



5-11 OLD COMPTON STREET,
13-17 MOOR STREET AND
95-99 CHARING CROSS ROAD
Soho
W1

City of Westminster

An archaeological evaluation report



MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

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An archaeological evaluation report

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Summary (non-technical)

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by the Museum of London Archaeology Service at the site of 5–1 Compton Street, 13–17 Moor Street and 95–99 Charing Cross Road, Soho, London, W1. The report was commissioned from MoLAS by Earle Architects.

Four evaluation test pits were monitored on the site on 21st March 2005: these had been positioned so as to give the maximum coverage and largest potential for recovery of information.

One of the test pits was located in a currently unbasemented area at the rear of 5 Old Compton Street. The evaluation revealed this area had a cellar which had been backfilled at some point in the Victorian period. The rest of the test pits revealed truncation by basement construction down to natural deposits. In the light of revised understanding of the archaeological potential of the site the report concludes the impact of the proposed redevelopment is negligible.

Contents

1	Introduction	5
1.1	Site background	5
1.2	Planning and legislative framework	5
1.3	Planning background	5
1.4	Origin and scope of the report	6
1.5	Aims and objectives	6
2	Topographical and historical background	10
2.1	Geology and topography	10
2.2	Prehistoric	10
2.3	Roman	10
2.4	Saxon	11
2.5	Medieval	11
2.6	Post-medieval–modern	12
3	The evaluation	14
3.1	Methodology	14
3.2	Results of the evaluation	14
3.3	Assessment of the evaluation	16
4	Archaeological potential	18
4.1	Realisation of original research aims	18
4.2	General discussion of potential	19
6	Proposed development impact and recommendations	21
7	Acknowledgements	22
8	Bibliography	22

List of illustrations

Front cover: Ordnance Survey map from 1914 showing area of site

<i>Fig 1 Site location plan</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Fig 2 Test pit location plan</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>Fig 3 Section and plan from Test pit 2</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Fig 4 Section from Test pit 4</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Fig 5 William Morgan's map of 1682 showing area of site</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>Fig 6 Horwood's map of 1813 showing area of site</i>	<i>20</i>

1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The evaluation took place at 5–11 Old Compton Street, 13–17 Moor Street and 95–99 Charing Cross Road, hereafter called ‘the site’. It forms a triangular block bounded by Charing Cross Road on the east, Old Compton Street on the north-west and Moor Street to the south-west (Fig 1). The Ordnance Survey National Grid reference for the centre of site is 529880 181069. The level of the basement slab varies between 21.34m and 21.24m OD. Modern ground level immediately adjacent to the site is c 23.9m OD. The site code is OCM05.

The evaluation was carried out in advance of the redevelopment of 15–17 Moor Street, alterations and extensions to 13 and 14 Moor Street, 5–11 Old Compton Street and 95–98 Charing Cross Road to provide hotel, restaurant, retail units and residential accommodation. Eight of the eleven existing buildings on the site are to be retained and substantially altered or extended. Three buildings will be replaced, with a new building integrated into the retained fabric. The facades of the existing buildings will be retained.

A new section of basement will need to be excavated to the rear of 5 Old Compton Street and the adjoining building will need to be underpinned. The effect of the truncation will be to remove all existing deposits in these areas. Any other areas, which are not at present basemented, will also be affected during the redevelopment.

A desk-top *Archaeological (impact) assessment* was previously prepared, which covers the whole area of the site (Miles, 2004). The *assessment* document should be referred to for more detailed information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site and the initial interpretation of its archaeological potential.

An archaeological field evaluation was subsequently carried out on a series of test pits within the existing buildings on 21st March 2005. The location of these test pits can be seen on Fig 2.

1.2 Planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place was summarised in the *Archaeological impact assessment* which formed the project design for the evaluation (see Section 2, Miles, 2004).

1.3 Planning background

Although, the site does not lie within an Area of Special Archaeological Priority (ASAP), as defined by the City of Westminster’s *Unitary Development Plan* (UDP), it

lies approximately 50m north to the Saxon settlement of Lundenwic and Thorney Island ASAP and is immediately to the west of the Lundenwic Archaeological Priority Area as defined by the London Borough of Camden UDP. In addition, the UDP protects the position of potential archaeology in the local planning process and incorporate recommendations from the Department of the Environment's *Planning Policy Guidance 16* (PPG 16). Planning consent was given to the proposed development (PT/05/01793/ADFULL, RN 98/05085) in April 2000. The following condition relating to archaeology was included:

No development shall take place within the site until the applicant has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

The Condition is implemented in order to allow an opportunity for investigations to be made, in an area where remains of archaeological interest are understood to exist.

The development area contains two Listed Buildings: 5 Old Compton Street and 13 Moor Street, both Listed Grade II.

1.4 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by Earle Architects on behalf of the client Consolidated Property Corporation Limited, 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

1.5 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 (Dunwoodie 2005, Section 2.2):

- *What is the nature and level of natural topography? Are there any variations across the site?*
- *What are the earliest deposits identified?*
- *Are there any archaeological remains of Saxon date on the site? Can their presence absence be used to further define the limits of the Lundenwic settlement? The site lies outside the known limits of the settlement, but there may be evidence for suburban occupation similar to that identified at the National Portrait Gallery?*
- *Are there any remains of medieval date on the site? If so, how do they relate to other medieval features recorded in the vicinity? Is there any evidence for structures or activities associated with St Giles' Hospital?*
- *What is the nature of any post-medieval remains on the site? What do they reveal about the character of the area during this period? In particular, is there evidence for the presence of earlier cellars to the rear of 5 Old Compton Street?*

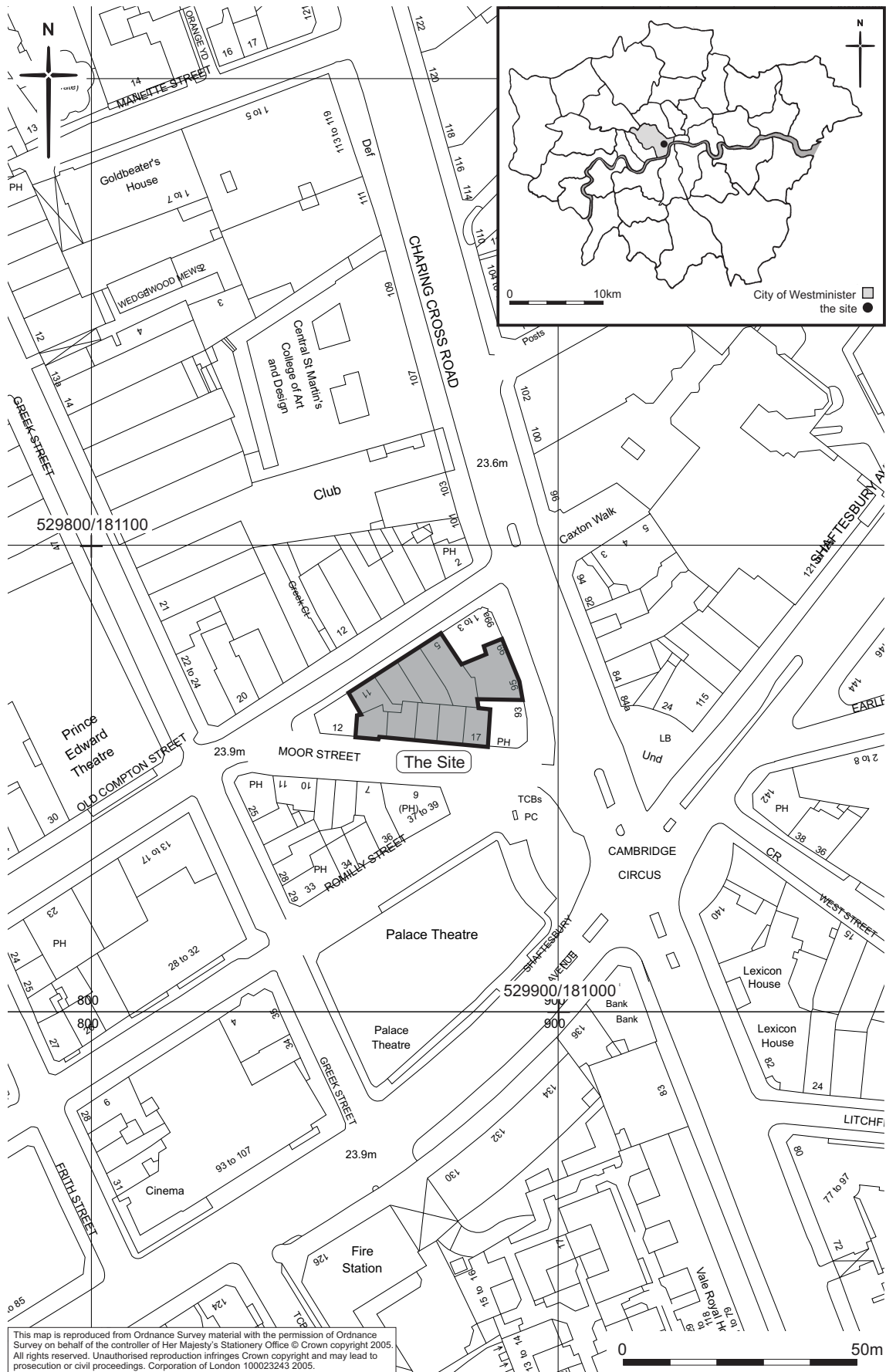


Fig 1 Site location



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Fig 2 Test pit location plan

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1 Geology and topography

London occupies part of the Thames Basin, a broad syncline of chalk filled in the centre with sands and clays. Above this 'bed-rock' lie the fluvial deposits of the River Thames arranged in flights or gravel terraces. These terraces represent the remains of former floodplains of the river.

The underlying geology in the site area is represented by a gravel terrace, the Lynch Hill gravels formed by the Thames during the glacial period, overlain by a deposit of brickearth, a mixture of sand, silt and clay, laid down as alluvial and aeolian deposits during the last glaciation around 26,000 to 13,000 BC.

The general area slopes down towards Leicester Square to the south of the site. This slope is reflected in the height of the natural gravel revealed during the evaluation; it was seen at 21.05m OD to the north of the site and at 20.49m OD to the south. Present day ground level at the junction of Old Compton Street and Moor Street is 23.9m OD and 23.6m OD in Charing Cross Road, just to the north of the site.

2.2 Prehistoric

The Greater London Sites and Monuments Record lists no prehistoric artefacts found close to the site, apart from a bronze object on a wooden shaft was found in Tower St around 1883, tentatively dated to the Bronze Age. Further to the south, worked flint of the Late Mesolithic/Early Neolithic period, and sherds of pottery were recovered from excavations in Leicester Square.

The Roman road that ran east-west along Oxford Street is thought to have followed the line of an Iron Age trackway, although there is as yet no archaeological confirmation of this.

2.3 Roman

The arrival of the Romans in AD 43 brought about a distinct change in the settlement pattern in the London area. Within approximately a decade, the Romans had established a town on the north bank of the Thames where the City of London is now located.

A network of roads spread out in several directions from this town. One of these was the main road Watling Street which followed the line of modern-day Oxford Street to the north of the study site. Another road from the Old Street area lay immediately to the north of Watling Street although its line is less clear.

Tottenham Court Road has been suggested as having a Roman origin (GLSMR 081790), although there is no direct archaeological evidence for this. It was certainly a

highway in the medieval and post-medieval periods (GLSMR 082050), which continued into Charing Cross Road (GLSMR 081493)

2.4 Saxon

There is no evidence that the area within the Roman town walls continued to be inhabited after the Roman withdrawal early in the 5th century, nor does it appear to have been occupied by the Early Saxon settlers. The main focus of the Early and Middle Saxon settlement was a busy trading port further to the west around Aldwych and Covent Garden, in an area known to Bede in the 8th century as Lundenwic. The site is located beyond the known north-west limits of the Saxon settlement at Lundenwic. Part of the Saxon settlement was found during excavations at Shorts Gardens, where Saxon buildings and metalworking hearths were found. Other excavations further south, such as at Long Acre, produced Saxon material, including rubbish pits, wells and quarry pits. However, all these excavations were within the limits of the Lundenwic, while the present site is outside the known settlement area.

The main Saxon road in the area, the Broad Military road, followed the old Roman road along Oxford Street except that it may have looped down along St Giles High Street. St Giles' village, to the north east of the site, had Saxon origins. The site was located in the Westminster Estate given to Westminster Abbey by Dunstan in 971. The Westminster Berewic (a name meaning an outlying farm or croft) was granted to Westminster Abbey by Ethelred in 1002.

A copper alloy long-cross brooch, supposed to be from Tower Street, is the earliest Saxon find from the area and is now in the British Museum, although its point of discovery is not entirely clear (GLSMR 081251).

2.5 Medieval

From the 11th century Westminster Abbey owned the land west of Drury Lane, which became its garden, hence Co[n]vent Garden. Drury Lane was a main road from the Aldwych and the church of St Clement Danes to Holborn and the villages such as St Giles and Tottenham Court.

In 1117, Queen Matilda, the new wife of King Henry I, founded a leper hospital in St Giles to the south of St Giles High Street, St Giles was the patron saint of outcasts.

The precincts of the hospital were bounded by St Giles High Street, Shaftesbury Avenue and Charing Cross Road. The main hospital buildings lay south of Denmark Street with an orchard further south. The position of the hospital church is maintained by the present parish church. To the north there were gardens and ancillary buildings. A late 13th or early 14th century stone wall foundation was excavated within the precinct of the medieval hospital, forming part of one of the buildings. The site lies outside the precincts of the hospital and the medieval village of St Giles and was probably located in adjacent fields.

Although the hospital was originally founded here in part to isolate it from the rest of London, it is clear that by about 1300 both the hospital and its attendant village were more cosmopolitan in nature. The king frequently abused his privilege of patronage

and retired valued servants to St Giles so that the majority of inmates were not lepers. During the 15th century it became traditional for criminals on their way to the gallows at Tyburn to be offered a bowl of ale as they passed the hospital gate on St Giles High Street.

The Greater London Sites and Monuments Record (GLSMR 082050) refers to another medieval road along Tottenham Court Road which was a highway in the post-medieval period

2.6 Post-medieval–modern

The hospital at St Giles was dissolved in 1539 and its lands passed into private hands. The hospital chapel became the new parish church in 1623. This was when the words ‘in-the-fields’ were added to its name. Development of the hospital site was slow although a number of houses within the former precinct are known to have been there before Denmark Place and Denmark Street were laid out in the 1680s.

The Tudor expansion took some time to reach the site area. Braun and Hogenberg’s map of 1572 (not illustrated) shows the last phase of the medieval rural landscape around the village. This landscape was characterised by small settlements and agricultural activity between the abandonment of Lundenwic in the 9th century and the urban development of the area in the 17th century. Faithorne and Newcourt’s map of 1658 (not illustrated) shows the study site as open fields at the edge of St Giles.

The development of the area started in the late 17th century. Moor Street first appears in the rate books for St Martin-in-the-Fields in 1683 (although it may have been present earlier as the 1682 book is missing). William Morgan’s map of 1682 (Fig 5) shows that the layout of the triangle had already been established, and that building on the plot had commenced. The present buildings on the site were built during the first half of the 18th century: 14 and 16 Moor Street were probably built by Dunn and Lloyd in 1734, while no. 13 was probably built by William Bignell in 1738. The Old Compton Street buildings were constructed around the same time. Old Compton Street was named after Henry Compton, Bishop of London from 1675 to 1713 and from the beginning it was a shopping street and many of the inhabitants were foreign. In 1720 Strype wrote, ‘This street is broad, and the Houses well built, but of no great Account for its inhabitants which are chiefly French.’

Charing Cross Road was created in 1887, taking in what had been Crown Street, which was widened. This widening can be seen when comparison is made between Horwood’s map (Fig 6) and the Ordnance Survey map of 1914 (Front Cover). The Cambridge Public House was built in 1887 and known until 1891 as the King’s Arms, the name of a tavern which had stood on or near the site since at least 1744. The remaining buildings which surround the present site were built after this date, in 1904–7, by CH Worley.

Among the residents of the buildings were James Caulfield, bookseller and printseller, 11 Old Compton Street in 1797, the artist Henry Edridge, notable for his portraits, of which 51 are in the National Portrait Gallery, who lived at 5 Old Compton Street in 1790 and the artist Gibson also at 11 Old Compton Street in 1792.

The layout of the area has changed little since the creation of Charing Cross Road and Shaftesbury Avenue. The junction of the two, Cambridge Circus, was named after the Duke of Cambridge, who had opened the new roads in 1887. The Palace Theatre was built in 1888–91 by TE Collcutt and GH Holloway as the Royal English Opera House for Richard D'Oyly Carte and was known as the Palace Theatre of Varieties from 1892–1910.

Soho was bombed during the Second World War and the Parish church of St Anne was badly damaged. Bombs landed in Old Compton Street, but the area of the site was not affected.

3 The evaluation

3.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and monitoring during the evaluation were carried out in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (Dunwoodie, 2005), and the MoLAS *Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 2004). Four test pits were excavated by hand by contractors and monitored by a member of staff from MoLAS. Test Pit 1, situated in an unbasemented area, reached a total depth of 2.80m and subsequently required shoring, which was installed at a depth of 1.20m.

The locations of the test pits were recorded by MoLAS offsetting from adjacent standing walls and plotted onto a basement survey drawing provided by Earle Architects (DWG 016/GA/00/60). This information was subsequently plotted on to the Ordnance Survey grid. The heights of archaeological deposits were recorded relative to the Ordnance Survey grid; these Ordnance Datum values were also provided by Earle Architects.

Sections were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and numbered contexts allocated. The site has produced: one test pit location plan, 16 context records and four section drawings. No finds were recovered from the site.

The site finds and records can be found under the site code OCM05 in the MoL archive.

3.2 Results of the evaluation

In total, four separate test pits were excavated. These have been numbered 1–4 consecutively. There follows a brief description of the archaeological deposits as recorded. For trench locations see Fig 2.

<i>Evaluation Test Pit 1</i>	
Location	Ground floor, 5 Old Compton Street
Dimensions	1.50m (NW-SE) by 1.20m (NE-SW) by depth 2.80m
Top of slab/ground floor	23.80m OD
Base of modern fill/slab	23.70m OD
Depth of deposits seen	2.30m
Level of base of deposits observed	21.50m OD
Natural brickearth observed	21.50m OD
Natural gravel observed	21.05m OD

Test Pit 1 was located in the main ground floor room at 5 Old Compton Street. This area is currently unbasemented and has the greatest potential for archaeological

survival. Excavation revealed the existence of a former basement, however, presumably excavated in the 18th century. It had been backfilled in the 19th century: the backfill contained several dumps of silt and fragments of mortar and CBM of this date.

<i>Evaluation Trench 2</i>	
Location	Basement of 9 Old Compton Street, partially below the pavement at the front of the property
Dimensions	1.05m (NW-SE) by 0.90m (NE-SW) by depth 0.70m
Top of basement slab	21.24m OD
Base of basement slab	21.02m OD
Depth of deposits seen	0.48m
Level of base of deposits observed	20.54m OD
Natural gravel observed	20.78m OD

Test Pit 2 revealed a dump of clay silt below the basement floor slab. This dated to the 18th century and overlay a linear cut, orientated north-south. The cut, which truncated the natural gravel, was 0.18m wide and ran the length of the test pit, appearing to continue to the north and south. No dating evidence was found within the backfill of the cut, which consisted of dark brown, hard packed gravel. The cut was not fully excavated due to the limitations of the test pit. It is thought that it may have been associated with the 17th century phase of development on the site, when the area of the test pit was yard/garden. The linear cut may have denoted a fence or planting line.

<i>Evaluation Trench 3</i>	
Location	Basement room in centre of site, entered along short corridor to north-east 9 Old Compton Street basement
Dimensions	0.76m (NW-SE) by 0.76m (NE-SW) by depth 0.45m
Top of basement slab	21.24m OD
Base of basement slab	21.06m OD
Depth of deposits seen	N/A
Level of base of deposits observed	N/A
Natural brickearth observed	21.06m OD
Natural gravel observed	20.90m OD

Test Pit 3 revealed natural brickearth immediately below the existing floor slab. This sealed river terrace gravels at 20.90mOD. No archaeological deposits or cut features were observed.

<i>Evaluation Trench 4</i>	
Location	Lower mezzanine level at 17 Moor Street
Dimensions	1.00m (N-S) by 0.60m (NE-SW) by depth 1.00m
Top of floor slab	21.34m OD
Base of floor slab	21.19m OD
Depth of deposits seen	0.25m
Level of base of deposits observed	20.94m OD
Natural brickearth observed	20.94m OD
Natural gravel observed	20.49mOD

Test Pit 4 revealed a dump of clay silt, which acted as make-up below the concrete floor foundation. This overlay a substantial concrete foundation which was present across the western half of the test pit. The foundation was 0.75m deep, with a step out to the east at 0.50m. It may be associated with the construction of the mezzanine floor, since it does not reflect any former property lines.

3.3 Assessment of the evaluation

GLAAS guidelines (English Heritage, 1998) require an assessment of the success of the evaluation ‘in order to illustrate what level of confidence can be placed on the information which will provide the basis of the mitigation strategy’. In the case of this site, the positioning of the test pits evenly across the area of investigation produced the maximum amount of information relating to truncation and survival levels. The results are considered to be a reasonable reflection of the archaeological potential which might be expected across the whole of the site.

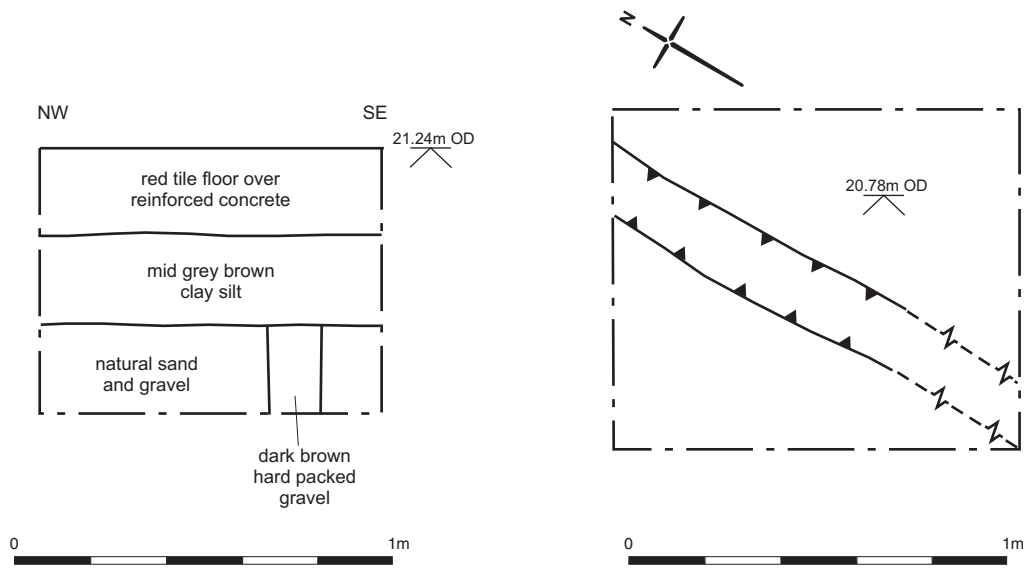


Fig 3 Section and plan from Test pit 2

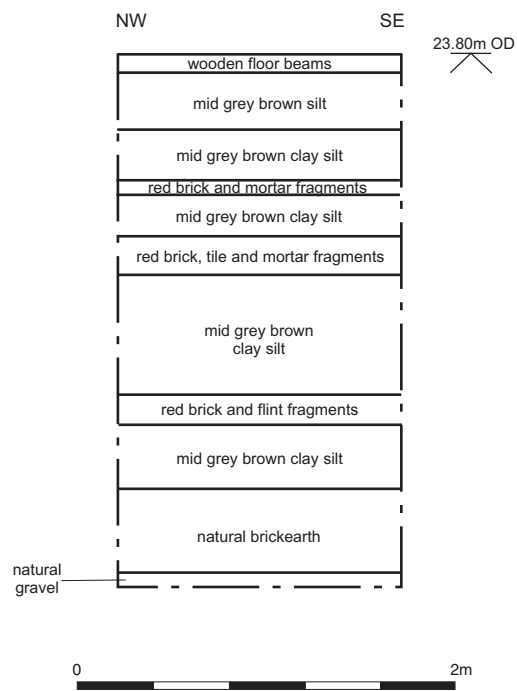


Fig 4 Section from Test pit 1

4 Archaeological potential

The results from the evaluation pits have been matched to the original research aims to further define the potential of the site. As recorded this potential is considered to be low.

4.1 Realisation of original research aims

- *What is the nature and level of natural topography? Are there any variations across the site?*

Natural brickearth was recorded in Test pits 1, 3 and 4 and natural gravel in 1–4. Truncation by the existing basements on the site means, therefore, that only the heights of the natural gravel in test pits 1, 3 and 4 reflect the natural topography. A slight slope was recorded from the north down to the south, reflecting the general slope towards Leicester Square and the River Thames.

- *What are the earliest deposits identified?*

The earliest deposits appear to relate to the 17th century and consist of a linear cut probably relating to horticultural/backyard activity. The cut could represent either a property fence boundary or a horticultural bedding trench for planting. Morgan's map from 1682 (Fig 5) shows the southern area of the site as being developed, while the northern part is represented as being open land. Test pit 2 lies within the open area. Unlike other blocks in the area at this time, the buildings on this plot are aligned north-south; this again tallies with the linear cut.

- *Are there any archaeological remains of Saxon date on the site? Can their presence absence be used to further define the limits of the Lundenwic settlement? The site lies outside the known limits of the settlement, but there may be evidence for suburban occupation similar to that identified at the National Portrait Gallery?*

There were no archaeological remains dating to the Saxon period.

- *Are there any remains of medieval date on the site? If so, how do they relate to other medieval features recorded in the vicinity? Is there any evidence for structures or activities associated with St Giles' Hospital?*

There were no archaeological remains dating to the medieval period.

- *What is the nature of any post-medieval remains on the site? What do they reveal about the character of the area during this period? In particular, is there evidence for the presence of earlier cellars to the rear of 5 Old Compton Street?*

The post-medieval remains appeared to span the 17th to the 19th centuries. The earliest deposits possibly dated to the 17th century and consisted of a linear cut probably relating to backyard/garden activity (see above). The cut was overlain by a deposit dating to the 18th century, contemporary with the construction of the basements. It was also clear that the 18th century cellar of 5 Old Compton Street had been backfilled in the 19th century.

4.2 General discussion of potential

The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of ancient ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification) at the site is negligible and there is minimal potential for the survival of cut features. Truncation from the existing basements has been extensive, although limited survival is possible in the area of the basement of 9 Old Compton Street.

The results of the evaluation indicate that there is some potential for the survival of post-medieval remains, albeit truncated, but no potential for the survival of any earlier features has been observed.

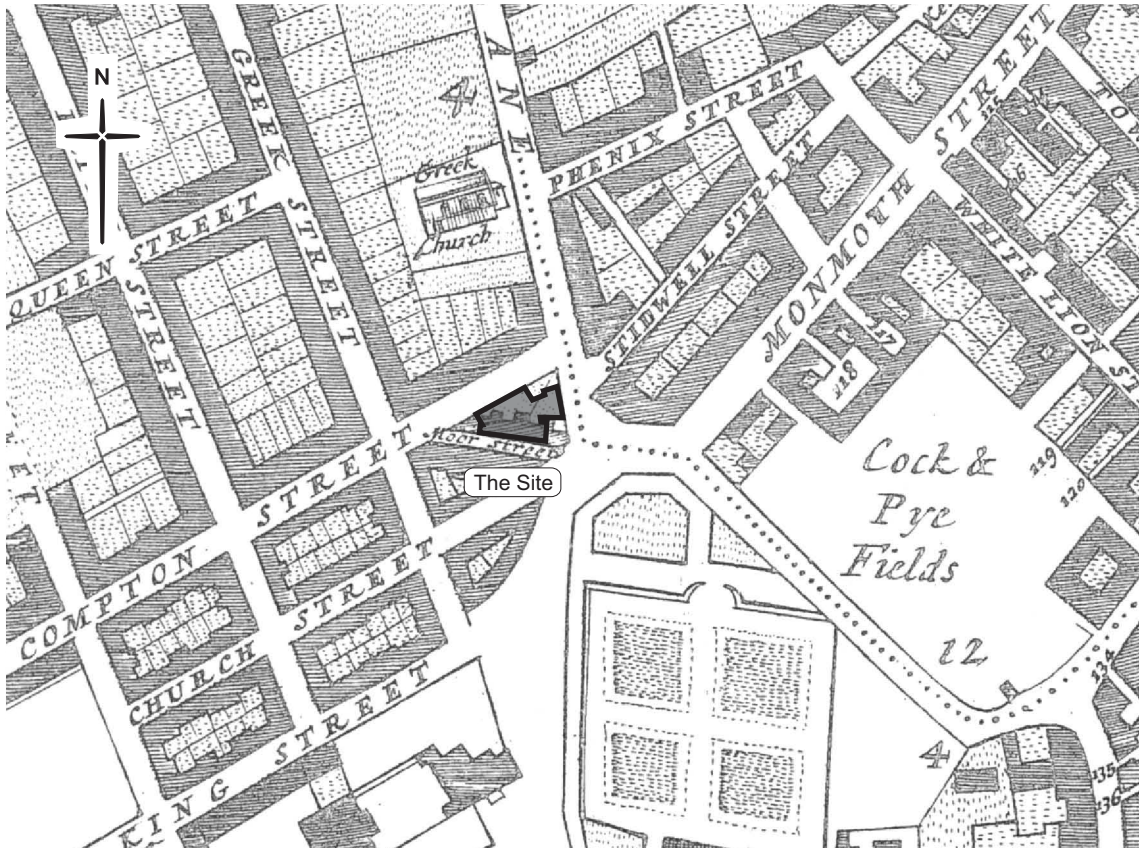


Fig 5 William Morgan's map of 1682 showing area of site

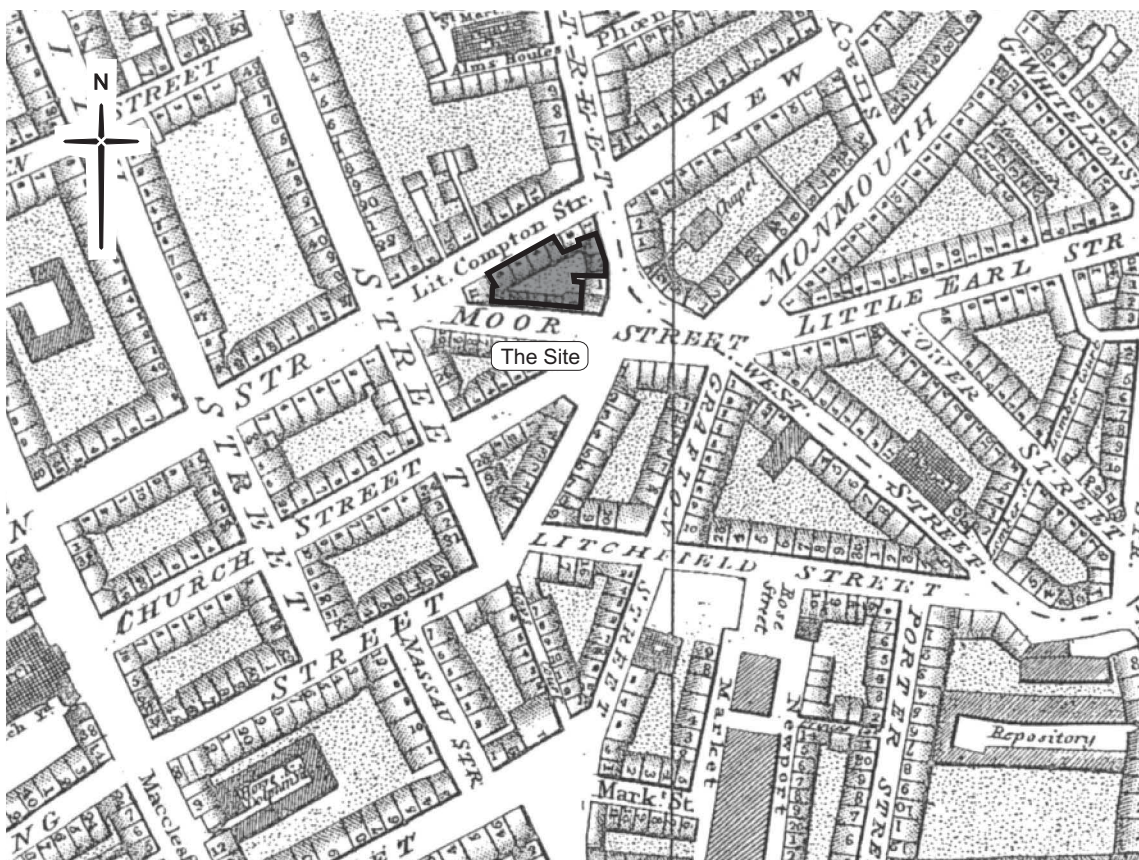


Fig 6 Horwood's map of 1813 showing area of site

5 Proposed development impact and recommendations

The proposed redevelopment at 5–11 Old Compton Street, 13–17 Moor Street and 95–99 Charing Cross Road, Soho, involves extensive alterations and extensions to the buildings. Excavation and underpinning will effectively remove all existing deposits in these areas.

MoLAS considers that the area of the basement of 9 Old Compton Street, where Test Pit 2 was located, may produce limited evidence relating to the 17th century development of the site. This would be in the form of truncated cut features with only low potential to answer any research questions about the area.

The decision on the appropriate archaeological response to the deposits revealed within the site rests with the Local Planning Authority and their designated archaeological advisor, GLAAS.

6 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the Consolidated Property Corporation Limited for kindly funding the site. Thanks also to Christopher Smith from Earle Architects for commissioning the work and his additional help, and the contractors on site for their assistance and hospitality. Particular thanks are due to Diane Walls at English Heritage for approving the evaluation at short notice. Gordon Malcolm project managed the site for MoLAS. The illustrations were done by Ken Lymer.

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8 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

8.1 OASIS ID: molas1-7479

Project details

Project name	5-11 Old Compton Street
Short description of the project	Test pit evaluation
Project dates	Start: 21-03-2005 End: 21-03-2005
Previous/future work	No / Not known
Any associated project reference codes	OCM05 - Sitecode
Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Conservation Area
Current Land use	Other 3 - Built over
Monument type	COMMERCIAL Uncertain

Project location

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CITY OF WESTMINSTER CITY OF WESTMINSTER 5-11 Old Compton Street
Postcode	W1
Study area	800.00 Square metres
National grid reference	TQ 2988 8106 Point
Height OD	Min: 20.54m Max: 21.50m

Project creators

Name of Organisation	MoLAS
Project brief originator	MoLAS project manager

Project design originator MoLAS
Project director/manager Gordon Malcolm
Project supervisor Alison Telfer
Sponsor or funding body Consolidated Property Corporation Limited

Project archives

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Physical Archive Exists? No

Digital Archive recipient LAARC

Digital Archive Exists? Yes

Paper Archive recipient LAARC

Paper Archive Exists? Yes

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