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SPITALFIELDS MARKET – PAVILLIONS  
Brushfield Street and Lamb Street  
E1

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

An archaeological watching brief report

September 2004

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MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

SPITALFIELDS MARKET – PAVILLIONS  
Brushfield Street and Lamb Street  
EI

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

An archaeological watching brief report

Site Code: BHF97

National Grid Reference: 533630 181834

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Museum of London Archaeology Service

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## Summary (non-technical)

*This report has been commissioned by Alan Baxter & Associates in order to record and assess the results of a watching brief carried out within Spitalfields Market.*

*Seven geotechnical pits were monitored between the 26th August and 2nd September 2004 in advance of the construction of four two storey pavilions to be built on raft foundations.*

*Archaeological deposits were recorded in section in all trenches. Natural ground was not observed during these investigations. The highest survival of archaeological deposits occurred at 0.30m below the floor slab. These were in form of road deposits and the walls for pre-existing 19th-century buildings.*

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Site background

The watching brief took place at Old Spitalfields Market hereafter called 'the site' between Lamb Street and Brushfield Street. The site is located within the Horner Buildings at the eastern end of Old Spitalfields Market, bounded by Lamb Street to the north and Brushfield Street to the south (see Fig 1). These buildings are Grade II listed. They were constructed by Robert Horner during the 1880s and 1890s after the 18<sup>th</sup>-century market had been pulled down and the market was subsequently extended westwards in 1928. The Horner buildings themselves have basements but the central area within the Horner Buildings has no basement. The floor slab level on the site is 14.41m OD.

The centre of the site is at OS National Grid Reference 533630 181834. The site code is BHF97.

## 1.2 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Alan Baxter & Associates 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 stated research aims, and to suggest what further work, including analysis or publication (if any), should now take place.

## 1.3 Aims and objectives

The following aims and objectives provide a research framework for the work undertaken in the watching brief :

- What is the level of truncation caused by buildings in this area?
- What is the nature and significance of the surviving archaeological remains?
- Can any archaeological deposits or structures found be correlated with those known from old maps of the area?

- What are the levels of natural deposits and how do these compare to adjacent sites?
- How do the results of the watching brief compare with those from previous works in the area.

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



Fig 1 Plan showing the location of the site



## 2 Topographical and historical background

### 2.1 Geology and topography

The site lies in an area of Langley Silt, more commonly known as brickearth. This is a recent geological deposit laid down by wind and possibly river action towards the end of the final Ice Age about 26,000 to 13,000 BC. The untruncated level of brickearth in this area (it has frequently been quarried away in antiquity) is around 11m OD. This overlies a gravel terrace of the Thames known as the Taplow terrace which is a relatively recent terrace that was cut and deposited by the river between about 120,000 and 26,000 BC. The level of Taplow gravels is about 10 to 10.5m OD. The area is fairly flat, though there is a slight slope down to the west and to the south towards the Thames.

### 2.2 Prehistoric

Little prehistoric evidence from the Spitalfields area has come to light. A few prehistoric flint artefacts, redeposited in later contexts, have however been recovered from the excavations at 250 Bishopsgate (STE95), and a neolithic polished flint hand-axe, again in a residual context, was recovered from excavations at 280 Bishopsgate and the Spitalfields Ramp (SRP98). These are currently being assessed and may throw some light on prehistoric activity in the area.

### 2.3 Roman

Spitalfields lies to the east of the former line of Ermine Street which was the through road from the north of London to London Bridge and thence to Southwark. Roman law forbade the burial of the dead within the City walls and it has long been known that areas alongside the roads out of settlements were used as burial grounds. Spitalfields was just such an area, and Roman burials, associated with ceramic, stone, and glass artefacts were recorded by John Stow at the end of the 16th century (Stow 1987, 152-3).

Roman burials have been recorded in more recent times at Eden House on Spital Square in 1935 by Frank Cottrill, and some of the finds and skulls are in the Museum of London collections. Roman burials have also been found at 12-14 Folgate St (site code: FLG82), the Central Foundation Girl's School (site code: SPT85), Stothard Place (site code: STO86), 282-294 Bishopsgate (site code: BOS87), 250 Bishopsgate (site code: STE95), 280 Bishopsgate and the Spitalfields Ramp (site code SRP98) and

Broadgate (site code BGB98). The burials are represented both by cremations in ceramic pots and glass vessels, and by inhumations. A variety of burial practices were used for inhumations; including lining the grave in chalk, and laying the body in coffins, both wooden, lead, and with stone sarcophagi. Remains of a mausoleum have also been found.

To the south and west, close to the Roman street frontage, Roman ditched enclosures have been found, suggesting that some areas were not used for burials but were defined for other purposes. There is clear evidence that large areas of Spitalfields, particularly those close to Ermine Street, were quarried for the natural subsoils (brickearth and gravel) during the early Roman period. Two timber wells have also been encountered, one due west of the current site at 288 Bishopsgate. (site code: BGE98) and one due east under the Spitalfields ramp (site code: SRP98)

Two finds groups of particular interest that have been recovered from the area, are wall plaster and glass-working waste. Roman wall plaster has been recovered in some quantity from an area of 250 Bishopsgate, apparently dumped into pits, and also thrown back into the well at 280 Bishopsgate and the Spitalfields Ramp (SRP98). Other building material has also been recovered, some to the immediate south of the present site. This building material may be indicative of the demolition of substantial masonry buildings either in this area or within the City, or of mausolea within the burial ground.

Roman glass-working waste has been recovered in substantial quantities from a number of sites to the north of Spital Square. This all takes the form of 'crucible waste' which is thought to be a late Roman glass manufacturing process, and is the only instance of its recovery from the London region.

## **2.4 Saxon**

No evidence of Saxon occupation has been found in this area nor have any residual artefacts been found.

## **2.5 Medieval**

During the Medieval period the whole of the Spitalfields area lay within the Manor of Norton Folgate and was in the ownership of the Bishop of London. The earliest evidence of occupation found in the area is of a substantial water supply system immediately to the east of Bishopsgate which was probably laid out in the 11<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> century. This consisted of two lines of substantial ditches feeding into large square pits, some wood-lined, which acted as silt traps. These ran through fields that were probably used for grazing animals brought down to London for slaughter. Crofts lay alongside Bishopsgate, stretching back to a field to the east known as Lollesworth Field. There is widespread evidence of quarrying the natural subsoils at this time, in particular for brickearth which was used for making tiles.

In c.1197 a group of London merchants founded the Priory and Hospital of St. Mary-without-Bishopsgate on land purchased from the Bishop of London. The initial precinct was a small area centred around Spital Square but this was massively increased in 1235 when the establishment was refounded. A new church and infirmary were built and the precincts stretched from west to east from the modern-day streets of Bishopsgate to Nantes Passage and from south to north from Artillery Passage to Fleur-de-lis Street.

The cemetery of the 1197 hospital lay to the south of the infirmary whilst the cemetery of the refounded hospital lay to the west of the new infirmary. By the late 13<sup>th</sup> century the cemetery had moved to an area to the south of the church, although this area may have already been in use for the burial of canons and benefactors. Many of the burials were laid in shrouds in simple graves whilst others were buried in wooden coffins. Some burials in the cemetery had tomb slabs and burials inside the church were sometimes laid in stone-lined cists or lead coffins (Thomas *et al*, 1997). A chapel and charnel house was built in the cemetery c.1320, dedicated to St Mary Magdalen, and a pulpit lay nearby from which sermons were preached at Easter (Stow 1987, 151). Over 10,000 skeletons have now been excavated from the monastic cemetery.

The hospital catered for the sick poor and wayfarers in need of a resting place. There were probably beds for 60 persons, increasing to 90 in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century. The infirmary was rebuilt in the late 13<sup>th</sup> century when new cloisters were built to the north of the church. Houses for the lay sisters who looked after the sick and five lay brothers were built in stone in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, replacing earlier timber buildings. A kitchen lay to the north of the cloisters and there were other buildings including stables, barns, and other domestic structures such as a brewhouse and a pantry, probably arranged around a service court. By the later 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries there were also a number of houses for wealthy residents scattered around the precincts.

The Priory was entered by a main gate, now situated under the entrance to Spital Square from Bishopsgate, a secondary gate under the entrance to Folgate Street. There is evidence of a road which continued from Spital Yard through the precinct along the line of the later Steward St, lined with timber-framed houses. This road probably exited the precinct on Artillery Lane via a gate.

In 1539 the Priory and Hospital was dissolved under the orders of Henry VIII along with England and Wales' other monastic houses. The lands were sold off and the religious buildings mostly destroyed.

## 2.6 Post-medieval

After the Dissolution the former inner precinct eventually came under the ownership of Stephen Vaughan. Many of the buildings were reused although the church had been largely demolished. Some buildings were rebuilt although major rebuilding did not occur until the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. By this time the Earls of Bolingbroke had a house

the site of which is now occupied by St Botolph's Hall. Large quantities of high quality pottery and glass have been recovered from 4-12 Norton Folgate, dating from the late 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries (Thomas *et al* 1997, 154-158). Most of the housing was sited around the core of the former monastic priory and major redevelopment of the area did not take place until the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The gardens on the east side of the priory remained as such during the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The outer precinct was used by the Honourable Artillery Company until 1658 when they moved to Bunhill Fields, and by the 'Gunners of the Tower'. Houses, including the Master Gunner's House, have been excavated along the north side of the Artillery Ground (SRP98). Preliminary results from excavations at 250 and 280 Bishopsgate suggest that some of the area was used for the growing of plants, but also that artillery practise did indeed take place here as shown by the recovery of numerous musket balls, a cannon ball and pieces of shot (SRP98, Thomas and Dunwoodie 1997). A butt at the end of a firing range lay on the east side of the Artillery Ground. The Artillery Ground was closed in 1682 when the area was sold off for housing development.

Lollesworth field was sold for housing in 1649. Sir George Wheler began building houses to the north of Lamb Street in the 1660s and Spitalfields Market was granted a licence in 1682. This consisted originally of a timber market which was replaced in brick in the early years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. It consisted of four blocks of buildings around a central open yard with entrance ways into the market on each side. Maps of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (eg Rocque (1746), Horwood (1800)) show continual development with the addition of buildings to the market making the plan complex to predict with any certainty.

By the early 18<sup>th</sup> century many of the modern streets had been laid out and new houses constructed. Wheler built a chapel for the new residents in Nantes Passage. The new Spitalfields suburb became a home for a rapidly expanding population, fuelled by large numbers of Huguenot immigrants who flooded into the area after the revocation of the edict of Nantes in 1682. The foundations of many of these houses survive, and large quantities of finds and environmental data have been recovered from the cesspits in their back gardens.



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Fig 2 Plan showing the location of the test pits

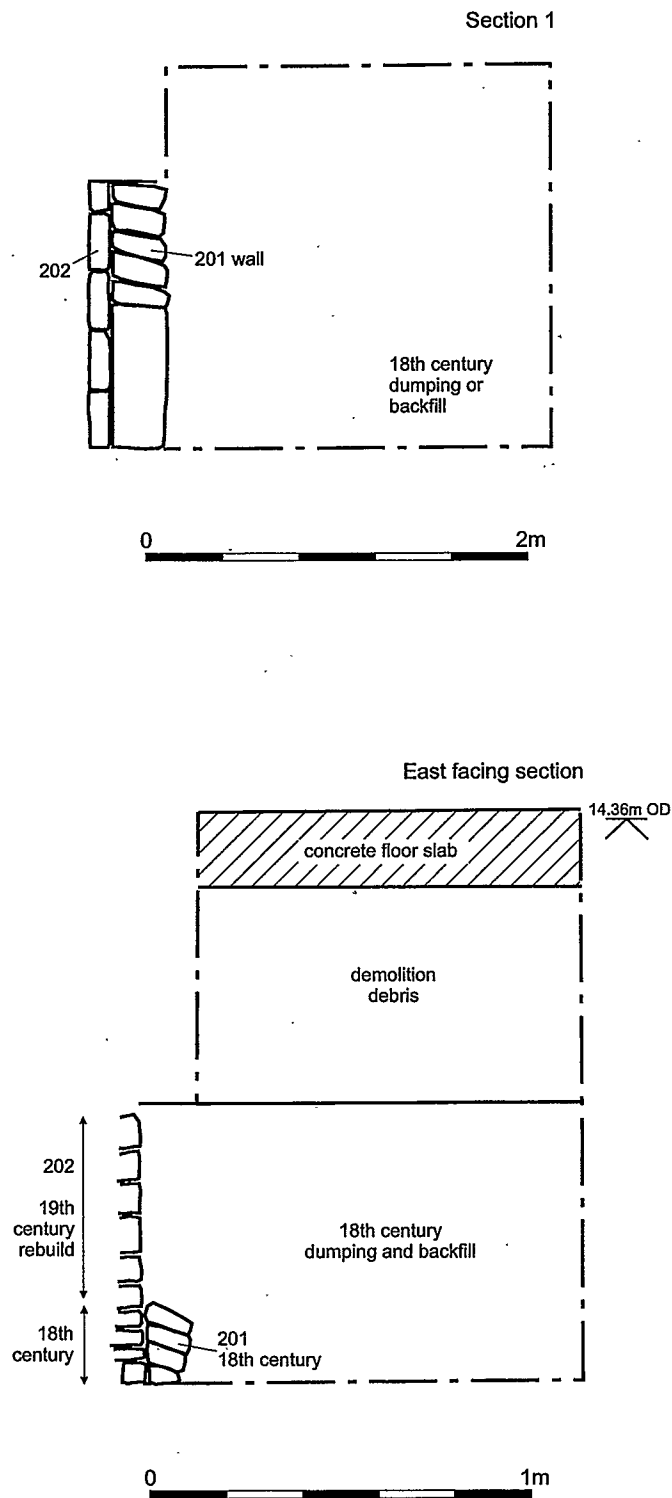


Fig 3 Plan and section of test pit 7

### 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 concrete floor slab was broken out and cleared by contractors under MoLAS supervision. Trenches were excavated by hand by the contractors, and monitored by a member of staff from MoLAS.

The locations of the areas of excavation were recorded by the MoLAS surveying team. This information was then plotted onto the OS grid.

The heights of observations and/or archaeological remains were recorded relative to Ordnance Datum and relative to the top of the concrete floor slab.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code BHF97 in the MoL archive.

#### 3.2 Results of the watching brief

In total, seven separate interventions (trenches) were made for the purposes of geotechnical site investigation. These have been numbered one to seven consecutively. There follows a brief description of the archaeological deposits as recorded. The deepest test pit reached a depth of 1.40m. Natural deposits were not encountered during these investigations.

For all test pit locations see Fig 2 Plan showing the location of test pits.

<i>Watching Brief Test Pit 1</i>	
Dimensions	1.90m by 0.60m by 1.15m d
Modern ground level/top of slab	14.49m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	13.89m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	c. 0.60m
Level of base of deposits observed	13.34 m OD
Natural observed	N/A

Post medieval dumped deposits were the earliest found, at a depth of 0.60m below the market floor slab. These deposits are either of garden deposits from the buildings in this area or were part of general dumping, possibly to build up the area to street level to provide a thoroughfare between the buildings. This deposit was covered by a

mortar spread that represented some sort of surface, but likely to date to the later 19th century. A modern pipe trench was cut through all these deposits.

#### *Watching Brief Test Pit 2*

<i>Watching Brief Test Pit 2</i>	
Dimensions	1.10m by 0.50m by 1.20m
Modern ground level/top of slab	14.28m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	13.58m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	0.70 m
Level of base of deposits observed	13.08m OD
Natural observed	N/A

A dumped deposit, similar to that found in Test Pit 1 was found interspersed with dark yellow/pale brown layer of re-deposited sandy silt (brickearth). This deposition sequence is similar to that seen in Test pit 4.

#### *Watching Brief Test Pit 3*

<i>Watching Brief Test Pit 3</i>	
Dimensions	0.60m by 2.0m by 1.20m
Modern ground level/top of slab	14.51m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	13.81m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	0.70 m
Level of base of deposits observed	13.31mOD
Natural observed	N/A

A dark grey silty deposit containing ceramic building material (brick and tile), clay pipe stems, oyster shell and sheep-sized animal bone was seen at the base of this trench at 1.20m depth, and presumed to be the same as that found in the other trial pits. Overlying this were re-deposited brickearth deposits up to 0.30m thick, and a dark silty sandy deposit that had subsequently been dumped over it. This was followed by the dumping of further brickearth deposits. At 0.30m below the ground surface modern levelling deposits and a late 19th/early 20th century cut (for services) were covered by the concrete floor slab.

#### *Watching Brief Test Pit 4*

<i>Watching Brief Test Pit 4</i>	
Dimensions	0.60m by 2m by 1.40m
Modern ground level/top of slab	14.41m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	14.05 m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	0.36 m
Level of base of deposits observed	13.01m OD
Natural observed	N/A



A dark grey, coarse grained silt containing frequent charcoal, mortar and shell fragments was seen from 0.91m below the top of the concrete floor slab, and continued below the base of the test pit (at 1.40m). This is thought to be the same post-medieval dumped deposit as that recorded in the other test pits. Above this deposit was a sterile brickearth, above which lay a burnt brickearth deposit that contained burnt brick and tile and charcoal fragments. In turn, these had been sealed by the levelling and make-up deposits both of which contained demolition rubble presumably from the pre-existing buildings in the area. A pipe trench cut through all these deposits at the eastern end of the trench. Hardcore for the market floor slab sealed this.

#### *Watching Brief Trench 5*

<i>Watching Brief Test Pit 5</i>	
Dimensions	1m by 1m by 1.20m
Modern ground level/top of slab	14.41m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	0.30m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	N/A
Natural observed	N/A

A mixed mortar and rubble deposit containing the brick and tile was recorded within this trench. This was the demolition debris of pre-existing buildings previously demolished on the site. Towards the base of the trench the deposit became less rubble filled, but remained high in its mortar content. In addition a modern pipe was running at the base of this trench. It is thought that this test pit was located within a backfilled cellar.

#### *Watching Brief Test Pit 6*

<i>Watching Brief Test Pit 6</i>	
Dimensions	0.90m by 080m by 1.25m depth
Modern ground level/top of slab	14.23m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	13.53m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	0.70 m
Level of base of deposits observed	12.98m OD
Natural observed	N/A

Directly below the concrete was a deposit thought to represent the backfill of a quarry pit. There was no distinct banding, though tiplines were viewed within the deposit itself.

#### *Watching Brief Test Pit 7*

<i>Watching Brief Test Pit 7</i>	
Dimensions	1m by 1m by 1.40m
Modern ground level/top of slab	14.36m OD

Base of modern fill/slab	13.66m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	0.70 m
Level of base of deposits observed	12.96m OD
Natural observed	N/A

Test pit seven contained demolition deposits to a depth of 1.40m below the level of the concrete floor slab. In the southern end of the trench, just outside of the area covered by the test pit a collapsed section revealed the presence of two walls, aligned east-west, running parallel with each other. The earliest (northern) wall [201] was made of 18th-century brick stretchers. The wall behind this ([202] to the south) seemed to be 18th-century at the base and had a later 19th century rebuild to it which slightly overlay the earlier wall [201]. The test pit was not excavated to the base of these walls and it is unclear whether they are foundations or cellar walls.



Fig 4 Rocque's map of London 1746

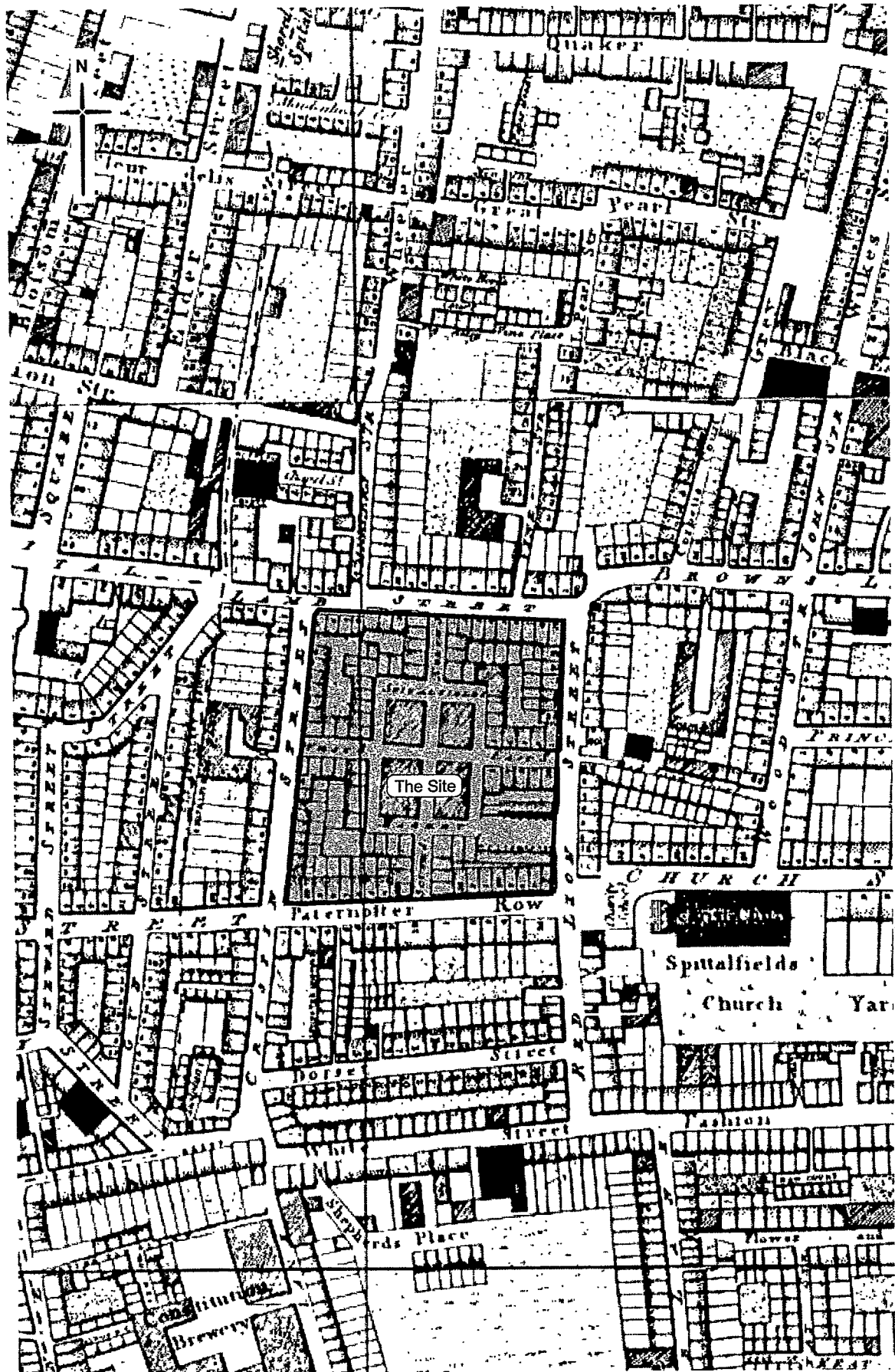


Fig 5 Horwood's map of London, 1800

## 4 Potential of archaeology

### 4.1 Original research aims

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

The works for the construction of the present market demolished previous activities in the area down to approximate levels of between 0.70m and 0.80m below the current market floor slab.

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

The test pits did not reach sufficient depths that any deposits earlier than Post-medieval (18th century) in date were revealed. The remains of 18th- and 19th-century buildings were present in Test Pit 7. The presence of a backfilled cellar was hinted at in Test Pit 5. Eighteenth century dumped deposits were recorded in the remaining test pits.

- Can any archaeological deposits or structures found be correlated with those known from old maps of the area?

It was not practicable to discern from historic maps of the area exactly which of the buildings was seen in Test Pit 7. This is in part due to the small size of the pits under investigation and the depth of the trenches excavated. There is clear evidence of the 18<sup>th</sup>-century Spitalfields Market, and that the buildings surrounding the market were subject to additions, rebuilds and changes. The rebuild of the walls, seen both during this and in previous works suggest this and the difference in the layout from contemporary maps supports it. The deposits found in the area are likely to be the make up deposits for the external roads around the 18th-century market buildings.

- What are the levels of natural deposits and how do these compare to adjacent sites?
- No natural deposits were recorded within these test pits.

- How do the results of the watching brief compare with those from previous works in the area.

The results of this watching brief are consistent with those from other works in this area. This includes a previous Watching Brief carried out within the Horner Buildings and the full scale excavations that have occurred in the area to the south of the study area (Thomas, 2001, Thomas et al, 2003, Thomas et al, 2003).

### 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. The results of

investigations are derived from geotechnical pits, and the report produced is not necessarily a substitute for any evaluation.

## 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 and finds will be stored with the Museum of London within 12 months of the end of the excavation.

## 6 Conclusions

The test pits revealed the presence of buildings that surrounded the original 18th century market place. These were recorded at approximately 700mm below the concrete floor slab, sealed by deposits associated with the demolition of these buildings and the building of the Horner Buildings. It would be impossible to indicate an accurate plan of the main structural elements of the Market buildings without widespread excavation. A potential basic ground plan would, however, seem to have comprised four blocks of buildings, c.18m wide around an open courtyard with entrances roughly in the centre of each side. Any sub-divisions within the buildings are unknown. Evidence from Horwood's map of 1800 would also suggest that there was substantial building within the open courtyard of the market during the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.



## 7 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Clive Cockerton, Chris Olton and the groundcrew from GBG Structural Services.

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## 9 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

OASIS ID: molas1-3884

### Project details

Project name Horner Buildings, Spitalfields Market Watching Brief

### Short description of the project

A watching brief was carried out within Spitalfields Market between 26th August 2004 and 2nd September 2004. Seven geotechnical pits were monitored in advance of the construction of four two storey pavilions to be built on raft foundations. Archaeological deposits were recorded in section in all trenches. Natural ground was not observed during these investigations. The highest survival of archaeological deposits occurred at 0.30m below the floor slab. These were in the form of road deposits and the walls for pre-existing 18th- and 19th- century buildings.

Project dates Start: 26-08-2004 End: 02-09-2004

Previous/future work Yes / Not known

Any associated project reference codes BHF97 - Sitecode

Any associated project reference codes SRP98 - Sitecode

Type of project Recording project

Site status Area of Archaeological Importance (AAI)

Current Land use Industry and Commerce 3 - Retailing

Monument type MARKET Post Medieval

Monument type BUILDINGS - BASEMENT Post Medieval

Investigation type 'Watching Brief'

Prompt Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16

**Project location**

**Site location** GREATER LONDON TOWER HAMLETS TOWER HAMLETS  
Spitalfields Market

**Postcode** E1

**Study area** 6906 Square metres

**National reference** **grid** TQ 335 818 Point

**Project creators**

**Name of Organisation** MoLAS

**Project originator** **brief** Local Authority Archaeologist and/or Planning Authority/advisory body

**Project originator** **design** MoLAS

**Project director/manager** MoLAS

**Project supervisor** Rosalind Aitken

**Sponsor or funding body** GBG Structural

**Project archives**

**Physical Archive recipient** LAARC

**Physical Archive ID** BHF97

**Physical Exists?** **Archive** No

**Digital recipient** **Archive** LAARC

**Digital Archive ID** BHF97

Digital Contents 'Survey','other'

Digital available Media 'Text','Survey'

Digital Exists? Archive No

Paper recipient Archive LAARC

Paper Archive ID BHF97

Paper Contents 'Survey','other'

Paper available Media 'Drawing','Notebook - Excavation',' Research',' General Notes','Plan','Report','Section','Survey'

Paper Exists? Archive No

Project bibliography  
1

Title Spitalfields Market, Brushfield Street and Lamb Street, E1, A report on the watching brief

Author(s)/Editor(s) Aitken, R

Date 2004

Issuer or publisher MoLAS

Place of issue or publication London

Description Unpublished client report