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170 BALLARD'S LANE
Finchley
London
N3

London Borough of Barnet

An archaeological watching brief report

August 2005

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MUSEUM OF LONDON

Archaeology Service

02

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Finchley
London
N3

London Borough of Barnet

An archaeological watching brief report

August 2005

Site Code: BLQ05
National Grid Reference: 525633 191187

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1 Introduction

1.1 Site background

The watching brief took place at the rear of 170 Ballard's Lane, London, N3, hereafter called 'the site' (see Figs 1 and 2). It is bounded by Ballard's Lane to the north-east, by the Ridgeway to the north-east, by a service road to the south-east, and by 168 Ballard's Lane to the south-west. The site consists of a rectangular area of yard and demolished 20th century out buildings, measuring 8.9 by 6.1m. The centre of the site lies at National Grid reference 525623 / 191187. Pavement level around the site lies at c 90.8m OD. The site code is BLQ05.

1.2 Planning and legislative framework

The legislative and planning framework in which the archaeological exercise took place is the London Borough of Barnet's *Unitary Development Plan* (UDP), which was adopted in 1991. The policies outlined in this document strengthen the position of archaeology in the local planning process and incorporate recommendations from the Department of the Environment's *Planning Policy Guidance 16* (PPG 16). The key policy points are summarised as follows:

— The Council will protect ancient monuments and their settings and other archaeological sites of acknowledged importance from intrusive or destructive development.

— Where development proposals may affect the buried heritage, the council will expect applicants to have properly assessed and planned for the archaeological implications. The Council may require a preliminary archaeological site evaluation before proposals are considered.

— Before development begins on sites of archaeological significance, a recognised archaeological organisation shall undertake appropriate rescue investigation, excavation, analysis, interpretation and public presentation of the results.

1.3 Planning background

Planning consent has been granted for the construction of single storey, two bedroom flat. A condition relating to archaeology has been attached to the planning consent.

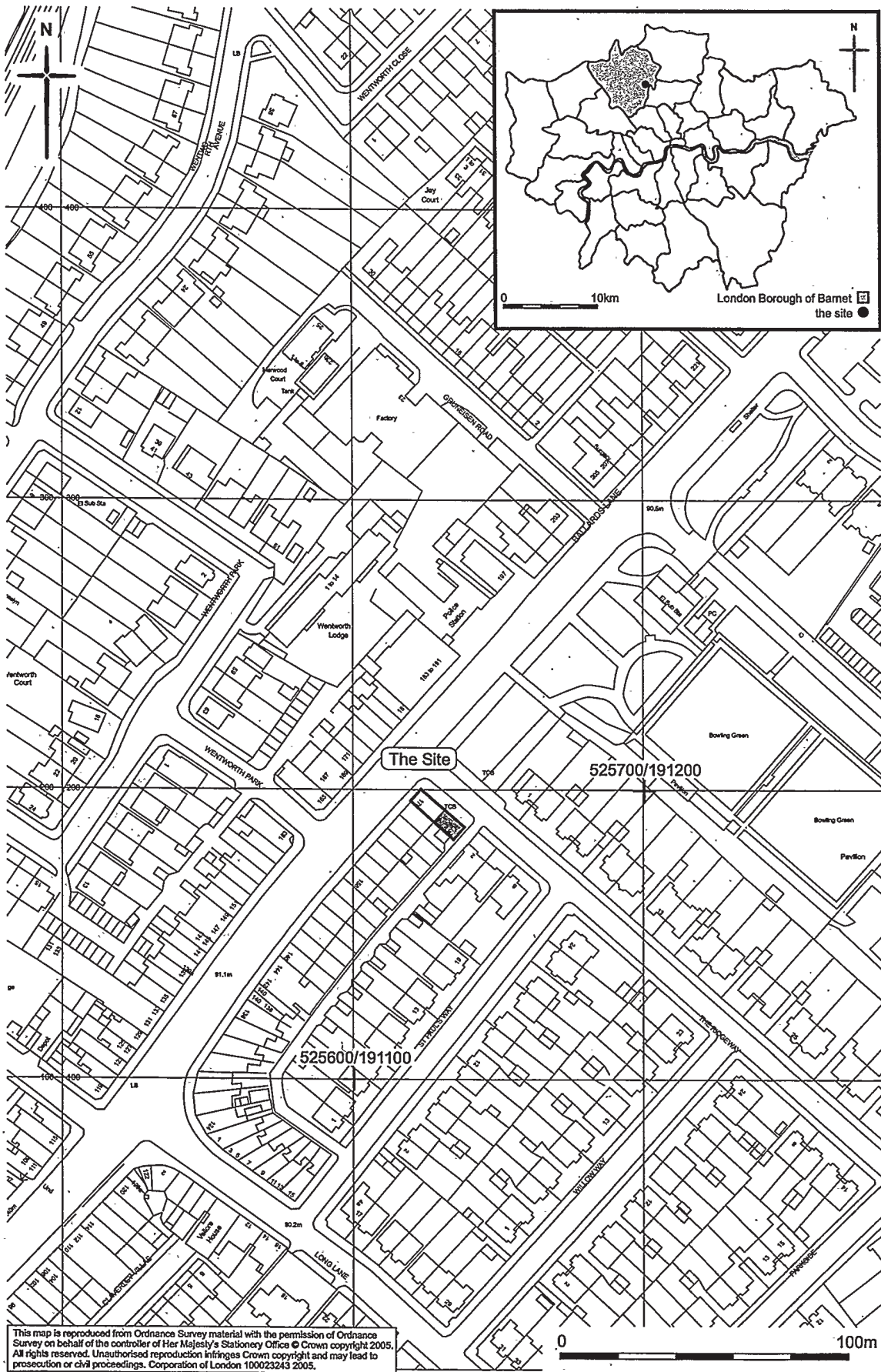


Fig 1 Site location

1.4 Origin and scope of this report

This report was commissioned by the client, Mr William Winters 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 site and if so to record the nature and extent of such remains.

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 for the watching brief :

1. What is the nature and level of natural topography?
2. What were the earliest deposits on site?

2 Topographical and historical background

2.1 Geology and topography

The site lies within an area of undulating topography, locally the ground surface slopes gently from the south-west to the north-east. The underlying geological deposits are Eocene London Clay, often capped by Pleistocene drift deposits (Boulder Clay and terrace gravel). The best local farmland was considered to be the areas capped by Pleistocene drift deposits, as the London Clay was traditionally used as either pasture or woodland.

2.2 Medieval

The site lay within the parish and manor of Finchley, which was part of the Bishop of London's estate. The medieval parish church of St Mary's, Hendon Lane dates from the 15th century (Cherry and Pevsner 1998, 119). During this period the area of the site was probably fields, adjoining a trackway, which later became Ballard's Lane

2.3 Post-medieval

On John Rocque's map of Middlesex (1754), Ballard's Lane was already in existence linking the area to Regent's Park Road (see cover). Further west along Ballard's Lane was a cluster of houses and cottages, which was the village of Finchley. At this time the site was part an area of scattered cottages houses surrounded by orchards and vegetable gardens, fronting onto Ballard's Lane. In 1826 Ballard's Lane was incorporated into a new turnpike road running from Regent's Park to the Great North Road.

Suburban development was encouraged by the arrival of the railways in 1867, when the Great Northern Railway, opened a line to Edgware and a branch to High Barnet followed in 1872. During the mid 19th century the area was famous for its market gardens. Most notable was the Claignar Vineyard, which in 1899 had 18.5 acres (7.5 hectares) under glass producing annually 100 tons each of grapes and tomatoes and 240,000 cucumbers. On the 1894-6 Ordnance Survey Map the site was part of the grounds of a large private house known as 'Willow Lodge' set well back from the Ballard's Lane (see Fig 3).

Finchley was not transformed into a London suburb until the 1920s and 1930s, when the remaining farms and nurseries vanished. The site was first built over during this period as part of large two storey brick-built range of ground storey shops with flats above (Numbers 144 - 170) fronting into the south side of Ballard's Lane.

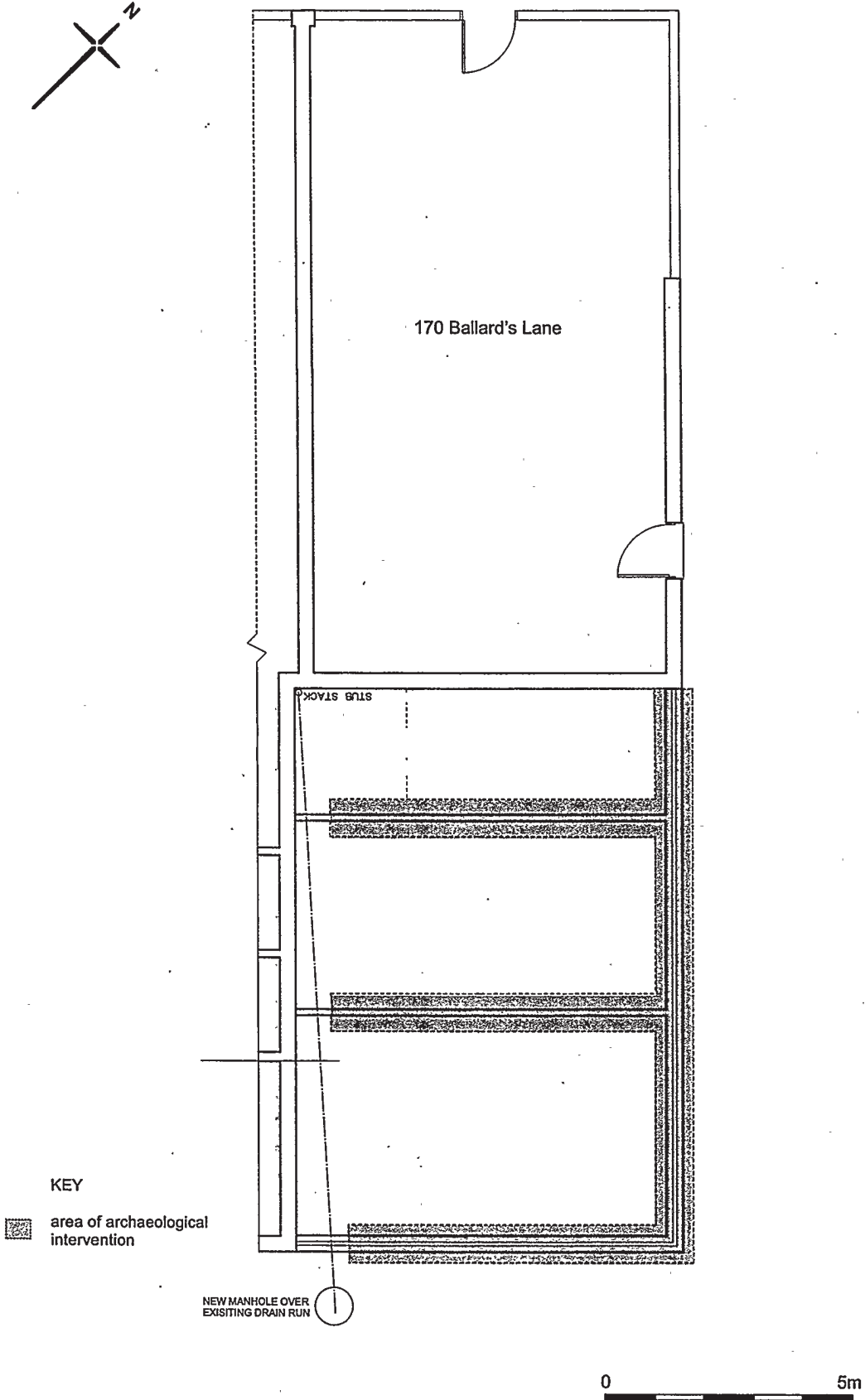


Fig 2 Area of archaeological intervention

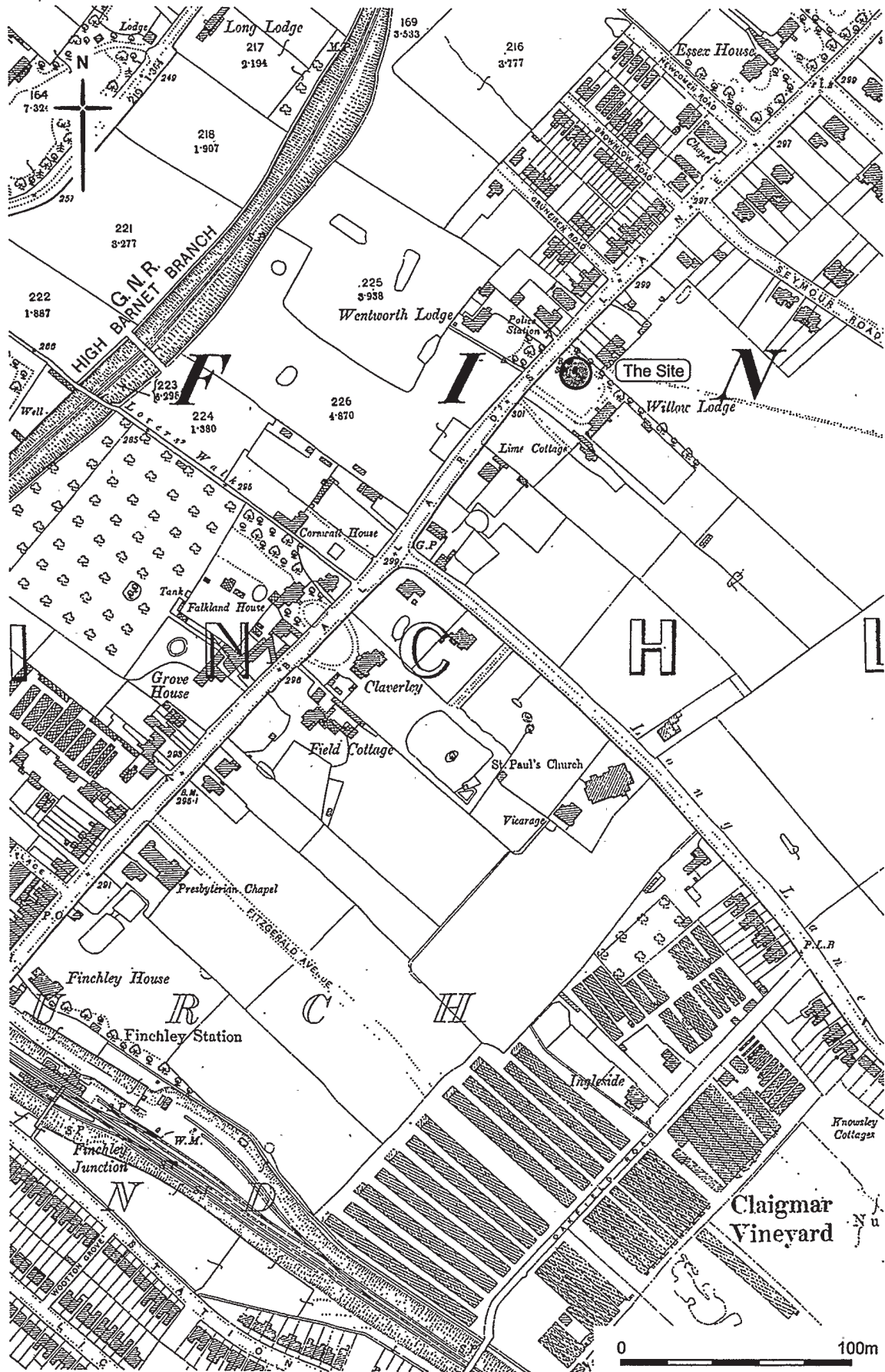


Fig 3 The site in 1894-96 (Ordnance Survey 1: 2500 London Sheet 5)

3 The Watching Brief

3.1 Methodology

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). The site has produced: one location plan, one digital plan of the proposed foundations and two pages of notes. There were no retained finds or photographs. The site records can be found under the site code BLQ05 in the MoL archive.

3.2 Results of the Watching Brief

The watching brief consisted of monitoring the excavation by mini-digger of a series of new foundations trenches some 0.60m wide and 1.2m deep, along the southern eastern sides and two south-west to north-east aligned trenches across the centre of the site (see Fig 2). Some 1.20m below modern ground level the top portion of a compact, stoneless, mid grey clay was revealed (top 89.6m OD). This deposit is interpreted as unweathered Eocene London Clay. Above this was a layer up to 0.6m thick of a compact, yellow-brown clay, containing a moderate frequency of angular pebbles and a few lenses of sandy gravel (top 90.8m OD). This deposit is interpreted as a mixture of Pleistocene Boulder Clay and Thames Terrace gravels, which occur locally. The mixture of the two deposits is probably the result of solifluction under periglacial conditions, when the deposits were churned up and moved slowly down slope. The top 0.6m generally consisted of modern materials, existing brick foundations, services trenches (including north - south aligned foul drains).

The earliest evidence of human activity was a few residual broken red, unfrosted bricks (2 inches thick and 4 wide inches) dating from 1450-1700. These bricks appear to have imported into site as hardcore during the previous development. In several places where the top 60cm of the site was undisturbed there were traces of the truncated and disturbed post-medieval topsoil and short lengths of lines of north - south aligned, insitu earthen ware, cylindrical land drains (mould made, length 300mm, external diameter 60mm, internal diameter 30mm) of 19th-century date.

4 Archaeological potential

4.1 Realisation of original research aims

1. What is the nature and level of natural topography?

London Clay was located at 89.6m OD, overlain by a mixture of Pleistocene Boulder Clay and terrace gravels, top 90.2m OD.

2. What were the earliest deposits on site?

The earliest insitu evidence of human activity on site were the remains of 19th-century agricultural field drainage scheme. The site was part an agrarian landscape in 1754 and by 1894 was part of the grounds of Willow Lodge. It was not built over until the 1920s or 1930s, when 170 Ballard's Lane was constructed as part of a larger roadside development of shops and flats (see 2.3).

4.2 Conclusions

The watching brief revealed no features or deposits of archaeological significance. It appears the site was part of an agrarian landscape and latterly was part of the gardens of Willow Court until the 1920s or 1930s. The earliest evidence of human activity on site consisted of broken bricks dating from 1450-1700, these were apparently not part of an insitu structure, but were imported here as hardcore during the 1920s or 1930s.

5 Publication and Archiving

Information on the results of the watching brief will made publicly available by means of a database in digital form, to permit inclusion of the site data in any future research. A short note on the results of the watching brief should appear in the annual round-up of the *London Archaeologist*.

6 Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Mr William Winter for commissioning this report and for his assistance during the on-site work. Thanks also go to Alan Cox Associates Architectural & Planning Consultants for their kind assistance.

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8 NMR OASIS archaeological report form

MOLAS 1-9516

Project details

Project name	170 Ballard's Lane, Finchley N3 London
Short description of the project	Watching Brief revealed London Clay sealed by Pleistocene drift, 19th C ceramic field drains, site built over 1920s-30s Site code BLQ05
Project dates	Start: 13-06-2005 End: 14-06-2005
Previous/future work	No / No
Any associated project reference codes	BLQ05 - Contracting Unit No.
Type of project	Recording project
Current Land use	Community Service 1 - Community Buildings
Monument type	field drain Post Medieval
Investigation type	'Watching Brief'
Prompt	Direction from Local Planning Authority - PPG16