

**SKINNERS' HALL**  
**8½ Dowgate Hill**  
**London EC4R**

City of London

Evaluation report

September 2010



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**8½ Dowgate Hill**  
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City of London

Evaluation report

Site Code: SKF10  
National Grid Reference: 532539 180863

Project Manager	Sophie Jackson
Author	Jez Taylor
Graphics	Judit Peresztegi

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Mortimer Wheeler House, 46 Eagle Wharf Road, London N1 7ED  
tel 020 7410 2200 fax 020 7410 2201  
MOLAGeneralEnquiries@museumoflondon.org.uk  
www.museumoflondonarchaeology.org.uk

## Summary (non-technical)

This report presents the results of an archaeological evaluation carried out by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA) on the site of Skinners' Hall, 8 ½ Dowgate Hill, London EC4R 2SP. The report was commissioned from MOLA by Jonathan Francois of William Martin & Partners, on behalf of the Skinners' Company. The Skinners' Hall is a Scheduled Monument (LO 41).

A programme of repairs and stabilisation is underway at the Skinners' Hall. One of the areas requiring remedial work is the Old Court Terrace on the south side of the site, which appears to be suffering from subsidence (slumping and broken paving slabs).

Following the recommendations of an *Archaeological desk-based assessment* (Rodenbusch, 2009) and a *Method Statement for an archaeological evaluation* (Jackson, 2010) a single evaluation trial pit was excavated on the site to try to identify the causes of the slumping. It was located towards the west end of the Old Court Terrace, adjacent to the main Skinners' Hall building. Scheduled Monument Consent was granted for the work on 10 May 2010 (EH reference S00005743).

The objective of the evaluation was to determine what lies under the paving slabs. A preliminary site-visit identified a layer of loose brick rubble in a localised area beneath the terrace that might be a contributing factor. It was thought that the rubble layer may contain material sourced from the original Skinners' Hall, which was destroyed during the Great Fire of London (1666).

Contrary to expectations, the rubble layer was not located during the evaluation. The trial pit was excavated to c 1.9m depth. It contained four soil landfill deposits, provisionally dated to the late 17th century (post-Great Fire). These had been laid as a deliberate process of ground-raising to achieve the required height for the terrace surface at that time. They were sealed by a layer of 19th century concrete and remnants of a brick gully, both contemporary with the pre-existing terrace surface. The trial pit also exposed the 17th century stepped brick footing on the south wall-face of the existing Skinners' Hall building. A crack was visible in the substructure masonry.

The project engineers, Thomason LLP, have concluded that the cracking in the foundation is likely to be a result of a foundation defect and this may be a historic problem associated with the building being located over the Walbrook Stream. The localised slumping of the paving (and defects in the terrace retaining walls) may be due to the presence of a large, heavy planter on this part of the Terrace. The engineers recommend temporarily relocating the planter and investigating further. With regard to the Old Court Walls, they recommend monitoring the affected areas of brickwork over a period of 1 year to assess the rate of movement. This will determine what further work, if any is required

The archaeological evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of ancient ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification) on the site is high. The average depth of archaeological deposits where they do survive is unknown, but post-medieval remains with a combined thickness of 1.67m were recorded within the trial pit and appear to extend to greater depth. Earlier medieval and Roman deposits were previously recorded at the site during excavations by the Department of Urban Archaeology (DUA) in 1987–88.

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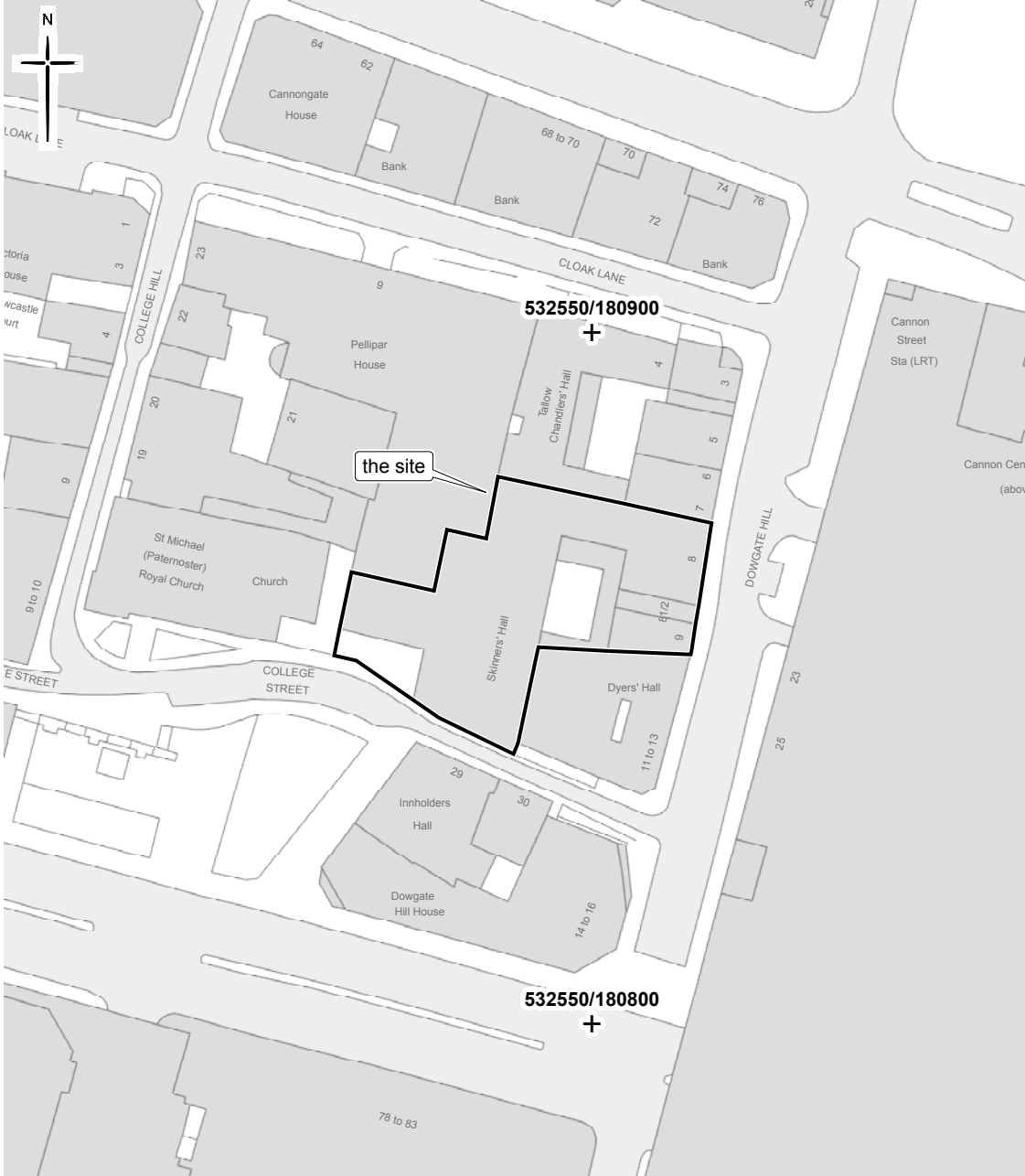
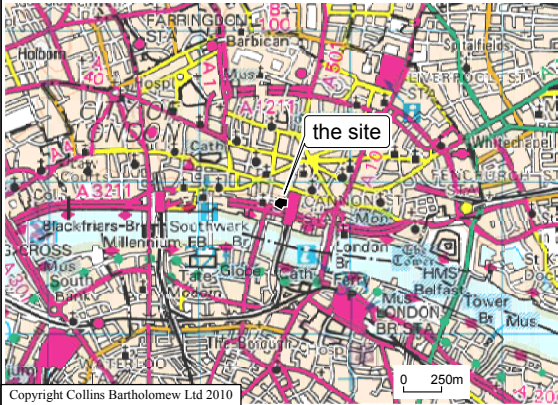
# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Site background

The evaluation took place within the Old Court Terrace at the Skinners' Hall, 8 ½ Dowgate Hill, City of London EC4R 2SP, hereafter called 'the site'. The National Grid Reference is 532539 180863. The Hall is a Scheduled Monument (No LO 41). The level of the paved Terrace surface lies at c 8.80m OD. Pavement level immediately adjacent to the site (in College Street, to the south) is c 7.38m OD. The site code is SKF10.

An *Archaeological desk-based assessment* was previously prepared, which covers the whole area of the site (MOLA, 2009) The *assessment* document should be referred to for information on the natural geology, archaeological and historical background of the site and the initial interpretation of its archaeological potential.

A Method Statement for the evaluation was prepared (MOLA, 2010) and the single trial pit was opened within the Old Court Terrace, from 2nd–6th of August 2010.



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Scale @ 1,000 A4



Fig 1 Site location



Fig 2 Trial pit location



## 1.2 Scheduled Monument Consent

The existing building on site, Skinners' Hall, is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (LO 41) and is Grade I Listed. The site is located within the Queen Street Conservation Area as defined by the local authority. It is located in the City of London which is considered an archaeologically sensitive area.

Scheduled Monument Consent for the evaluation was granted (10 May 2010, EH ref S00005743) with a number of conditions. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with Condition (c) of the Consent.

## 1.3 Origin and scope of the report

This report was commissioned by the project engineer, Jonathan Francois of William Martin & Partners on behalf of the Skinners Company and produced by Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA). The report has been prepared within the terms of the relevant Standard specified by the Institute for 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

## 1.4 Aims and objectives

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

A preliminary site-visit identified a brick rubble deposit in a localised area beneath the Old Court Terrace surface (see *Method Statement*, Section 1.2). A sample of brick was taken from the rubble and dated to the 16th to mid-17th century, i.e. pre-Great Fire of London (1666). This suggests that some, if not all of the rubble, may consist of parts of the original pre-fire Skinners' Hall building. In the first instance, the aim of the evaluation was to identify what material was present beneath the paving and if it was brick rubble to establish whether it was sourced from the original Skinners' Hall building. The objectives include recording the date, nature and extent of any other archaeological features/deposits identified within the trial pit.

## 2 Topographical and historical background

The site lies in an area that was occupied during the Roman, medieval and post-medieval periods. Readers should refer to the previous *Archaeological desk-based assessment* (MOLA, 2009) for a comprehensive summary of the site's geological, historical and archaeological background. A brief extract from the *assessment* notes:

The property was in the possession of the Skinners' Guild from the 13th century onwards and their first building, the Livery Hall or Coppers' Hall is known to have existed in 1409. The original building burnt down in the Great Fire of London (1666) but remains of those structures, such as foundations or associated outbuildings etc might still be present on site, underneath the extant Skinner's Hall.

The existing building on site, Skinners' Hall, was built in 1670 and although redeveloped and enlarged in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, some of the original 17th century features still exist throughout the building. Skinners' Hall is Grade I Listed and a Scheduled Monument of high (i.e. national) importance. A sample taken from the rubble underneath the Old Court Terrace in the south-west of the site indicates that at least some of the rubble derives from the pre-fire building and would thus be of archaeological interest.

## 3 The evaluation

### 3.1 Methodology

All archaeological excavation and monitoring during the evaluation was carried out in accordance with the preceding *Method Statement* (MOLA, 2010), and the *Archaeological Site Manual* (MoLAS, 1994).

A single trial pit measuring c 1.5m x 1.5m x 1.9m depth was excavated towards the west end of the Old Court Terrace.

Four Terrace paving slabs were lifted by a contractor under MOLA supervision. The trial pit was hand-excavated by a MOLA archaeologist, assisted by the contractor. The work was monitored at all times by the MOLA archaeologist.

The location of the trial pit was recorded by MOLA by offsetting from adjacent standing walls and plotted on to a Survey (William Martin & Partners LLP, Dwg. No. 7799-03, May 2009). This information was then plotted onto the OS grid.

A written and drawn record of all archaeological deposits encountered was made in accordance with the principles set out in the MOLA site recording manual (MOLAS, 1994). Levels were calculated by establishing a temporary bench-mark adjacent to the site, transferred from an Ordnance Survey bench-mark in College Street (7.94m OD).

The site has produced: 1 trench location plan; 7 context records; 1 section drawing at 1:10 and 13 photographs. Small samples of pottery and clay tobacco pipe were retrieved from the site and analysed by MOLA finds specialists. There were no significant finds within the samples and the material was subsequently discarded.

The site records can be found under the site code SKF10 in the Museum of London archive.

### 3.2 Results of the evaluation

For trial pit and section location see Fig 2.

*Table 1: Trial pit statistics*

<i>Trial Pit</i>	
Location	Towards west end of Old Court Terrace
Dimensions	1.5m by 1.5m by 1.9m depth
Modern ground level	c 8.80m OD
Base of modern fill	c 8.53m OD
Depth of archaeological deposits seen	1.67m
Level of base of deposits observed and base of trench	6.90m OD
Natural observed	N/A

### 3.2.1 Trial pit

See Figs 2, 3, 4

Contrary to expectations, the rubble layer observed in the preliminary site-visit (Section 1.4) was not present in the trial pit. The bulk of the excavated area consisted of soil landfill deposits used to establish the terrace ground-level.

The earliest layer was a friable sandy silt with frequent brick and tile fragments [6]. It measured c 0.9m visible depth, but appeared to extend beyond the base of the trial pit. Dating evidence included late-17th century clay tobacco pipe (post-Great Fire), mid. 16th–17th century Surrey/Hampshire border whiteware pottery and residual Mill Green ware pottery (1270–1350). A few small fragments of disarticulated human bone were also present. It seems likely the soil was sourced from land at St Michael Paternoster Royal Church immediately west of the site, which was also destroyed in the Great Fire. The bone was reburied in the same deposit during backfilling.

It was sealed by a 0.09m thick layer of 'clean' gravelly fine sand [5]. A very small pottery sample included a sherd of residual London tin-glazed ware dating to the early 17th century.

Layer [5] was overlain by a further rubbly soil deposit [4], almost identical to [6] described above. It seems likely [4] and [6] came from the same source, which suggests they were laid in quick succession. Layer [3] was a lens of sandy silt within [4], also containing frequent brick and tile fragments. A few pieces of residual Opus signinum (fine Roman concrete) were present within layer [4].

The soil deposits were sealed by a 0.2m thick mix of gravel with frequent small fragments of brick and tile, cemented together to form a layer of coarse concrete [2]. The concrete contained fragments of Victorian Yellow stock brick, indicating a 19th century date. It presumably served as the bedding/consolidation layer beneath the pre-existing terrace surface.

Concrete [2] was overlain by a single course of brickwork [1], bedded on mortar and bonded to an overlying course of horizontally-laid tile. It ran adjacent to a stepped brick footing [7] - part of the existing (17th century) Skinners' Hall building. The structure had been truncated during insertion of the existing terrace surface, but originally would have formed a drainage gully along the side of the building. It was probably contemporary with concrete layer [2].

Modern features include a 0.17m thick layer of coarse concrete, underlying a thinner layer of fine concrete, which serves as bedding for the flagstones forming the existing terrace surface. These features were probably installed as repairs to the terrace after the site was damaged by a V1 flying bomb in 1944.

The project engineers Thomasons LLP visited the site while the pit was open. Their observations and recommendations have been set out in a letter to Jonathan Francois (dated 23 September 2010). Extracts relevant to the Old Court part of the building are copied below.

**Observations**

The pit had been excavated prior to arrival, to a depth of 1.7m OD exposing the substructure masonry and terracing ground build up...There was a notable jagged crack in the substructure masonry, following the perpendicular and bed joints. The crack terminated at both sides of the excavation pit....

**Discussion**

The jagged crack in the substructure masonry is likely to be an indication of a foundation defect, possibly allowing the substructure masonry to deflect downwards.

Having reviewed the Archaeological report the buildings of Skinners Hall would appear to span over the historical river Walbrook, that terminated into the Thames to the south of the site. ... The presence of the historic river suggests that there is likely to be soft spots in the geology below the buildings, with possible harder spots at the perimeter of the Walbrook River....

**Recommendations**

We would recommend a period of monitoring (1 year) followed by attending to the masonry defects, with masonry replacement to the window jambs for the Old Court Building.....'

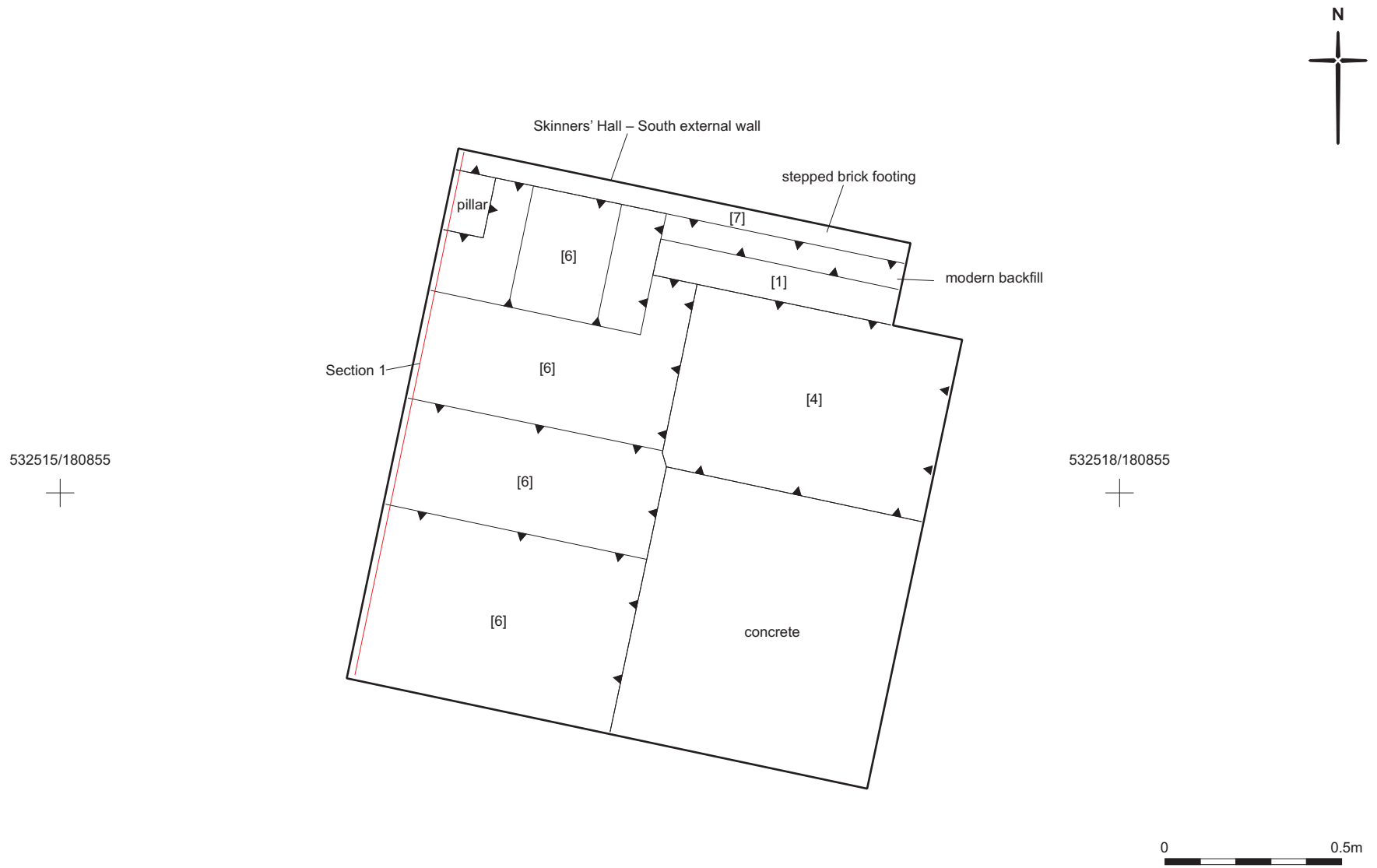


Fig 3 Trial pit – post-excavation, showing masonry feature [1]

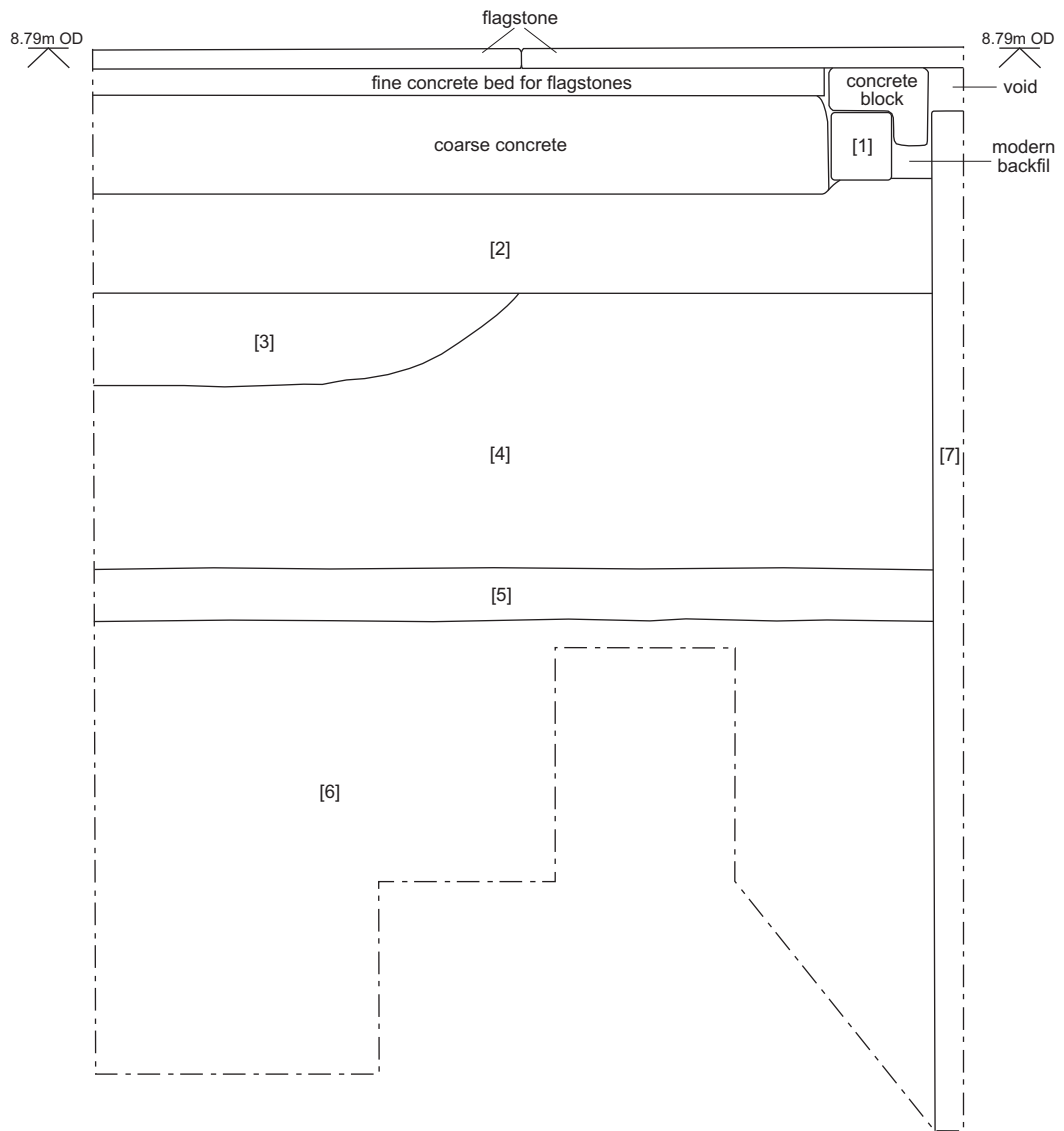


Fig 4 Section 1 (east facing)



Fig 5 Overview of the trial pit (looking west)



Fig 6 View of the external wall of the main Skinners' Hall building (looking north) with stepped brick footing [7] beneath the scale



### 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 trial pit was positioned in an area where it was believed to overly a brick rubble deposit, which may have contained material sourced from the original pre-Great Fire Skinners' Hall building. In the event, the expected brick rubble layer was not present. However, the pit did contain post-medieval soil landfill (ground-raising) deposits with a combined depth of 1.47m, provisionally dated to the late 17th century (post-Great Fire). They were sealed by 19th century features relating to the pre-existing terrace surface.

The trial pit also exposed the 17th century stepped brick footing on the south wall-face of the existing Skinners' Hall building.

## 4 Archaeological potential

### 4.1 Realisation of original research aims

*A preliminary site-visit identified a brick rubble deposit in a localised area beneath the Old Court Terrace surface. A sample of brick was taken from the rubble and dated to the 16th–mid. 17th century, i.e. pre-Great Fire of London (1666). This suggests that some, if not all of the rubble, may consist of parts of the original pre-Great Fire Skinners' Hall building. In the first instance, the aim of the evaluation is to establish whether the brick rubble deposit was sourced from the original Skinners' Hall building. Secondly, to record the date, nature and extent of any other archaeological features/deposits identified within the trial pit.*

The layer of brick rubble identified during the preliminary site-visit was not present within the trial pit. It did however contain four soil landfill deposits, provisionally dated to the late 17th century (post-Great Fire). These had been laid as a deliberate process of ground-raising to achieve the required height for the terrace surface at that time. They were sealed by a layer of 19th century concrete beneath remnants of a brick gully, both contemporary with the pre-existing terrace surface. The combined depth of archaeological features/deposits was 1.67m.

The trial pit also exposed the 17th century stepped brick footing on the south wall-face of the existing Skinners' Hall building.

### 4.2 General discussion of potential

The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of ancient ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification) on the site is high. The average depth of archaeological deposits where they do survive is unknown, but post-medieval remains with a combined thickness of 1.67m were recorded within the trial pit and appear to extend to greater depth. Medieval and Roman deposits were recorded at the site during excavations by the Department of Urban Archaeology (DUA) in 1987 and 1988 (SKN87 and CKL88) and may well survive at depths beneath the base of the trial pit.

### 4.3 Significance

The Skinners' Hall is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (LO 41) and Grade 1 Listed Building of national importance. The archaeological remains recorded during the evaluation relate directly to 17th century construction of the Old Court Terrace within the post-Fire Hall.

## 5 Proposed development impact and recommendations

The project engineers have recommended an initial stage of monitoring of the affected parts of the Skinners Hall in order to assess the rate of movement of brickwork. This will help to inform the strategies for repair.

The archaeological evaluation did not expose the expected brick rubble layer believed to be the cause of subsidence beneath the terrace. It did however, reveal a sequence of 17th century landfill/ground-raising soil deposits, in order to establish the terrace ground-level at that time. It is not thought that the make up deposits beneath the terrace paving are the cause of slumping. Locally to the pit, the cause of slumping may be the weight of the large planter. The engineers have recommended temporarily relocating the planter to investigate further.

Any further investigations will need to be discussed in advance with the Inspector of Ancient Monuments, London Region (English Heritage) and will require Scheduled Monument Consent.

## 6 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Jonathan Francois of William Martin & Partners, who commissioned the evaluation and subsequent report from MOLA on behalf of the Skinners' Company

Jane Sidell, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, London Region (English Heritage)

From MOLA:

Sophie Jackson (Senior Consultant), who project-managed the evaluation

Nigel Jeffries, for comment on the pottery

Jacqui Pearce, for comment on the clay tobacco pipe

Neville Constantine, who digitised the site-plans

Judit Peresztegi, who produced the graphics

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## 8 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

### 8.1 OASIS ID: molas1-81689

#### Project details

Project name Skinners' Hall, 8 1/2 Dowgate Hill, London EC4R 2SP

Short description of the project A programme of repairs and stabilisation works are being carried out at the Skinners' Hall. One of the areas requiring remedial work is the Old Court Terrace on the south side of the site, which appears to be suffering from subsidence (slumping and broken paving slabs). A single evaluation trial pit was excavated, located towards the west end of the Old Court Terrace, adjacent to the main Skinners' Hall building. The objective of the evaluation was to determine what lies under the paving slabs and to identify the cause of the subsidence. The trial pit was excavated to c 1.9m depth. It contained four soil landfill deposits, provisionally dated to the late 17th century (post-Great Fire). These had been laid as a deliberate process of ground-raising to achieve the required height for the terrace surface at that time. They were sealed by a layer of 19th century concrete and remnants of a brick gully, both contemporary with the pre-existing terrace surface. The trial pit also exposed the 17th century stepped brick footing on the south wall-face of the existing Skinners' Hall building. No natural deposits were present. The evaluation has shown that the potential for survival of ancient ground surfaces (horizontal archaeological stratification) on the site is high. The average depth of archaeological deposits where they do survive is unknown, but post-medieval remains with a combined thickness of 1.67m were recorded within the trial pit and appear to extend to greater depth.

Project dates Start: 02-08-2010 End: 06-08-2010

Previous/future work Yes / Not known

Any associated project reference codes SKF10 - Sitecode

Any associated project reference codes CKL88 - Sitecode

Any associated project reference codes SKN87 - Sitecode

Type of project	Field evaluation
Site status	Scheduled Monument (SM)
Current Land use	Other 2 - In use as a building
Monument type	DRAINAGE SYSTEM Post Medieval
Monument type	BUILDING Post Medieval
Significant Finds	POTTERY Post Medieval
Significant Finds	CLAY TOBACCO PIPE Post Medieval
Methods & techniques	'Targeted Trenches'
Development type	Building refurbishment/repairs/restoration
Prompt	Scheduled Monument Consent
Position in the planning process	After full determination (eg. As a condition)

#### **Project location**

Country	England
Site location	GREATER LONDON CITY OF LONDON CITY OF LONDON Skinners' Hall, 8 1/2 Dowgate Hill, London EC4R 2SP
Postcode	EC4R 2SP
Study area	2000.00 Square metres
Site coordinates	TQ 32539 80863 51.5106305471 -0.08985830609370 51 30 38 N 000 05 23 W Point

#### **Project creators**

Name of Organisation	MOL Archaeology
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Project brief originator	English Heritage
Project design originator	MOL Archaeology
Project director/manager	Sophie Jackson
Project supervisor	Jez Taylor
Type of sponsor/funding body	Skinner's Hall
Name of sponsor/funding body	Skinner's Company

**Project archives**

Physical Archive Exists?	No
Digital Archive recipient	LAARC
Paper Archive recipient	LAARC

**Project bibliography 1**

Publication type	Grey literature (unpublished document/manuscript)
Title	Skinner's Hall, 8 1/2 Dowgate Hill, London EC4R 2SP, Evaluation Report
Author(s)/Editor(s)	'Taylor, J.'
Date	2010
Issuer or publisher	MOL Archaeology



Place of issue or  
publication London

Description Standard MOL Archaeology A4 report

Entered by Jeremy Taylor (jtaylor@museumoflondon.org.uk)

Entered on 27 August 2010