

**WINDMILL GARDENS**  
off Blenheim Gardens  
London  
SW2

London Borough of Lambeth

An archaeological evaluation report

October 2004

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MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

WINDMILL GARDENS  
off Blenheim Gardens  
London  
SW2

London Borough of Lambeth

An archaeological evaluation report

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## Summary (non-technical)

*This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation and training excavation carried out by Lesley Smith of 'Discovering Archaeology' with assistance from the Museum of London Archaeology Service on the site of The Windmill, off Blenheim Gardens London, SW2.*

*The aims of this project were to raise awareness within the local community of the history of the windmill and its importance to local heritage, to raise awareness of the Friends of Windmill Gardens campaign to restore the windmill, build an education centre and develop the Windmill Gardens site, increase the local community's sense of ownership of their archaeology/heritage and raise awareness of the process and methodology of archaeological investigation.*

*Five primary schools and an after-school club participated in the project, experiencing three different specialisms used in archaeological investigation, namely; excavation, finds and environmental work. The five schools were Lenbrook Primary School, Richard Atkins Primary School, Hitherfield Primary School, Sudbourne Primary School, Livity Special School and Renton Close After School Club.*

*Three trenches were evaluated. The smallest one, adjacent to the windmill was sited against the millstone to find its base, which was found to be 0.12m below current ground level (the millstone was 0.24m thick). The two other trenches were situated in an area that had been previously occupied by 19th century buildings. Both trenches were excavated to a depth of 0.30m below ground level and revealed redeposited clay and gravel with brick, metal and tile fragments. A sondage was dug to a depth of 1.00m below ground level at the eastern end of the trenches to determine the nature of the natural geological substrate. At a depth of 0.40m below ground level, large fragments of asphalt, whole bricks and tile were found. Large voids were noted between the fragments, suggesting a possible basemented area that had been backfilled with 19th century demolition material. No evidence of the buildings was found.*

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*Front cover: Ordnance Survey map of 1870 showing the Windmill and associated buildings*

Fig 1 Site location and areas of evaluation

## **Introduction**

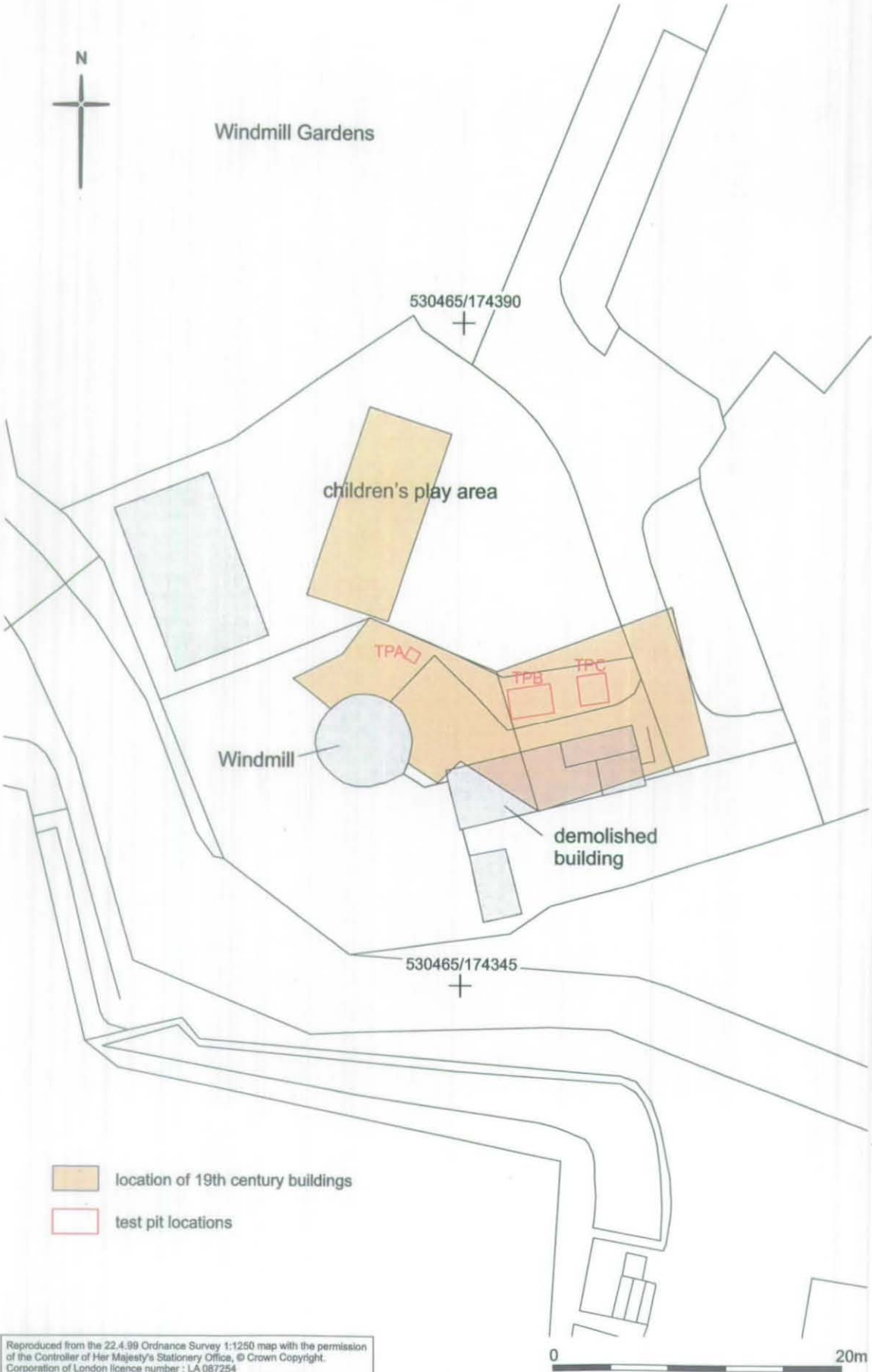
### **Site background**

A Method Statement for an archaeological evaluation on the site of Windmill Gardens, open park and play area was produced by Lesley Smith 'Discovering Archaeology' to provide English Heritage Greater London Archaeological Advisory Service, and Museum of London Archaeology Service with a description of method, location and research aims.

The site comprises several areas of grass to the north and east of Brixton Windmill, and is bounded to the north by a children's play area and on other sides by surrounding properties. The centre of the site lies at National Grid reference 530373 174408. Modern ground level in the area lies between approximately 30 – 35m OD.

The aims of this evaluation were to raise awareness within the local community of the history of the windmill and its importance to local heritage, to raise awareness of the Friends of Windmill Gardens campaign to restore the windmill, build an education centre and develop the Windmill Gardens site, increase the local community's sense of ownership of their archaeology/heritage and raise awareness of the process and methodology of archaeological investigation.

The evaluation was carried out between Saturday 18th and Saturday 25th September 2005.



Reproduced from the 22.4.99 Ordnance Survey 1:1250 map with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright. Corporation of London licence number: LA 087254

Fig 1 Test pit locations

## **Planning and legislative framework**

This evaluation is not part of a Planning application but the methods and procedures followed were commensurate with such an application.

## **Origin and scope of the report**

This report was commissioned by Lesley Smith 'Discovering Archaeology' 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).

Field evaluation, and the *Evaluation report* which comments on the results of that exercise, are defined in the most recent English Heritage guidelines (English Heritage, 1998) as intended to provide information about the archaeological resource in order to contribute to the:

- formulation of a strategy for the preservation or management of those remains; and/or
- formulation of an appropriate response or mitigation strategy to planning applications or other proposals which may adversely affect such archaeological remains, or enhance them; and/or
- formulation of a proposal for further archaeological investigations within a programme of research

## **Aims and objectives**

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

The following research aims and objectives were established in the *Method Statement* for the evaluation (Section 2.2):

- Do any of the outbuilding foundations survive?
- How old are the outbuildings – were they built the same time as the windmill or are they later additions?
- Is there any evidence for what the outbuildings were used for?
- Is there any evidence for any activity outside the immediate area of the windmill?



## **Topographical and historical background**

### **Archaeological and historical background**

There have been no archaeological investigations within the vicinity of the site. The history of the windmill is documented and this is a summary drawn from the Friends of Windmill Gardens website.

There have probably been windmills in the Lambeth area since medieval times and 12 sites have been identified, but the Brixton windmill is the only one to have survived. Built in 1816, it was leased the following year by John Ashby. John, his sons and grandson were millers producing stone-ground wholemeal flour. The Ashby family operated the mill, which became known as Ashby's Mill, for the whole of its working life.

When the windmill was built, Brixton Hill would have been relatively rural, surrounded by open fields, but during the 1850s, the area around the mill had become built up and the new houses sheltered the mill from the strong winds needed to drive it. The mill could no longer work efficiently and in 1862 Ashby and Sons transferred their milling business to watermills at Mitcham. The sails were removed two years later and the mill was used for storage.

In 1902, when the lease on the Mitcham mill expired, a steam engine was fitted to power Brixton Windmill. This was later replaced by a gas engine but the mill was finally closed down in 1934.

Surrounding the windmill stood the miller's house, a cottage, a bakery and outbuildings; these were all demolished in about 1960.

Joshua Ashby (John's grandson) wished to preserve the mill as a relic of bygone days and, after his death in 1935, it was administered by a trust. In 1957 the mill and surrounding land was purchased by the London County Council and was later laid out as a public garden.

In 1971 Brixton Windmill was handed over to Lambeth Council in whose ownership it remains. At present, besides grassed open space and trees, Windmill Gardens has a children's playground and a One O'Clock Club.' [www.brixtonwindmill.org.uk](http://www.brixtonwindmill.org.uk)

## The evaluation

### Methodology

All archaeological excavation and monitoring during the evaluation was carried out in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (MoLAS, 2004), and the *MoLAS Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 1994).

Three evaluation trenches were excavated to the south of the One O'Clock Club playground, close to the windmill.

Volunteers and MoLAS staff removed the turf and topsoil of each of the three trenches. Children from five primary schools and an after-school club who attended on a daily basis excavated the trenches by hand. The work was supervised by a member of MoLAS. The five schools were Lenbrook Primary School, Richard Atkins Primary School, Hitherfield Primary School, Sudbourne Primary School, Livity Special School and Renton Close After School Club.

The children were given a short introduction to the fundamental principles of excavation, including health and safety issues before actively participating in the excavation procedure.

The locations of evaluation trenches were recorded by MoLAS offsetting from the adjacent railings of the One O'Clock Club and plotted on to an Ordnance Survey map at a scale of 1:200.

A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was made in accordance with the principles set out in the MoLAS site recording manual (MoLAS, 1994). Levels were calculated by establishing a temporary bench mark on the southern boundary wall of the site.

The site has produced: 1 trench location plan; 3 trench recording sheets and levels data.

The finds from the site consisted of brick, roofing tile, ceramic wall tile and metal fragment, including nails collected by the children during excavation. The finds were then taken to be the finds assistant from MoLSS to be processed in the next stage of the teaching procedure.

The site records can be found under the site code BXM04 in the MoL archive.

## Results of the evaluation

For trench locations see Fig 1.

<i>Evaluation Trench A</i>	
Location	North side of Windmill
Dimensions	1m x 1m
Modern ground level	33.53m OD
Base of topsoil	33.41m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	N/A
Natural observed	N/A

This trench was located against the millstone and excavated to find the depth of the millstone, which was found to be 0.24m deep.

<i>Evaluation Trench B</i>	
Location	East of the windmill
Dimensions	3m x 2m
Modern ground level	33.09m OD
Base of modern topsoil	32.94m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	1m
Level of base of deposits observed	32.12m OD
Natural observed	N/A

<i>Evaluation Trench C</i>	
Location	East of the windmill
Dimensions	2m x 2m
Modern ground level	33.09m OD
Base of modern topsoil	32.94m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	1m
Level of base of deposits observed	32.32m OD
Natural observed	N/A

Trenches B and C were situated in an area that had been previously occupied by 19th century buildings. Both trenches were excavated to a depth of 0.30m below ground level and revealed redeposited clay and gravel with brick, metal and tile fragments. A sondage was dug to a depth of 1.00m below ground level at the eastern end of each trench to determine the nature of the natural geological substrate. At a depth of 0.40m below ground level loose large fragments of asphalt, whole bricks and tile were found, dating to the 19th and early 20th century. Large voids were noted between the fragments, with the rubble material still evident at a depth of 1m below ground level. Natural geology was not observed. It is possible that the demolition material filled a basemented area, however no foundations or structural elements were found.

## **Archaeological potential**

### **Realisation of original research aims**

*Do any of the outbuilding foundations survive?*

No direct evidence for the outbuildings was found on the site. The material within the trenches included 19th century demolition material, which may well represent the remains of the outbuildings. It was not possible to excavate below 1m depth for health and safety reasons. It is possible that remains of clear floors or foundations survive below this level.

*How old are the outbuildings – were they built the same time as the windmill or are they later additions?*

The demolition material contained building material that dated from the late 18th century through to the early 20th century, and may represent evidence for buildings contemporary with the windmill and also later additions that appear to have been constructed in the 19th and early 20th century, according to documentary evidence.

*Is there any evidence for what the outbuildings were used for?*

No evidence was found for the function of the outbuildings.

*Is there any evidence for any activity outside the immediate area of the windmill?*

The evaluation was limited to the area of the former outbuildings for health and safety reasons.

### **General discussion of potential**

The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of ancient ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification) on the site is very low. The deposits revealed date from the 19th century and early 20th centuries.

### **Significance**

The archaeological remains are of local significance.

## Assessment by EH criteria

The recommendations of the GLAAS 1998 guidelines on *Evaluation reports* suggest that there should be:

‘Assessment of results against original expectations (using criteria for assessing national importance of period, relative completeness, condition, rarity and group value) .....’ (Guidance Paper V, 4 7). A set of guide lines was published by the Department of the Environment with criteria by which to measure the importance of individual monuments for possible Scheduling. These criteria are as follows: *Period*; *Rarity*; *Documentation*; *Survival/Condition*; *Fragility/Vulnerability*; *Diversity*; and *Potential*. The guide lines stresses that ‘these criteria should not...be regarded as definitive; rather they are indicators which contribute to a wider judgement based on the individual circumstances of a case’.<sup>1</sup>

### *Criterion 1: period*

Taken as a whole, the archaeology as seen is characteristic of the 19th and 20th centuries.

### *Criterion 2: rarity*

There is nothing to suggest that any of the archaeological deposits are rare either in a national or regional context.

### *Criterion 3: documentation*

There is contemporary documentation for the late post-medieval period, relating to the windmill.

### *Criterion 4: group value*

Had structural remains of the outbuildings been found, these would have had group value as part of the windmill complex. However, it was not possible to confirm whether structural remains survive.

### *Criterion 5: survival/condition*

Not applicable.

### *Criterion 6: fragility*

Not applicable.

### *Criterion 7: diversity*

Not applicable

### *Criterion 8: potential*

Unclear

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<sup>1</sup> Annex 4, DOE, Planning and Policy Guidance 16, (1990). For detailed definition of the criteria see that document. Reference has also been made to Darvill, Saunders & Startin, (1987); and McGill, (1995)

## Acknowledgements

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## Project details

Project name Windmill Gardens, Brixton

Short description of the project The intentions of this evaluation were to raise awareness within the local community of the history of the windmill, and its importance to local heritage, to raise awareness of the Friends of Windmill Gardens campaign to restore the windmill, build an education centre and develop the Windmill Gardens site, increase the local community's sense of ownership of their archaeology/heritage and raise awareness of the process and methodology of archaeological investigation. Four primary schools participated in the project, experiencing three different specialisms used in archaeological investigation; excavation, finds and environmental work. Three trenches were evaluated.

Project dates Start: 18-09-2004 End: 25-09-2004

Previous/future work No / No

Type of project Field evaluation

Site status None

Current Land use Community Service 2 - Leisure and recreational buildings

Methods & techniques 'Targeted Trenches'

Development type Amenity area (e.g. public open space)

Prompt Research

Position in the planning process Not known / Not recorded



**Project location**

Country England  
Site location GREATER LONDON LAMBETH BRIXTON Windmill Gardens, off  
Blenheim Gardens  
Postcode SW2  
Study area 11 Square metres  
National grid  
reference TQ 3037 7440 Point

**Project creators**

Name of  
Organisation MoLAS  
Project brief  
originator Consultant  
Project design  
originator Lesley Smith 'Discovering Archaeology'  
Project  
director/manager Sophie Jackson  
Project supervisor Portia Askew  
Sponsor or funding  
body Lesley Smith 'Discovering Archaeology'

**Project archives**

Physical Archive  
Exists? No  
Digital Archive  
Exists? No  
Paper Archive  
recipient LAARC  
Paper Contents 'other'

Paper Media available	'Miscellaneous Material','Plan','Report','Survey'
Paper Archive notes	Records consist of 3 trench recording sheets, 1 trench location plan and levels data
Paper Archive Exists?	Yes

**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	A forthcoming report
Title	An Archaeological evaluation at Windmill Gardens, off Blenheim Gardens, London SW2
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