

Land adjoining  
Byng Street and  
Westferry Road  
Isle of Dogs  
London E14



**Archaeological Evaluation**



**Oxford Archaeology**

2nd August 2002

**Client Name: Cathedral  
Docklands Limited**

Issue N<sup>o</sup>: 1

OA Job N<sup>o</sup>: 1378

Planning Ref N<sup>o</sup>:

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**Client Ref No:**

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Position: Director: Operations and Business Development  
Date: 2nd August 2002

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# Land at the Junction of Byng Street and Westferry Road

## Isle of Dogs

### London E14

## *ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVALUATION*

### CONTENTS

Summary .....	1
1 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Location and scope of work .....	1
1.2 Geology and topography .....	1
1.3 Archaeological [and historical] background.....	2
1.4 Acknowledgements .....	3
2 Evaluation Aims .....	3
3 Evaluation Methodology .....	3
3.1 Scope of fieldwork .....	3
3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording .....	3
3.3 Finds .....	4
3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence .....	4
4 Results: General.....	4
4.1 Soils and ground conditions .....	4
4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits .....	4
5 Results: Descriptions .....	4
5.1 Description of deposits .....	4
5.2 Finds .....	6
6 Discussion And Interpretation .....	6
6.1 Reliability of field investigation.....	6
6.2 Overall interpretation.....	7
7 Impact of the Development .....	7
Appendix 1 Archaeological Context Inventory.....	8
Appendix 2 Bibliography and references .....	8
Appendix 3 GLSMR/RCHME NMR Archaeological Report Form .....	9

### LIST OF FIGURES

- Fig. 1 Site location map  
 Fig. 2 Trench location plan  
 Fig. 3 Section Drawings through Trenches 2 and 3

## SUMMARY

*In July 2002 Oxford Archaeology (OA) carried out a field evaluation at land adjoining Byng Street and Westferry Road, Isle of Dogs, London E14 on behalf of Cathedral Docklands Ltd. The evaluation revealed a series of 19th to 20th century building foundations and industrial features. There was no evidence to suggest settlement on the site at any time before the 19th century.*

### 1 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Location and scope of work

1.1.1 In July 2002 OA carried out a field evaluation at land adjoining Byng Street and Westferry Road, Isle of Dogs, London E14 (NGR: TQ 3715 7982), on behalf of Cathedral Group Plc. The works were carried out in respect to the formulation of development proposals for the construction of a new fire station and apartment blocks to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority. An archaeological Desk Based Assessment of the proposal area has been previously undertaken as part of an Environmental Impact Assessment, commissioned for the site by Cathedral Docklands Ltd, and carried out by Gifford and Partners in 2001. This desk based study highlighted the potential for important archaeological and environmental deposits to survive on the site that may be impacted by the development, and as such made recommendation that further intrusive field evaluation should be undertaken, in line with PPG 16 and policies contained within the Tower Hamlets Unitary Development Plan, in order that a suitable mitigation strategy could be agreed. A written scheme of investigation (WSI) was prepared by OA outlining the methodology of the field evaluation and this was approved by the Local Planning Authority Archaeological Advisor Mr. Nick Truckle of English Heritage. This archaeological field evaluation has been undertaken prior to, and in support of, the determination of this planning application. The site covers an area of approximately 6,500 m<sup>2</sup> situated between Manilla Street and Byng Street, Isle of Dogs, London E14 (Fig. 1). The site comprises of an area of leveled ground partially covered by concrete standing. The site lies at approximately 2 m above OD.

#### 1.2 Geology and topography

1.2.1 The geology of the site, as identified by the British geological Survey (sheet 270 solid and drift edition 1:50,000), is alluvium of the Holocene or Pleistocene periods overlying flood plain gravels (BGS 1981). Geo-technical borehole and trial pit data acquired from investigations within the proposal area has provided a more detailed analysis of the stratigraphic sequence of deposits present over the site (Gifford and Partners 2001). These show the presence of made ground overlying alluvium, within which an 'organic clay', approximately 1.2 m to 1.5 m thick (no OD heights were taken), containing occasional wood and plant remains was identified. Although the geo-technical results did not reveal evidence for the presence of a peat layer on the

site this organic layer may suggest that the site has the potential to produce surviving peat formations, evidence of which has been previously identified in the area at Atlas Wharf, Arrowhead Quay, Timber Wharves, Masthouse Terrace, Locke's Wharf and Dingle Gardens (Gifford and Partners 2001).

### 1.3 Archaeological [and historical] background

- 1.3.1 The archaeological background to the evaluation has been the subject of a separate desk study (Gifford and Partners 2001), the results of which are summarized below.
- 1.3.2 The assessment identified the possibility that the site may contain sealed peat deposits, and this evidence, coupled with the recording of a buried fossil forest at the West India and Millwall Docks (SMR ref. 080728) and the recovery and recording of Prehistoric activity and remains both in close proximity to the site and on the river terrace gravels of the Thames Floodplain, suggests that the site has a significant potential to produce further archaeological and environmental/palaeoenvironmental evidence dating to this period.
- 1.3.3 Archaeological activity dating from the Iron Age period through to the Anglo-Saxon period within the vicinity of the site is, on current evidence, absent, although, the potential for activity to be present on the site from these periods cannot as yet be discounted.
- 1.3.4 Historical evidence suggests that in the medieval period the site, located on the west side of the Isle of Dogs, was situated within open pasture (called Stepney Marshes) that was frequently subject to inundation by the Thames. The earliest recorded settlement on the Isle of Dogs was the Manor of Pomfret founded in the 12th century. This settlement was located at the southern central end of the island and, due to the threat of flooding from the Thames and the marshy nature of the land, never grew to a substantial size. Archaeological evidence for activity in the area during the Medieval period is limited to a single possible late Medieval ditch recorded during evaluation at 33-39 Westferry Road.
- 1.3.5 The most common evidence, both archaeologically and historically, for the area of the proposed development dates to the post-medieval period. The island was protected from flooding by the construction of a sea defence wall known as 'Marsh Wall' and later 'Mill Wall', the earliest account of which dates to the 13th century. Evidence of the marsh wall has been recorded during archaeological evaluation carried out at Atlas Wharf. Cartographic sources, dating from the early 18th century, indicate that the proposal area remained as open landscape, most likely pasture, up until its later development in c.1860. The Isle of Dogs, through gradual reclamation of its marshes, had become renowned for its rich grazing and much of its interior remained as open pasture with development, such as the construction of mills in the 17th and 18th century and later shipbuilding and metalworking industries 18th and 19th centuries, focused along the rivers edge.
- 1.3.6 Around the mid-19th century onward, speculative landholders created new housing developments consisting of small terraces and cottages on the island, and in the mid 1860's the proposal area was occupied by a mix of terraced housing and an engineering works up until the end of the Second World War. Much of the housing, situated in the

southwest corner of the site, was removed during post-war bomb clearance. The site was gradually taken over predominantly by the engineering works, until it later became a timber yard. In recent years it has been cleared. Previous development on the site will undoubtedly have caused some below ground disturbance, although, it is believed that earlier foundations on the site would have been relatively insubstantial, and as such, are likely only to have had a minimal impact on potential below ground archaeological deposits.

#### 1.4 Acknowledgements

- 1.4.1 OA would like to extend its thanks to Mr Mark Davis of Mount Anvil Construction for controlling access to the site and to Mr Nick Truckle of English Heritage for invaluable advice concerning the location of the trenches.

### 2 EVALUATION AIMS

- 2.1.1 To establish the presence/absence of archaeological remains within the development area and to determine the extent, condition, nature, character, quality, date, depth below ground archaeological remains.
- 2.1.2 To establish the ecofactual and environmental potential of archaeological and geoarchaeological deposits and features.
- 2.1.3 Where significant archaeological remains are discovered, to determine what further mitigation measures may be required and to agree these with Cathedral Docklands Ltd, the Local Planning Authority and English Heritage.
- 2.1.4 To make available the results of the investigation.

### 3 EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Scope of fieldwork

- 3.1.1 The evaluation consisted of two trenches measuring 5 m x 5 m at their base. Owing to the substantial depth of made ground the trenches were stepped in order to ensure safe working access to the base of the trenches (Fig. 2). The original scope of archaeological works was for the excavation of three trenches, however it was decided in consultation with and the agreement of Nick Truckle that the lack of archaeological evidence in Trenches 2 and 3 did not justify the excavation of Trench 1.

#### 3.2 Fieldwork methods and recording

- 3.2.1 The trenches were machine excavated by a 360° mechanical excavator fitted with a toothless bucket under the direct supervision of a qualified archaeologist, supplemented by hand excavation of any archaeological deposits

3.2.2 The trenches were cleaned by hand and the revealed features were sampled to determine their extent and nature, and to retrieve finds and environmental samples. All archaeological features were planned and where excavated their sections drawn at scale of 1:20. All features were photographed using colour slide and black and white print film. Recording followed procedures laid down in the *OAU Fieldwork Manual* (ed D Wilkinson, 1992).

### 3.3 Finds

3.3.1 Finds were recovered by hand during the course of the excavation and generally bagged by context. Finds of special interest were given a unique small find number.

### 3.4 Palaeo-environmental evidence

3.4.1 No samples were taken for environmental analysis.

## 4 RESULTS: GENERAL

### 4.1 Soils and ground conditions

4.1.1 The site is located in an urban residential area southwest of Canary Wharf between Manilla Street and Byng Street on the Isle of Dogs. The site is an area of approximately 6,500 m<sup>2</sup> of leveled land partially covered by concrete hard standing with the rest covered by demolition rubble and scrub. Below the surface there is up to 1.2 m of made ground consisting of industrial rubble and refuse including the footings of late 19th to 20th century buildings probably cleared during the post-war period. Below the made ground was a deposit of alluvial silt up to 1 m thick which overlay a band of sand and the holocene/pleistocene gravels. The water table lay just above the level of the sand at approximately 0.5 m above OD.

### 4.2 Distribution of archaeological deposits

4.2.1 No archaeological features or deposits dating to before the 19th century were encountered in either trench. Trench 2 contained a single linear feature (1007) below the made ground. The function of this feature is not entirely clear but it resembled a silted up drain run. The fill of the feature yielded a number of pottery sherds of the blue and white Willow pattern variety dating from the late 19th to early 20th century and probably associated with the late buildings on the site. Three brick built wells were observed within Trench 3 cut immediately below the demolition deposit. All of the wells were cut through the underlying alluvium and a number of willow pattern pottery sherds and a machine-turned teapot were recovered from the bottom of the structures indicating a similar late date to the feature in Trench 2.

## 5 RESULTS: DESCRIPTIONS

### 5.1 Description of deposits



### ***Trench 2***

- 5.1.1 Trench 2 was located in the southeast corner of the development area close to Byng Street. Trench 2 was c. 2.6 m deep. At the base of the sequence was a deposit of clean flint terrace gravels (1011). These gravels formed the natural and earliest geology on the site and lay at approximately -0.2 m below OD. The gravels were overlain by a layer of clean alluvial sand (1010) up to 0.3 m thick. The sand was overlain by a relatively thin (0.1 m) layer of light greyish brown silt with occasional small flint pebbles and coarse sand (1009). This layer is typical of the settling and sorting of particle sizes settling to the bottom of a body of relatively still water. Above deposit (1009) were the main bulk of the alluvial deposits (1005 and 1006). Layer 1006 was a light greyish brown silt 0.8 m thick. This horizon was overlain by a more bluish grey silt (1005). It is likely that both deposits were fundamentally the same and that the upper blue horizon was a more oxygenated deposit owing to its higher position in the sequence and the contamination caused by root action and later intrusive building works in the late post-medieval period.
- 5.1.2 The silt layers (1005 and 1006) were both truncated by an irregularly shaped linear feature 1007. This feature was orientated north-south and at its widest was 1.5 m wide and up to 1.1 m deep. The edges of 1007 were irregular and sloped at c.60° on to a concave base. The function of the ditch was not entirely clear though it was probably an open drainage feature. Feature 1007 was filled by a single dark brown mixed clayey loam (1008) that produced a number of white and blue willow-pattern style pottery sherds as well as fragments of vessel glass and iron work.
- 5.1.3 The top of the sequence was composed of brick footings (1002) that formed the foundations of the modern concrete hard standing. The footings were orientated north-south and spaced at fairly regular intervals of c. 1.0 m. The footings were built on a layer of yellow sand and fine gravels (1004) up to 0.3 m thick that formed a leveling layer on which to base the concrete structure. The gaps between the brick foundations were filled by a layer of black clinker (1003) no doubt designed to produce a well drained but robust layer between the voids in the brickwork and the concrete surface. The concrete surface (1001) at the top of the sequence of deposits was up to 0.28 m thick and formed the central access road through the middle of the development area (Fig. 2). A layer of demolition debris composed of crushed brick, tile, glass and dirty coarse sand (1000) overlay the concrete and represented the abandonment and demolition of the site as a place of industry.

### ***Trench 3***

- 5.1.4 Trench 3 was located in the southwest corner of the development area close to Byng Street and Westferry Road (Fig. 2). Trench 3 was 2.8 m deep. At the base of the stratigraphic sequence was a horizon of clean flint terrace gravels (1029). These gravels were equivalent to (1011) in Trench 2 and they formed the natural and earliest geology on the site lying at approximately -0.35 m below OD. Overlying the gravel was a layer of clean yellow sand (1028) up to 0.4m thick. The sand was overlain by up to 0.9 m of alluvial silt that formed three distinct horizons. The lowest band



(1027) was pale grey in colour and measured 0.3 m thick. The grey silt was overlain by 0.4m of light brown silt (1026) which was in turn overlain by 0.52 m of bluish grey silt (1025). As in Trench 2 these silts represented periods of inundation of the site by the river Thames. The bluish colour of the upper band (1025) can be attributed to oxidation of the deposit by intrusive plant roots and late building works in the area. The lower bands (1026 and 1027) may reflect separate episodes of flooding. None of the alluvium layers contained sealed archaeological deposits.

- 5.1.5 The upper part of the sequence comprised a series of late 19th to early 20th century brick-built building foundations. The foundations were all badly damaged and the majority fell outside the 5 m x 5 m trench. As well as the foundations, three brick lined circular well structures were identified. Two of the wells (1012 and 1018) lay wholly within trench 3 while the third (1017) lay partly within the north side of the trench (Fig. 2). The wells each measured c. 1.5 m in diameter and were cut through the underlying alluvium deposits and to a depth of 0.2 m into the gravels (1029). The basal fills of wells (1015) and (1018) both produced good quality white and blue Willow pattern style pottery and an almost complete machine-turned decorated black ware teapot. The wells and building foundations were covered by a layer of demolition debris composed of crushed brick, tile, glass and dirty coarse sand (1000) up to 1.0 m thick.

## 5.2 Finds

- 5.2.1 No finds of significant antiquity were recovered during the fieldwork. A number of features notably the wells in Trench 3 and the drainage cut in Trench 2 produced sherds of pottery including distinctive blue and white willow patterned china wares and glass. The willow-patterned wares can be dated to the late 19th century and possibly to the early part of the 20th century and were common tablewares. The teapot recovered from context (1019) in the base of well (1018) was decorated with machine-turned lathe-applied patterns, this decoration coupled with the relatively large size of the object would indicate a similar date to that of the other pottery sherds recovered.
- 5.2.2 A single undated fragment of clay pipe and a sherd of undated glass were also recovered from the site.

## 6 DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION

### 6.1 Reliability of field investigation

- 6.1.1 The evaluation trenches excavated within the proposed development area exhibited a clear sequence of stratification from the earliest natural horizon of Holocene/Pleistocene gravels through to the last remnants of late 20th century land use on the site. Although the alluvial sequence of silts exhibited a degree of contamination and truncation by later development this was restricted to only the last

century or so of activity on the site and with the exception of the well structures in Trench 3, the sequence was not greatly affected.

- 6.1.2 The use of 5 m x 5 m trenches enabled a relatively large area of the site to be opened up for investigation which has allowed for an informed assessment of the presence of surviving archaeological activity on the site. The sequence of the alluvial processes did not appear to suggest any break in which an archaeological horizon could have formed at any time from the prehistoric period up until the 19th century. The latest phase of activity present on the site does not appear to have disturbed any deposits of archaeological significance although there was no buried topsoil horizon present in either trench to attest the open pastureland alluded to in the desk based study or the cartographic evidence. It is therefore possible that this could have been removed or destroyed by the latest phase of activity present within the trenches.

## 6.2 Overall interpretation

- 6.2.1 The evaluation did not reveal any features or deposits of archaeological significance that can be dated to any period before the later post-medieval. The only evidence of activity on the site comprised a series of late brick built foundations and footings for the terraced housing, wells and the engineering works associated with post 1860's use of the site and the abandonment of the area in the immediate post WW II years.

## 7 IMPACT OF THE DEVELOPMENT

### 7.1 *Significance*

- 7.1.1 The lack of any significant evidence of archaeological interest uncovered during fieldwork would suggest that the potential for surviving archaeological remains to be disturbed by development is very low.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1 ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONTEXT INVENTORY

Context No.	Type	Thickness/Depth	Width	Finds	Date/Comment
1000	Deposit	0.3 m	5 m	None	Demolition Rubble
1001	Deposit	0.3 m	5 m		Concrete Slab
1002	Structure				Brick Footing
1003	Deposit	0.45 m	5 m	None	Clinker
1004	Deposit	0.3 m	5 m	None	Made Ground
1005	Deposit	0.5m	5 m	None	Alluvium
1006	Deposit	0.9 m	5 m	None	Alluvium
1007	Cut	1.1 m	2 m		Drainage Cut
1008	Deposit	1.1 m	2 m	Pot	19th/20th Century
1009	Deposit	0.1 m	5 m	None	Alluvium
1010	Deposit	0.3 m	5 m	None	Sand Below 1009
1011	Deposit		5 m	None	Natural Gravel
1012	Cut	3.0 m	1.5 m		Well. C19th\20th
1013	Deposit	3.0 m	1.5 m	Pot	Fill of 1012
1014	Void				
1015	Cut	3.0 m	1.5 m		Well. C19th/20th
1016	Deposit	3.0 m	1.5 m	Pot	Fill of 1015
1017	Structure	3.0 m	1.5 m		Lining of Well
1018	Cut	3.0 m	1.5 m		Well. C19th/20th
1019	Deposit	3.0 m	1.5 m	Pot	Fill of 1018
1020	Structure	3.0 m	1.5 m		Lining of Well
1021	Structure	1.0 m	3.6 m		Brick Footing
1022	Deposit	0.36 m	1.4 m	None	Concrete Slab
1023	Deposit	0.24 m	1.4 m	None	Made Ground
1024	Deposit	0.4 m	1.4 m	None	Made Ground
1025	Deposit	0.6 m	5 m	None	Alluvium
1026	Deposit	0.6 m	5 m	None	Alluvium
1027	Deposit	0.2 m	2.2 m	None	Alluvium
1028	Deposit	0.4 m	5 m	None	Sand Below 1027
1029	Deposit			None	Natural Gravel
1030	Cut				Contains 1023,1024

## APPENDIX 2 BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES

BGS 1981, *Geological Survey of Great Britain, South London, Sheet 270, Solid and Drift Edition, 1:50,000 Series*

Gifford and Partners 2001, '*A New Borough Fire Station and Community Fire Safety Centre, Westferry Road, Isle of Dogs: Environmental Statement*', Gifford Report No. B4138A/R01

Gifford and Partners 2001, '*Byng Street, Isle of Dogs: Deskbased Assessment*', Gifford Report No. B4138A.R01

**APPENDIX 3 GLSMR/RCHME NMR ARCHAEOLOGICAL REPORT FORM**

## 1) TYPE OF RECORDING

Evaluation

## 2) LOCATION

Borough: Tower Hamlets

Site address: Byng Street, Isle of Dogs, London E14

Site Name: Land Adjoining Byng Street and Westferry Road

Site Code: BSV 02

Nat. grid Refs: TQ 3715 7982

Limits of site: N 3715 7989 S 3715 7975

E 3726 7982 W 3704 7982

## 3) ORGANISATION

Name of archaeological unit/company/society: Oxford Archaeology

Address: Janus House, Osney Mead, Oxford OX2 OES

Site director/supervisor: Daniel Dodds Project manager: Steve Weaver

Funded by: Cathedral Docklands Ltd

## 4) DURATION

Date fieldwork started: 08/07/02

Date finished: 16/07/02

Fieldwork previously notified?

YES

Fieldwork will continue?

NOT KNOWN

## 5) PERIODS REPRESENTED

Post-Medieval

## 6) PERIOD SUMMARIES

Building footings and 3 post medieval industrial wells.

## 7) NATURAL

Type: Gravel

Height above Ordnance datum: -0.2 m

## 8) LOCATION OF ARCHIVES

- a) Please provide an estimate of the quantity of material in your possession for the following categories:

NOtes	PLans x4	PHotos x1	Ngatives x2
SLides x1	COrrrespondence	MScripts (unpub reports, etc)	
BULK finds 1xbox	SMall finds	SOil samples	
OTHer 1x A4 ring binder site records			

- b) The archive has been prepared and stored in accordance with MGC standards and will be deposited in the following location:

- c) Has a security copy of the archive been made?: YES

## 10) BIBLIOGRAPHY

BGS 1981, *Geological Survey of Great Britain, South London*, Sheet 270, Solid and Drift Edition, 1:50,000 Series

Gifford and Partners 2001, '*A New Borough Fire Station and Community Fire Safety Centre, Westferry Road, Isle of Dogs: Environmental Statement*', Gifford Report No. B4138A/R01

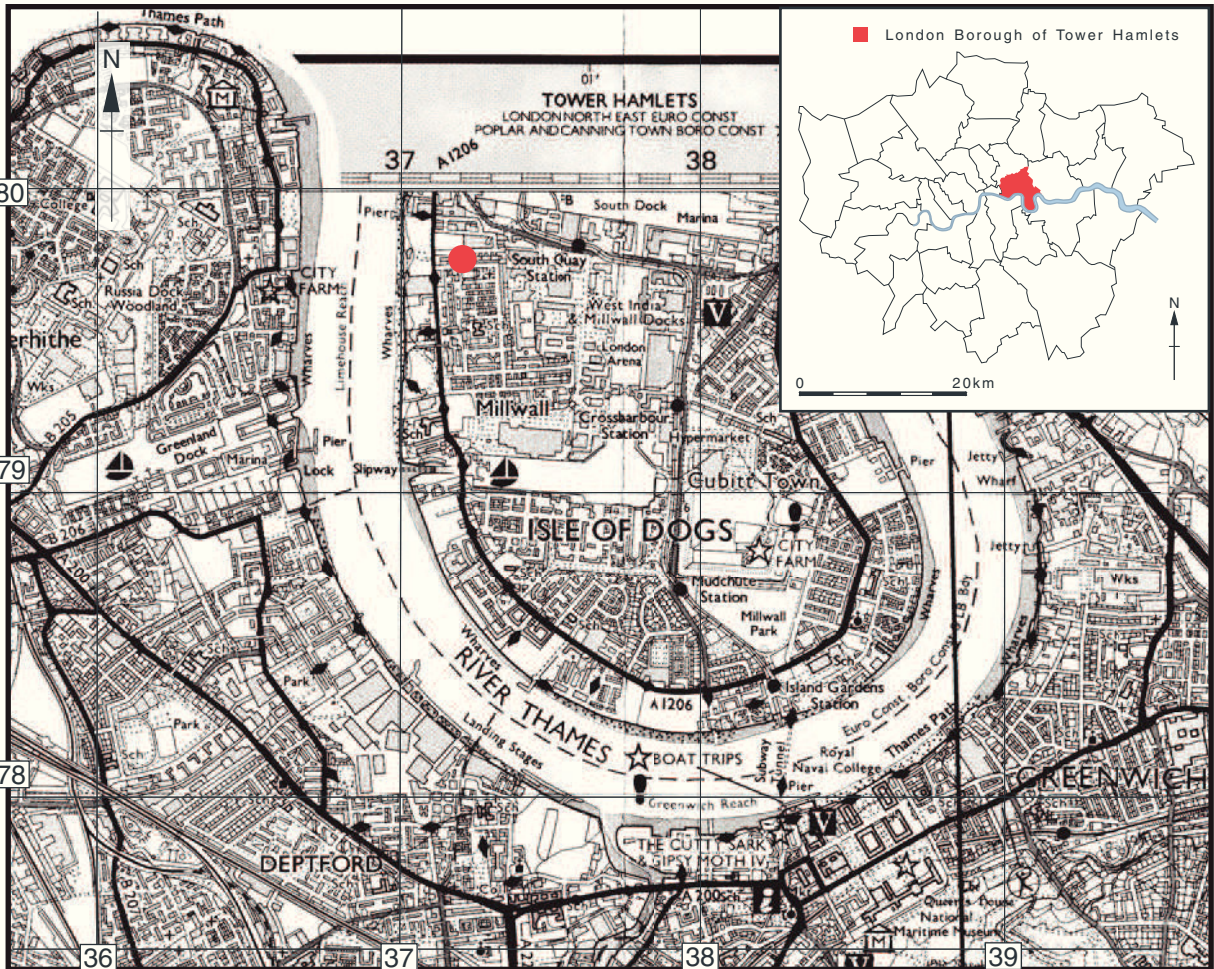
Gifford and Partners 2001, '*Byng Street, Isle of Dogs: Deskbased Assessment*', Gifford Report No. B4138A.R01

SIGNED:

DATE:

NAME :





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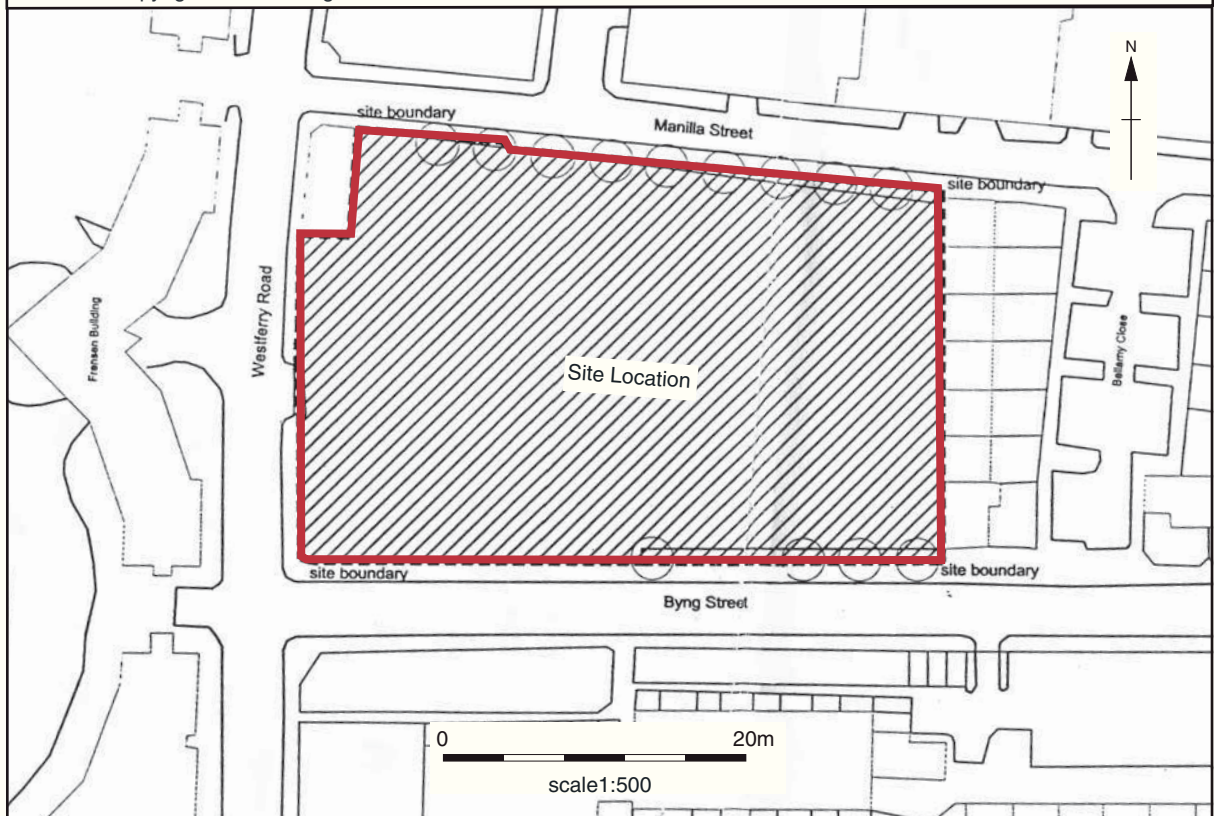


Figure 1: Site location.

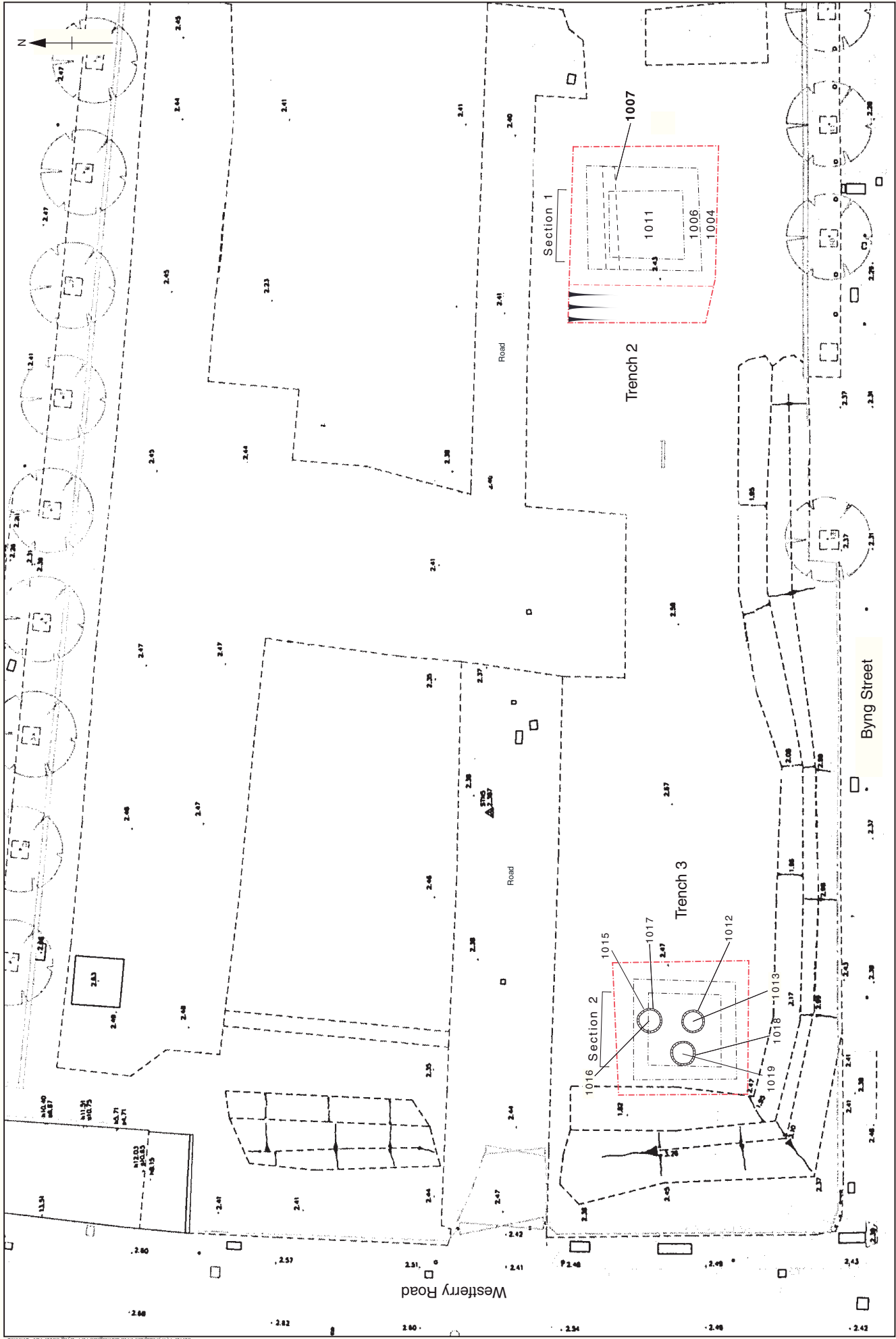


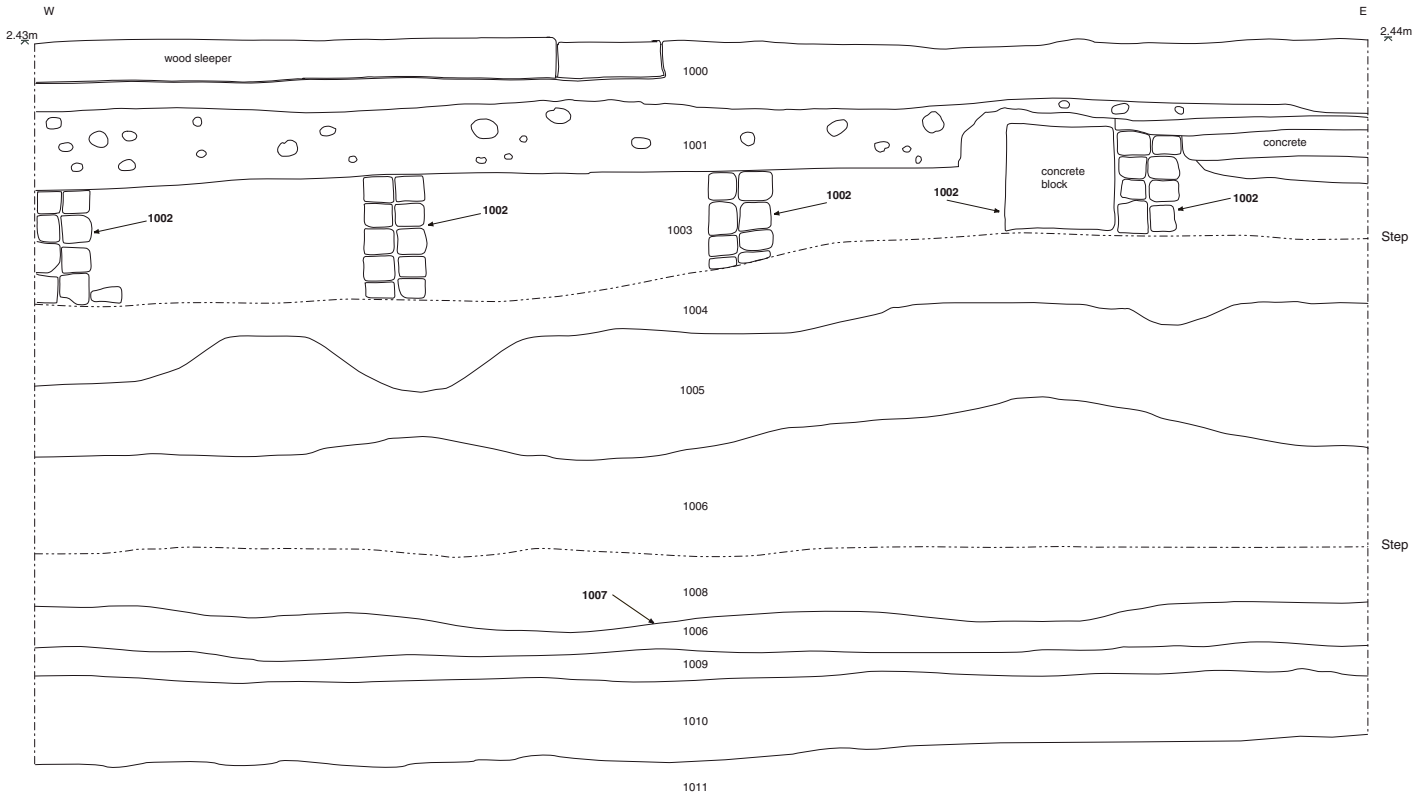
Figure 2 Trench Location Plan



Site: 4 (W) \projects\1\B drawings\SYV\Byng Street\AP21.06.02



### Section 1: South facing through Trench 2.



### Section 2: South facing through Trench 3.

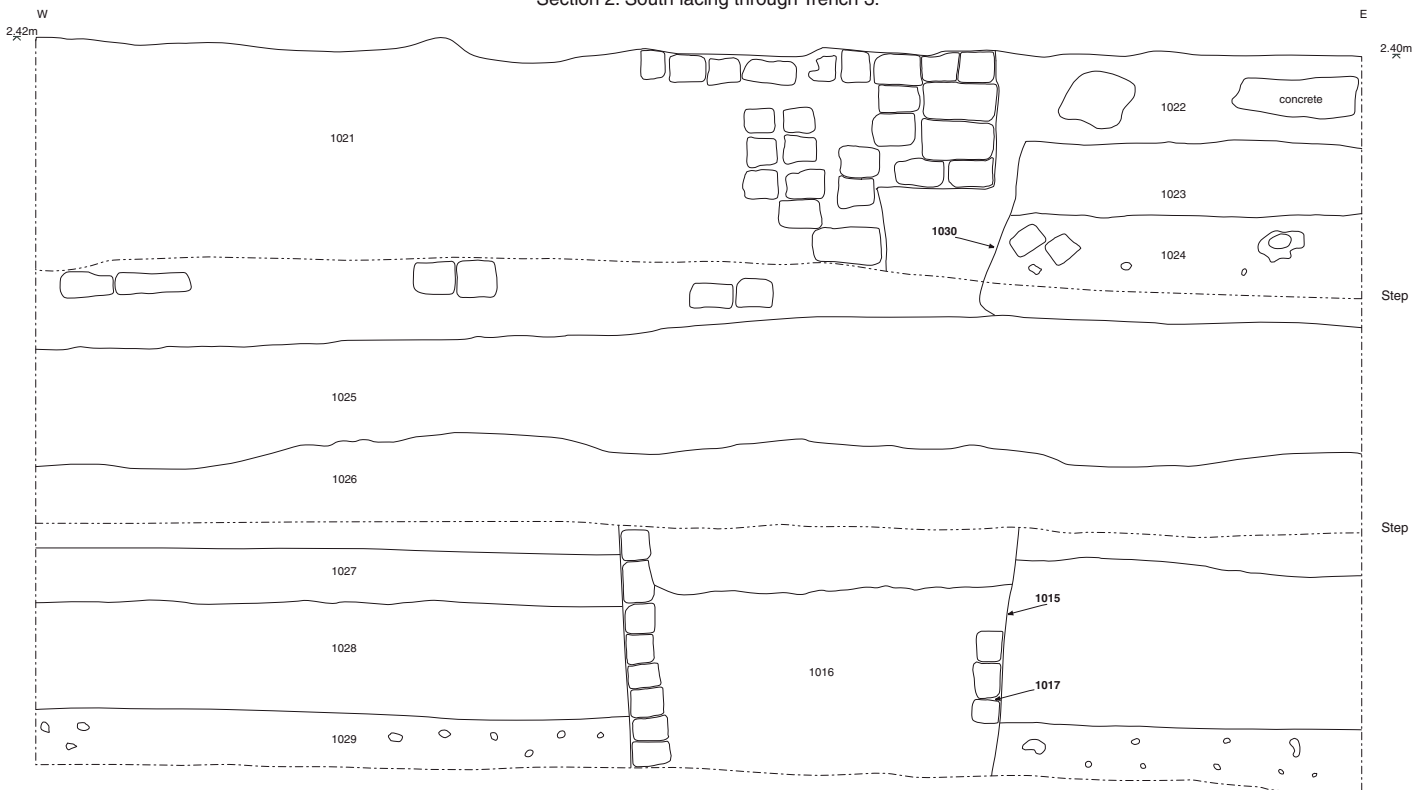


Figure 3. Section drawings through trenches 2 and 3



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