OF WESTMINSTER PADDINGTON BAYSWATER AND KNIGHTSBRIDGE The Berkeley Hotel, Knightsbridge, SW1
Postcode	SW1X 7NL
Study area	375 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 28110 79755 51.501695831281 -0.154055062579 51 30 06 N 000 09 14 W Point
Height OD / Depth	Min: 7.2m Max: 7.5m

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### Project creators

Name of Organisation	MOLA
Project brief originator	MOLA
Project design originator	Rosalind Morris
Project director/manager	Rosalind Morris
Project supervisor	Pat Miller
Type of sponsor/funding body	client
Name of sponsor/funding body	The Berkeley Hotel Ltd

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### Project archives

Physical Archive recipient	LAA
Physical Archive ID	YHO19

Digital Archive recipient	LAA
Digital Archive ID	YHO19
Paper Archive recipient	LAA
Paper Archive ID	YHO19

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### **Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	The Berkeley Hotel, Knightsbridge, SW1, City of Westminster, Watching Brief Report
Author(s)/Editor(s)	Miller, P
Date	2019
Issuer or publisher	MOLA
Place of issue or publication	London
Description	A4 client report detailing the results of a watching brief on the site

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Entered by	Pat Miller (pmiller@mola.org.uk)
Entered on	26 February 2019

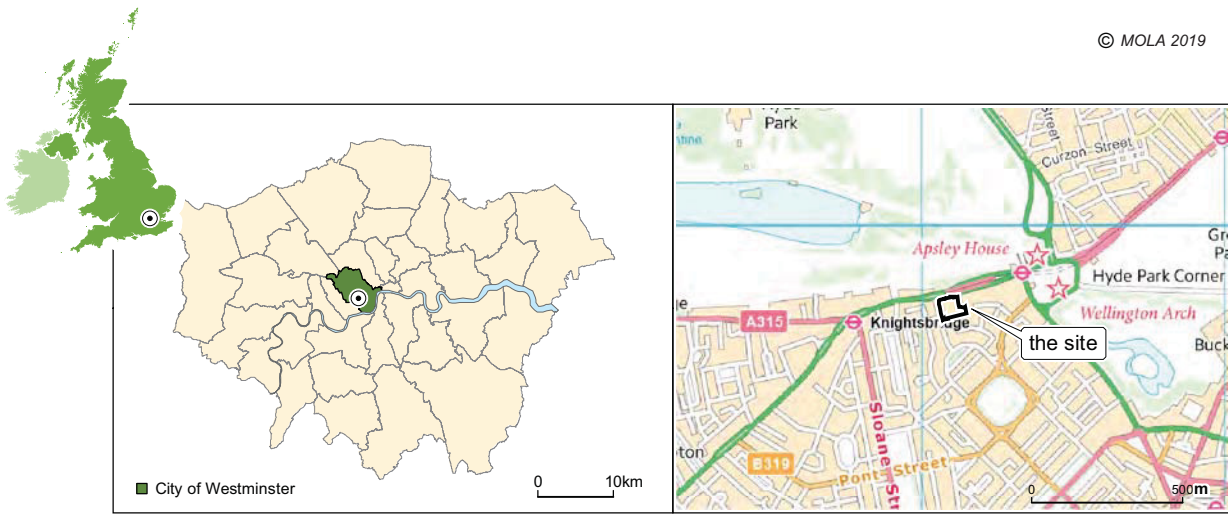


Fig 1 Site location

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scale 1:1,000 @ A4

0 50m





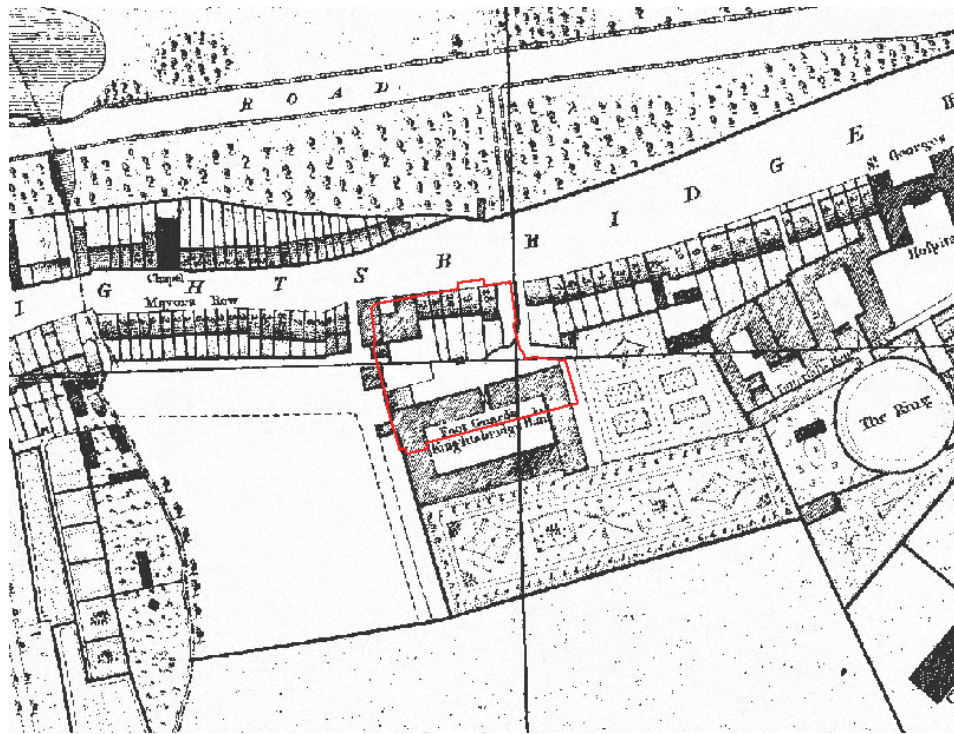


Fig 3 Horwood's map of c 1799

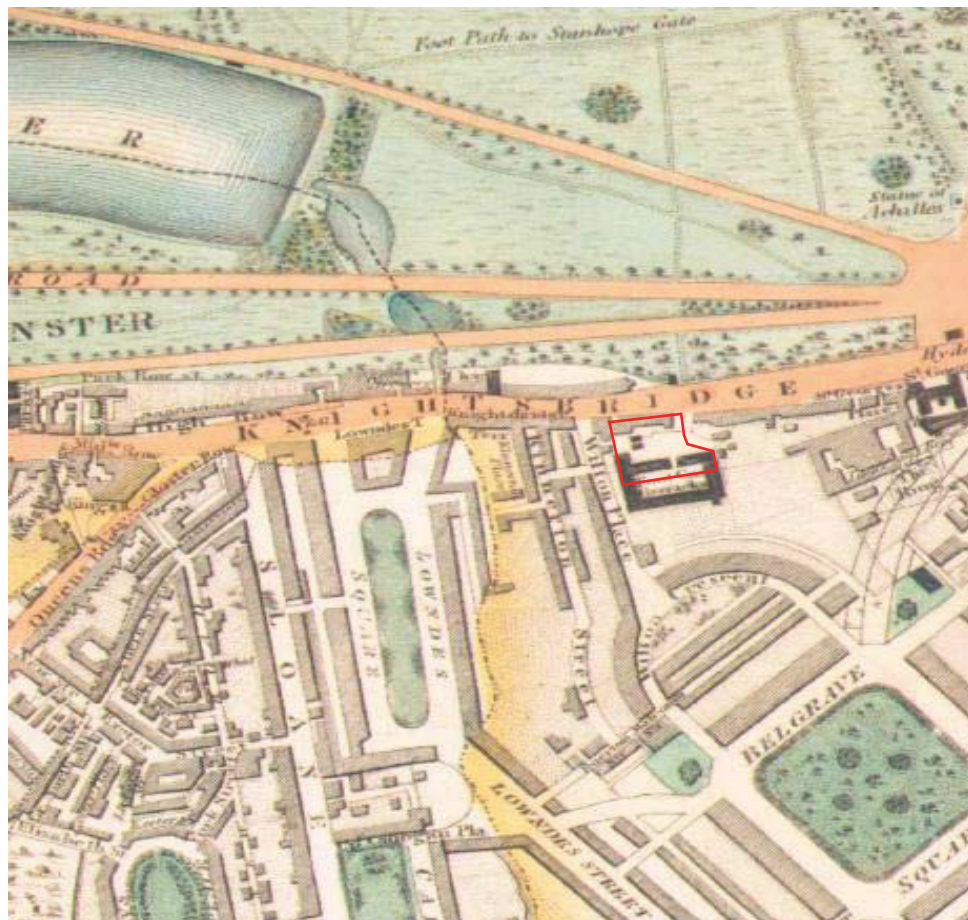


Fig 4 Greenwood's map of 1827





Fig 5 Central area of site looking west during ground reduction



Fig 6 Localised area of natural alluvium cut by modern activity seen in west facing section in centre of site looking south





Fig 7 Ground reduction towards south of site looking west



Fig 8 Alluvial deposits beneath redeposited made ground and modern pile holes (from ground level)